

The Virgin Islands Consortium

CBP to begin Inspections for Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus

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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 beginning today, to prevent the introduction of Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus and protect the multi-billion dollar U.S. tomato and pepper production industry, CBP has announced.

The increased inspections come following a Federal Order issued 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 as well as restrictions on tomato and pepper fruit consignments imported from Mexico, Canada, Israel, and the Netherlands.

APHIS is also prohibiting the importation of tomato and pepper fruits from all countries of origin in passenger baggage.

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 imported tomato and pepper seed lots along with other propagative plant materials be tested and/or certified free of the disease.
- Require all tomato and pepper fruit commercial shipments imported from Mexico, Israel, Canada and the Netherlands to be inspected and certified free of disease symptoms.

In addition, CBP will:

- Increase inspections of commercial consignments 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 executive director Kevin Harriger.

“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](#).