

U.S. authorities have approved the importation of five types of fresh pepper fruit from Colombia into the continental United States.

The commodities are *Capsicum annum* (Pepper, Bell); *C. baccatum* (Pepper, Locoto); *C. chinense* (Pepper, Habanero); *C. frutescens* (Pepper, Tabasco); and *C. pubescens* (Pepper, Manzano), the USDA's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) said.

These commodities will be imported using a systems approach that includes safeguarding measures across the production continuum that growers, packers, and shippers put in place to minimize the risk of introducing plant pests into the U.S., APHIS said.

The organization published a pest risk analysis evaluating the risks associated with importing fresh pepper fruit from Colombia into the continental United States in May 2019.

Based on the pest risk assessment, APHIS experts determined that fresh pepper fruit from Colombia can be safely imported into the U.S. using the designated phytosanitary measures outlined in the systems approach.

Protective measures to mitigate risk during importation require that places, where the pepper fruit is grown (inside pest exclusionary structures), must be registered with Colombia's national plant protection organization.

In addition, production locations must use approved pest trapping measures and those locations must be monitored, and places of production must be inspected prior to harvesting; peppers must be packed within 24 hours of harvest using insect-proof materials.

Furthermore, imports must be accompanied by a phytosanitary certificate stating that the consignment was inspected and found free of quarantine pests.

Colombia will also have to enter into an operational work plan with APHIS that spells out the daily procedures its national plant protection organization and growers will take to implement the protective measures identified.

Rodolfo Zea Navarro, Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, said that pepper exports have been growing over the last five years, and in 2020 amounted to US\$748,239.

"With this new opportunity, we hope to start working hand in hand with the private sector, in order to allow us to identify what they require from the national government and thus take advantage, in the short term, of this market. We want to position Colombian peppers in the U.S. market, as we have done with avocados," said Zea.

