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GENERAL ISSUES OF INTEREST TO THE CCB:

APHIS Publishes Dates for Upcoming Plant Bilateral Meetings

- The U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) updated information on its Plant Health Technical Bilateral Meetings [webpage](#), including the following:
- The date for the U.S. – Canada Plant Health Bilateral Meeting has been tentatively scheduled for February 25, 2026: (virtual). Contact Fan Wang-Cahill for details, ppq.pim.requestsmanagement@usda.gov.
- The date for the U.S. – Mexico Plant Health Bilateral Meeting has been tentatively scheduled for February 26, 2026: (virtual). Contact Amanda Elkhateeb for details, ppq.pim.requestsmanagement@usda.gov.
- The date for the U.S. – Vietnam Plant Health Bilateral Meeting has been scheduled for the week of March 16, 2026: (in-person, Vietnam). Contact Lisa Kohl for details, ppq.pim.requestsmanagement@usda.gov.
- The date for the U.S. – Thailand Plant Health Bilateral Meeting has been scheduled for the week of March 16, 2026: (in-person, Thailand). Contact Sajedul Islam for details, ppq.pim.requestsmanagement@usda.gov.
- The date for the U.S. – Brazil Plant Health Bilateral Meeting has been tentatively scheduled for March 24 or 25, 2026: (virtual). Contact Eric Longen for details, ppq.pim.requestsmanagement@usda.gov.
- The date for the U.S. – South Korea Plant Health Bilateral Meeting has been scheduled for the week of April 27, 2026: (in-person; Visalia, California). Contact Lisa Kohl for details, ppq.pim.requestsmanagement@usda.gov.

China Updated Implementation Rules for Organic Product Certification Enter into Force

- On January 1, 2026, China's revised [Implementation Rules for Organic Product Certification](#) (in Chinese) will enter into force (*BCI Monitor* 9-30-25).
- As reported previously, the rules stipulate the basic requirements for organic product certification procedures and management. Any imported products seeking to be labeled as organic must meet the requirements of these rules.
- Of note, there is no substantive change to the rules' scope. Minor revisions include adding a production-site environmental conformity check, tightening requirements for testing, adding mandatory in-market sampling and stricter post-certification surveillance, and strengthening control and traceability.

**A REPORT FOR
THE CALIFORNIA
CHERRY BOARD**

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EU to Clarify Organic Import Rules, Extend Third-Country Recognition

- On December 22, the European Union (EU) [notified the WTO](#) of a European Commission [proposal](#) (and [accompanying document](#)) for a Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council amending *Regulation (EU) 2018/848* regarding certain production, labelling, and certification rules and rules on trade with third countries.
- The proposal aims to protect the EU organic label, clarify how imported organic products may be marketed, and avoid trade disruptions by extending third-country equivalence recognition to 2036. It also updates some organic production requirements.
- Comments can be sent to the U.S. TBT Enquiry Point at usatbtep@nist.gov. The WTO comment deadline is March 22, 2026.

EFSA Seeks Data on Single-Use Plastic Alternatives for Unprocessed Fresh Produce

- The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) [launched](#) a public call for data to inform a future scientific opinion supporting EU guidelines on implementing *Regulation (EU) 2025/40*, which phases out single-use plastic (SUP) packaging for prepacked fresh fruit, vegetables, and herbs under 1.5 kg.
- The input will help define possible exemptions to the plastic packaging ban where packaging is needed to prevent water loss, loss of freshness, microbial risks, physical damage, or oxidation.
- EFSA is specifically assessing microbiological impacts, including cross-contamination, survival, and growth of foodborne pathogens and spoilage organisms, comparing SUP packaging, alternative packaging (e.g., wood or cardboard with <5% plastic), and no packaging (bulk).
- Stakeholders are invited to submit data on current packaging practices, reasons for portion packaging, limitations of alternative materials, supply-chain handling practices, and key microbiological risks affecting fresh produce safety and quality. Submissions must be made via an [EU Survey](#) by January 30, 2026, with confidential business information submitted separately through EFSA's system.

India Notifies Draft Amendment to Food Contact Materials Regulation

- On December 19, India [notified the WTO](#) of its Food Safety and Standards Authority (FSSAI) [Draft Food Safety and Standards \(Packaging\) Amendment Regulations, 2025](#) regarding poly- and perfluoroalkyl substances (PFAs) in food contact materials (FCM).
- The amendment bans the use of PFAs in the manufacturing of FCM.
- The proposed dates of adoption and entry into force have yet to be determined.
- Comments can be sent to the U.S. TBT Enquiry Point at usatbtep@nist.gov. The WTO comment deadline is February 17, 2026.

Holiday Delivery Notice

Due to the holidays, your next BCI Monitor will be delivered on January 6, 2026. We wish you a wonderful holiday season and a happy New Year!