

**U.S. Customs and Border Protection and  
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service  
Joint Agency Task Force – Implementation Action Plans**

In April 2007, the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) established a joint agency task force comprised of employees from various levels in each organization. The Joint Agency Task Force (JATF) looked at data from internal quality assurance reviews and reports of the respective Offices of the Inspector General and the Government Accountability Office; evaluated stakeholder concerns as expressed in correspondence and at a stakeholder listening session conducted in May 2007; and evaluated documents indicating support for various pieces of legislation introduced to return the agriculture (Ag) function to APHIS from CBP. The JATF receives guidance from the Agriculture Quarantine Inspection Partnership Council.

The purpose of the JATF is to jointly evaluate and develop recommendations to Plant Protection & Quarantine's Deputy Administrator and U.S. Customs & Border Protection's Assistant Commissioner of Field Operations that respond to the issues raised and provides a road map for improving how CBP and APHIS jointly accomplish the Agriculture Inspection Mission.

The JATF identified thirteen fundamental categories of key issues. These issues were comprehensively examined and discussed by the JATF to understand the underlying barriers to achieving optimum program performance. A series of detailed implementation action plans were devised that address each key issue by category and outline steps necessary to implement corrective actions and improvements.

The overarching themes of the JATF report focused on: raising the priority of the Ag mission within CBP; developing strategies to improve capability to prevent the introduction and establishment of exotic plant pests and foreign animal diseases; and integrating Ag into the primary CBP mission of preventing terrorists and terrorist weapons from entering the United States. During the stakeholder listening session on May 8, 2007, it was acknowledged that terrorism was a dangerous threat that needed the utmost attention from U.S. border security personnel. However it was recognized that in relation to the concentrated focus on this threat, the Ag mission loses a degree of significance as priorities are established in CBP. As a result, the ability of the organization to fully implement Ag priorities is hindered.

The following are the key issues the JATF identified for which implementation action plans have been developed. We have also provided a high-level list of accomplishments and, as appropriate, pending items for each of the action plans.

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### **Structure and Leadership**

**Issue:** The management and leadership infrastructure supporting the Ag mission from CBP should be staffed and empowered at levels equivalent to other functional mission areas in CBP.

**Accomplishments:** Created a comprehensive GS-0401 agriculturalist career ladder and comprehensive recruitment strategy for entry level CBP Agriculture Specialists (CBPAS). Established Ag liaison positions in California and Florida.

**Pending:** Evaluate the existing Ag management and support structure servicing CBP Ports of Entry, Field Offices, and Headquarters and determine options for achieving optimum structure. Evaluate Ag liaison positions. Evaluate Miami management structure pilot.

### **Outreach and Communication**

**Issue:** There is a need for access to CBP officials by stakeholders to be able to voice their concerns. There is a need for CBP to establish forums to discuss issues with stakeholders. There is also an identified need for better communications and information sharing between CBP and APHIS.

**Accomplishments:** Conducted the Ag Stakeholder Conference and initiated plans for the next Conference. Established the Agriculture Quarantine Inspection Partnership Council (AQIPC). CBP created the office of Agriculture Operational Oversight (AOO). AOO created the Ag enforcement alerts and provides copies to all state/Federal Ag stakeholders. Provide opportunities for outreach through “other than CBP” functions (i.e., regional plant board meetings). Created an Ag subcommittee in support of the Advisory Committee on Commercial Operations of CBP (COAC). Created an interim congressional outreach liaison to service the Office of Congressional Affairs and Field Operations for Ag issues. Conduct bi-weekly teleconference calls from office of Ag operational oversight and CBP field offices. Institutionalized and revitalized the pest risk committees. Deployed an industry stakeholder survey on relevant Ag-related data. Provide quarterly data to key Congressional points of contact.

**Pending:** Create and deploy a periodic industry stakeholder data sheet containing relevant Ag-related data.

### **Joint Agency Planning**

**Issue:** There is a need for an effective joint planning effort on numerous fronts to ensure that both Agencies are jointly placing priority on the Ag mission and approaching mission delivery cooperatively and consistently.

**Accomplishments:** Developed an annual calendar of events. Conduct planning for Ag-related operations at the local level with USDA counterparts (ongoing). CBP representative attend USDA Plant Health Programs annual strategic planning session (ongoing). Established

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internet and intranet sites for posting task force related information. Instituted formal annual review process by JATF members of review of all implementation action plans. Conduct a joint planning session as the starting point for additional joint agency plans (on-going).

**Pending:** Create a joint agency strategic plan consistent with JATF initiatives and aligned with each agency's strategic plan.

### **Performance Measures**

**Issue:** Develop and implement both joint and CBP program performance measures for AQI activities that appropriately and adequately correlate to user fee functions as well as the disbursement of appropriated dollars. Performance measures will accurately reflect the accomplishment of the Ag mission within CBP.

**Accomplishments:** Joint data review group finalized measures for each pathway. Created performance metrics for; passenger baggage, vehicles, pedestrians, international mail, and specific cargo pathways. Re-initiated the Unaccompanied Baggage Directive to include the agriculture program

**Pending:** Develop performance measures for PPQ identifiers and remaining cargo pathways. Evaluate and develop CBP performance measures.

### **Emergency Response**

**Issue:** APHIS and CBP need a joint comprehensive plan to effectively deploy CBP or APHIS resources during an Ag-related emergency.

**Accomplishments:** Convened subject matter experts to identify possible Ag-related emergency scenarios. Drafted an emergency response plan identifying Ag-related emergency events requiring responses. Vetted final draft plan through Agriculture Steering Committee.

**Pending:** Approval of the plan by PPQ and OFO leadership. Develop a roll-out mechanism to institute the plan. Roll-out and support the plan.

### **Information Management**

**Issue:** CBP and APHIS need to develop a coordinated and comprehensive process to identify essential and common data elements. CBP and APHIS need to evaluate all information systems useful in compiling and expressing outcomes. CBP and APHIS need to ensure data quality and integrity and that analysis of program information is coordinated. Consistency is needed in both data input and output.

**Accomplishments:** Convened joint agency work group to identify and develop short-term plan addressing data related issues. Conducted joint data summits to address issues in dual agency systems. Harmonized Ag forms. Provide annual guidance to CBP on various PPQ

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data systems. Rolled out the T&E and International Mail Databases. Address CBP-related challenges with AQAS data collection system. PPQ to address revisions within existing databases that service CBP.

**Pending:** Develop a plan for integration of systems for data collection and information sharing. Integrate with ACE, ITDS, and CERTS.

### **Resources**

**Issue:** Improve the Ag mission through more transparent financial accountability of Agriculture Quarantine and Inspection (AQI) resources and more effective and efficient programmatic and human capital resource management.

**Accomplishments:** Developed an effective and transparent financial management system. Determined by pathway and environment the types/kinds/amounts of equipment and supplies for CBPAS staffed and CBPAS Agriculture-Canine locations. Procured necessary Ag-related supplies and resource material. Initiated plans to comply with equipment standards as soon as possible, identifying locations with highest priority. Developed a joint comprehensive risk-based Resource Allocation staffing model to include calculations for the number of CBPAS and CBPAS canine.

**Pending:** Validate the joint comprehensive risk-based Resource Allocation staffing model and include enhancements to assess the number of Supervisory CBPAS. Identify out-year Ag resource needs.

### **Training**

**Issue:** CBP and APHIS need to continue to review and improve the Ag-related training programs used by CBP.

**Accomplishments:** Develop and deploy Ag pest detection modules (ongoing). Develop and deliver technology transfer module on Asian Gypsy Moth (AGM) and khapra beetle.

**Pending:** Construct a “Needs Analysis” for existing pre-academy, academy, and post-academy regimen for the CBPAS, CBPO, supervisory cadre, management cadre, and senior level managers to identify any Ag operational knowledge gaps. Develop and implement a train-the-trainer program on data collection for Ag coordinators on all AQAS systems, AQIM data, and specific pest identification. Develop and deliver technology transfer modules on the Asian citrus psyllid and fruit fly complex.

### **Regulatory Enforcement**

**Issue:** Maintenance of an effective, efficient, joint effort for consistent enforcement of the Plant Protection Act and the Animal Health Protection Act.

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**Accomplishments:** Reconvened the Civil Penalties Action Team (ongoing). Identified barriers to effective enforcement and create options to address and overcome barriers (ongoing).

**Pending:** Develop a process to review Ag-related civil penalties, including OGC process within USDA for adjudication.

## **Pest Identification**

**Issue:** CBP and APHIS need a joint comprehensive plan to establish standards of service in pest identification, training, and discard authority.

**Accomplishments:** Convened the Plant Pest Work Group (ongoing). Developed and instituted a pest detection liaison position (PPQ) to service multiple CBP field offices (ongoing).

**Pending:** Create procedures for developing and maintaining synoptic plant pest collections at the port level. Standardize pest identification reports. Re-invigorate and adjust the Cargo Release Authority program.

## **Operations**

**Issue:** CBP and APHIS need a joint comprehensive plan to establish and maintain priorities for Ag-related operational issues that need to be improved.

**Accomplishments:** Developed and piloted a passenger, risk-based targeting system using integrated approach. Implemented revised and standardized pest risk committee charter and addendum. Piloted and implemented the electronic recording of agriculture penalties not associated with a seizure. Implemented agriculture pest alerts/violators improvements to the automated targeting program used for incoming vessels. Created and implemented a compliance agreement database to automate the oversight improving tracking, agreement renewals, and capturing of quarterly reviews. Completed the Hatching Egg Pilot providing structured communication, identification of roles and processes to detect and prevent smuggling through the Miami Port of Entry. In collaboration with APHIS revised the CBP Standard Operating Procedures – “Handling Bird Importations.” Created Agricultural/Biological Terrorism Countermeasures Rules and Weights Sets 2. Identified, created, and piloted a comprehensive mechanism for an agriculture-related risk-based passenger targeting for high risk flights for agriculture (ongoing).

**Pending:** Review/discuss operational functions of the Ag national trend analysis group. Establish and maintain risk-based targeting schemes for select CBP air passenger operations. Develop and implement risk analyst positions in USDA regional offices. Evaluate existing technologies seeking ways to leverage new technologies to improve operations. Develop a concept of operations for Ag “jump team” and/or Ag enforcement teams.

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### **Quality Assurance**

**Issue:** Incorporation of quantifiable performance measures into the CBP Ag mission resulting in improved oversight and consistent application of the Ag inspection policy.

**Accomplishments:** Support the joint agency quality assurance program (ongoing). Monitor established performance measures for Ag (ongoing). Incorporated appropriate performance measures into the Field Office accomplishment report. Implementation of the expansion of the JAQAP review process to small port environment

**Pending:** Develop Ag-related training metrics to increase oversight and validation of completeness.

### **Canine**

**Issue:** CBP should maximize the utilization of Agriculture canines in the field to provide for a more efficient and effective layered enforcement of protecting American agriculture.

**Accomplishments:** Validated the canine training program ensuring compliance with national standards. Developed and implemented CBP supervisory overview training for Ag canine program (ongoing). Ensured Ag canine training program has an established protocol for bilateral, periodic review and input.

**Pending:** Develop Canine training and performance metrics to increase oversight and validation of completion.

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