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GENERAL ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CCB:

U.S. Department of Agriculture Publishes Proposed Rule to Standardize Phytosanitary Treatment Regulations

- On June 30, the U.S. Department of Agriculture's (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) [published](#) a proposed rule in the *Federal Register* detailing its plan to standardize various phytosanitary treatment regulations.
- The proposal includes an amendment to establish generic criteria that would allow for the approval of new cold treatment facilities in the Southern and Western States of the U.S. The change is designed to streamline the current arrangement by eliminating the need for specific rulemaking in each approval case.
- The proposed rule also contains the following amendments: 1) the addition of requirements regarding the creation of compliance agreements for all entities operating fumigation facilities; 2) the expansion of cutting and inspection requirements to include commodities that have been treated for a wider variety of pests of concern; and 3) the harmonization of language concerning State compliance with the parameters of cold treatment regulations.
- Generally, the amendments are intended to codify and enforce existing procedures as well as maintain or provide a greater degree of phytosanitary protection against the introduction of pests of concern into the U.S.
- The deadline for comments on the proposed rule is August 29, 2016.

European Commission Extends Glyphosate License

- Ahead of a June 30 marketing approval expiration date for the active substance glyphosate—a key ingredient in many commonly used pesticide products—the European Commission decided to temporarily [extend](#) authorization of its use for up to 18 months.
- The temporary approval period will last until 6 months from the date of receipt of the opinion of the European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) but no later than December 31, 2017. The report by ECHA's Risk Assessment Committee is expected to clarify the potential safety risks related to glyphosate use. Additional information on the glyphosate approval process in the European Union (EU) is available [here](#).
- The Commission decision occurred after EU member states were repeatedly unable to reach a qualified majority decision regarding the authorization of glyphosate use. Despite an [assessment](#) in 2015 by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) which determined it is unlikely the substance is a carcinogenic threat to humans, conflicting opinions by other organizations have contributed to a dispute regarding the re-authorization of glyphosate.

Container Weight Verification Requirement Enters into Force

- An amendment to the International Maritime Organization's (IMO) International Convention for the Safety of Life at Sea (SOLAS) which requires shippers to provide the verified gross mass (VGM) of packed shipping containers prior to export entered into force on July 1, 2016.

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**A Report for
the California
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Container Weight Verification Requirement Enters into Force

- In an effort to establish a common approach to the new requirements, the Ocean Carrier Equipment Management Association (OCEMA), a U.S.-based association consisting of 19 major ocean carriers, [published](#) best practice guidelines to ensure compliance. The guidelines promote the use of a “Terminal Weighing Approach” which relies on the utilization of existing terminal weighing equipment to provide VGM information. In a [press release](#), the U.S. Coast Guard confirmed that this arrangement would be compliant with the VGM requirement.
- Although industry stakeholders are still working out the details of implementation, a number of major U.S. ports—including six major East and Gulf Coast ports—have already agreed to use this approach.

Fourteenth Round of Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership Negotiations Scheduled for July 11-15 in Brussels

- The fourteenth round of negotiations for the U.S.-European Union (EU) Transatlantic Trade and Investment Partnership (TTIP) will take place from July 11-15 in Brussels, Belgium, according to a recent European Commission [press release](#).
- In conjunction with the negotiations, two stakeholder events will occur on July 13. The registration deadline for participating in these events is July 6. Additional details are available [here](#).
- On June 28, EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström met with U.S. Trade Representative (USTR) Michael Froman and USTR Chief Agricultural Negotiator Darci Vetter in Washington, D.C. to discuss the status of TTIP negotiations and prepare for the fourteenth round.
- While in Washington, D.C., Commissioner Malmström addressed some of the main concerns surrounding the TTIP negotiations in a [speech](#) to the Atlantic Council. Notably, Commissioner Malmström announced: 1) TTIP negotiations will continue to move forward despite the United Kingdom’s (U.K.) decision to leave the EU; and 2) the EU is prepared to make the political choices needed to close the deal by the end of the year. Although significant issues remain—such as disagreements about rules for financial services, procurement, and geographical indications—representatives from both sides continue to reaffirm their goal of concluding TTIP negotiations in 2016.

European Commission Designates European Union-Canada Free Trade Agreement as Mixed Agreement

- On July 5, the European Commission [announced](#) its proposal to consider the European Union-Canada Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement (CETA) as a mixed agreement.
- This designation means that in addition to approval by the European Council and Parliament, ratification by the national parliaments of each European Union (EU) member state will also be required for the agreement to enter into force. That said, provisional application of CETA will be possible following a decision by the European Council. This decision is expected to occur shortly after CETA is signed during the EU-Canada Summit in October. Full entry into force will be subject to the conclusion of national ratification procedures in each of the EU member states.
- Due to an ongoing dispute between the EU and Canada regarding visa requirements for foreign travelers from Romania and Bulgaria, the national parliaments of the two countries may oppose CETA pending changes to Canada’s visa rules for their citizens. In an effort to work toward resolution of this issue before national parliaments begin formal consideration of the agreement, the European Commission has called on member states to determine their position on the visa dispute by July 12, 2016 (*BCI Monitor* 4-12-16).

European Union, Russia Extend Sanctions to Restrict Bilateral Relationship

- On July 1, the European Council [extended](#) European Union (EU) sanctions against Russia until January 31, 2017. The sanctions—which target Russia’s defense, banking, and energy sectors—were originally imposed in July 2014 in response to Russia’s annexation of Crimea and the ongoing crisis in Ukraine. The European Council cited the status of the Minsk agreements between Russia and Ukraine, which were designed to bring a peaceful end to the conflict but have not been fully implemented, as justification for prolonging the sanctions. Additional details regarding EU sanctions against Russia are available [here](#).
- Russia’s counter-sanctions against the EU, U.S., and other countries have also been extended. On June 29 Russian President Vladimir Putin signed a decree extending the country’s ban on various agricultural products from the EU, U.S., and other countries until December 31, 2017.
- The sanctions imposed by each side have had a significant impact on the economies of Russia and the EU, in particular. The European Council is expected to discuss the sanctions, as well as the broader EU-Russia relationship, during a meeting this fall.