



National Grain and Feed
Association



North American Export
Grain Association

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Industry Groups Say USDA Soybean Rust Policy Should be Science-Based, Minimize Potential Trade Disruption

WASHINGTON – The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) should continue to rely upon transparent, science-based risk assessments when making policy decisions on imports of soybean seed, raw soybeans and soybean meal from countries experiencing soybean rust, several industry organizations said today.

Further, the groups urged the agency to ensure that phytosanitary measures utilized by foreign countries shipping soybeans and soybean products to the United States will be acceptable to U.S. government authorities to minimize potential trade disruption and ensure appropriate protection against soybean rust. Ultimately, such shipments should not be subject to reinspection upon import into the United States, they said.

The industry statement – submitted by the National Grain and Feed Association (NGFA), North American Export Grain Association (NAEGA) and National Oilseed Processors Association (NOPA) – was in response to a request for comments from APHIS on its draft 28-page report that concluded that soybean seed, clean soybean grain and soymeal do **not** constitute likely pathways for the introduction of soybean rust into the United States.

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The APHIS report outlining the scientific data currently available on the most aggressive type of soybean rust – known as *Phakopsora pachyrhizi* – found that there is a negligible risk the pathogen would be spread to the United States through soybean meal. APHIS’ report also said it is “extremely unlikely” that soybean rust will be transmitted through shipments of raw soybeans that have undergone normal post-harvest treatment, including cleaning that reduces foreign material to 2 percent or less, or through soybean seed.

The so-called Asian strain of soybean rust was reported in Hawaii in 1995 and has spread to Zimbabwe, South Africa, Paraguay, and, most recently, Brazil, resulting in yield losses. Soybean rust is not a food safety concern.

In their statement to APHIS, the organizations said that while science-based risk assessments are a critical foundation of U.S. policy, they are insufficient in-and-of-themselves to facilitate commercial trade. In addition to science-based risk-assessment, they said, it is essential that the United States adhere to international sanitary and phytosanitary agreements that apply to export clearance procedures utilized by World Trade Organization (WTO)-member countries to ensure adequate protection against transmitting plant diseases in shipments of agricultural products. If such an assurance – which allows trade to be conducted on so-called “origin-final terms” – was not provided, it likely would inhibit imports of raw soybeans from South American countries that are experiencing soybean rust because of the inability of U.S. importers to accurately assess the risk of the shipment being rejected by APHIS once it reaches the United States.

“The acceptance of ‘official origin-final terms’ is a common and essential component of an efficient export trade, as it allows shippers and receivers to adequately manage risk and minimize the costs of shipments,” the organizations said.

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In this regard, the organizations noted that the United States is obligated under WTO rules to accept as equivalent the sanitary and phytosanitary measures of a foreign country if that country can objectively demonstrate that its measures are science-based and provide an appropriate level of protection against disease transmission. “Thus, APHIS would be working against the interests of the U.S. soybean industry – producers, handlers, processors and exporters – as well as U.S. obligations under the WTO if it were to require “destination-final terms” in full or in part (on imports of soybeans or soybean products), or to subject import shipments to a ‘zero tolerance’ for (Asian rust) spores without clear scientific justification,” the groups said.

The organizations also said that continued reliance on science-based risk assessments for determining U.S. phytosanitary policies on plant diseases, including soybean rust, is important because it demonstrates U.S. commitment to abide by its WTO obligations to base phytosanitary measures on scientific evidence and not unfairly discriminate against other WTO-member countries.

In addition, such policies are critical to maintaining U.S. access to important foreign markets, they said, since it encourages reciprocal and appropriate science-based treatment of U.S. agricultural exports. “As one of the world’s top exporters of soybeans and other agricultural products, U.S. farmers, grain handlers, processors and exporters clearly benefit from a transparent and rules-based international trading system that relies on the best-available science upon which to base sanitary and phytosanitary measures,” the organizations said.

The NGFA, established in 1896, consists of 1,000 grain, feed, processing, exporting and other grain-related companies that operate about 5,000 facilities that handle more than two-thirds of all U.S. grains and oilseeds. The NGFA’s membership encompasses all sectors of the industry, including country, terminal and export elevators; feed manufacturers; cash grain and feed merchants; end users of grain and grain products, including processors, flour millers, and livestock and poultry integrators; commodity futures brokers and commission merchants; and allied industries. The NGFA also consists of 36 affiliated state and regional grain and feed associations, as well as two international affiliated associations.

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NAEGA, established in 1912, is a not-for-profit trade association comprised of 35 private and publicly owned companies and farmer-owned cooperatives involved in and providing services to the bulk grain and oilseed exporting industry. NAEGA member companies ship practically all of the bulk grains and oilseeds exported each year from the United States.

NOPA, established in 1929, represents the U.S. soybean, sunflower, canola, flaxseed and safflower seed-crushing industries. Its activities focus on enhancing the competitiveness and profitability of the U.S. oilseed processing industry. As such, it is proactively engaged in such issues as international trade policy, environmental and resource management, domestic farm programs, and health and safety issues.

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