

Mr. Osama El-Lissy
Opportunities in Phytosanitary Irradiation for Fresh Produce
Workshop
March 26, 2015

Good Morning.

I'm excited to be able to join you for at least a brief time at this important workshop.

As the Deputy Administrator for Plant Protection and Quarantine at USDA, I am reminded daily of the importance of exports – not only to the individual growers whose livelihoods rely on the sale of the commodities they grow – but also to the U.S. economy and our way of life.

Agriculture is our country's largest industry and employment sector, adding more than \$330 billion to the economy and providing more than 1 million jobs here in the United States.

Last year was a banner year for U.S. agricultural exports. In 2014, the value of U.S. agricultural trade exceeded \$250 billion, with U.S. agricultural exports reaching a record high of \$149.5 billion.

Because agriculture continues to be a bright spot in the U.S. economy, President Obama has mandated the U.S. government to do all it can to continue to support agricultural exports.

In PPQ, we take this task very seriously.

Our mission is built on two pillars:

1. Safeguarding American agriculture against the introduction, spread and establishment of economically and environmentally significant pests and disease, and
2. Facilitating the safe trade of agricultural commodities without artificially moving pests through commerce.

The United States is fortunate to already produce some of the highest quality produce in the world. So, our focus is to reduce the plant health risks that come with global trade, international travel, and agricultural smuggling.

We accomplish this through risk assessment and analysis, policy development, permitting, inspections, pest identification and mitigation, pest detection and emergency response.

We also help to create a fair and predictable trade system for U.S. agricultural products by promoting the use of science-based international and regional trade standards, eliminating unfair or unjustified trade barriers, and certifying the health of U.S. exports.

In our endeavors, we work closely with other government agencies, including USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service and the Office of the U.S. Trade Representative to maintain a coordinated and strategic approach to resolving plant health trade barriers and other trade challenges facing U.S. agriculture.

As we look to the future of U.S. agricultural exports, we see increasing opportunities for our products in foreign markets.

For example, economic models suggest that there is significant potential for fresh fruit market expansion and growth between the United States and Pacific Rim countries should the Trans-Pacific Partnership agreement be finalized.

But with most opportunities come challenges.

Increasingly, countries are becoming more sophisticated in their approach to phytosanitary issues.

On the one hand, this is great. It means a more fair, predictable, and safe trade system. On the other, it means that we may face more restrictions or requirements from importing countries.

Last fall, we held an internal, 2-day export strategy meeting to consider how we, PPQ, might improve or enhance our support of U.S. exports to make sure we are doing all we can to help our producers and exporters capitalize on expanding global market opportunities.

Coming out of that meeting, we agreed that we need to look at how we can accelerate the development, availability, and adoption of alternative treatment technologies as well as improve the application of existing treatment options, like irradiation.

Forums like this one are critical to our country's long-term success in the global marketplace.

I commend Chapman University for their research to understand the impact of irradiation on fruit quality, shelf life, and consumer preference.

And I thank everyone who is speaking and who is participating in the workshop yesterday and today for your innovation and forward thinking as we work together to make sure we have the necessary tools to meet phytosanitary challenges and secure access to global markets for our nation's producers.

Thank you!