News Release

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**CBP to begin inspections for Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus**

**Washington –**U.S. Customs and Border Protection will increase inspections on imported tomato and pepper fruit, seed lots and transplants entering at all U.S. ports of entry on Friday to prevent the introduction of tomato brown rugose fruit virus and protect U.S. tomato and pepper production worth more than $2.3 billion annually.

The increased inspections come following a Federal Order by the U.S Department of Agriculture’s Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service last week which imposes restrictions on imports of tomato and pepper seed lots and transplants from all countries where the virus exists as well as restrictions on tomato and pepper fruit imported from Mexico, Israel, and the Netherlands.

The order prohibits the importation of tomato and pepper fruits from all countries of origin in passenger baggage. The order also imposes additional requirements for commercial consignments from Mexico, Canada, Israel and the Netherlands.

Canada imports tomato and pepper fruit from Mexico that may be re-exported to this country, therefore, Canadian exporters will now be required to inspect tomato and pepper fruit to ensure it is free of disease symptoms prior to export to the United States.

Tomato brown rugose fruit virus can cause severe fruit loss in tomatoes and peppers. It is easily spread through the use of contaminated tools, hands, and plant-to-plant contact. It was first reported in tomatoes in Israel in 2014. Since then, it has been reported in China, Mexico, Germany (eradicated), Italy, Greece, the United Kingdom, Jordan, Turkey, and the Netherlands. The virus was detected and eradicated from a California tomato greenhouse in 2018.

Per the Federal Order, APHIS will:

* Require all tomato and pepper seed lots imported from countries where the virus exists to be officially tested and certified free of the disease.
* Require all tomato and pepper transplants imported from countries where the virus exists to be officially tested and certified free of the disease.
* Require all tomato and pepper fruit imported from Mexico, Israel, and the Netherlands to be inspected at the point of origin to ensure it is free of disease symptoms.
* Require Canada to inspect all tomato and pepper fruit prior to export to the United States to ensure it is free of disease symptoms.

In addition, CBP will:

* Increase inspections at U.S. ports of entry to ensure imported tomato and pepper fruit entering from Mexico, Canada, Israel, and the Netherlands does not show any signs of disease upon arrival.

**“Working closely with our partners at the USDA, our CBP agriculture specialists serve tirelessly to protect our nation’s agriculture industries against the accidental or deliberate introduction of plant and animal diseases such as the tomato brown rugose fruit virus.” said CBP’s Agriculture Programs and Trade Liaison director Kevin Harringer**.

**“Diseases like this, as well as other invasive species could devastate our nation’s economy, and threaten the health and safety of our citizens.”**

During a typical day last year, CBP agriculture specialists across the nation seized 4,552 prohibited plant, meat, animal byproduct, and soil, and intercepted 319 insect pests at U.S. ports of entry. For further information on bringing agricultural products to the United States visit our CBP site [here](https://www.cbp.gov/travel/clearing-cbp/bringing-agricultural-products-united-states).

A copy of the Federal Order is posted at [https://www.aphis.usda.gov/import\_export/plants/plant\_imports/federal\_order/downloads/2019/DA-2019-28.pdf](https://lnks.gd/l/eyJhbGciOiJIUzI1NiJ9..B1EZouWU-8JBP_O0fkm2J6cBc5p79CQOmhUdnw38lzY/br/71461239664-l)

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*U.S. Customs and Border Protection is the unified border agency within the Department of Homeland Security charged with the management, control and protection of our nation's borders at and between official ports of entry. CBP is charged with keeping terrorists and terrorist weapons out of the country while enforcing hundreds of U.S. laws.*