

The U.S. is revising the requirements for importing fresh blueberry fruit from Chile, allowing fruit from the Biobio and Nuble regions to be produced under a systems approach as an alternative to using methyl bromide fumigation.

The U.S. Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) said the much-anticipated move, which comes just before the start of the Chilean blueberry season, is effective immediately.

The systems approach combines safeguarding measures across the production continuum by growers, packers, and shippers to minimize the risk of introducing plant pests into the United States.

APHIS says that the entry of the European grapevine moth (*Lobesia botrana*, EGVM) into the U.S. can be avoided by following a work plan, which includes requirements that can be viewed [here](#).

EGVM is known to exist in the southern Biobio and Nuble regions but APHIS says that pest prevalence is low.

APHIS solicited comments on the proposed rule change for Chilean blueberry imports for 60 days ending June 1, 2020.

"We received 53 comments by that date. They were from growers, importers, buyers, ports, associations, and representatives of a foreign government. All but one of those comments were in favor of the proposal with no further questions," it said.

Jorge Valenzuela Trebilcock, the president of the Federation of Fruit Producers of Chile, Fedefruta, said: "The Federation is convinced that the Ñuble Region will become the country's main fruit and vegetable hub within a few years. The fact that the United States finally approved the Systems Approach for blueberries from this area will strengthen and speed up this process," stated Valenzuela.

APHIS in December 2013 implemented the methyl bromide fumigation requirement after numerous pest detections. Blueberry producers have long complained that the methyl bromide fumigation requirements created unnecessary additional costs and could affect fruit quality.