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ISPM 15 Modifications Causing End Users to Explore Alternatives

The ISPM 15 was developed by the international community to achieve two main goals:

- Stop the introduction of non-indigenous wood-related invasive species
- Harmonize the import requirements for wood packaging to facilitate the efficient movement of goods around the world

To change the standard international technical panels need scientific evidence, but signatory countries have an option to make any modification they want on imports into their territory. For example, the United States has a bilateral agreement with Canada that allows for no treatment requirements, but demands certification that pallets coming into the United States are manufactured with native lumber. If they are not made from U.S. or Canadian lumber they must be treated and marked consistent with ISPM 15.

Thus, the International Plant Protection Convention under which the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations developed the ISPM 15 requirements left the various participating nations an avenue in which to customize and augment the standard – and they are using it without adhering to the IPPC condition of providing technical justification. In effect there is no country harmonization.

Here are some of the country variations imposed by IPPC-participating nations:

Bark Free Requirements

Australia and New Zealand

Debarked Requirements

Bolivia, Chile, European Union (effective January 1, 2009 pending review September 2007), and Turkey

Paper Documentation

Australia: Shippers must provide packing declarations for ISPM 15-compliant WPM in less than container load (LCL), full container load (FCL) and combined LCL/FCL. Other treatments are also accepted and should come with proper certification.

China: Although not a requirement, it is highly recommended to make a declaration preferably in Chinese language on the shipping invoice that "WPM are ISPM 15-compliant," "WPM are exempt from ISPM 15" or "There is no WPM in this shipment."



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India: A phytosanitary certificate is required for treated WPM that is not ISPM 15-compliant.

The ISPM 15 harmonized standard, which is paperless and does not require debarked or bark-free wood packaging material, has demonstrated through port monitoring that it is effective. Since implementation interception of pests has been less than one-tenth of one percent. The international standard works – without packing declarations, without debarking and without bark-free demands! If there are variations to the standard, the harmonization is removed and the work of the IPPC is obliterated.

What this means to you: End users, particularly those who ship to a number of countries, want the certainty of knowing their goods will move quickly through the ports unimpeded by embargoes imposed by wood packaging materials. They do not want to sort their warehouses by destination countries. End users want what they thought they were getting with the ISPM 15 – a harmonized standard for transport platforms. As a result of the confusion caused by the alterations in the standard and frustration caused by increasing embargoes end users are exploring the use of alternative materials exempt from ISPM 15 rules.

What this means to the industry: The association is working with the U.S. Department of Commerce, Office of the U.S. Trade Representative and the USDA to support the ISPM 15 harmonized international standard as originally written unless reliable technical justification is provided. In the event of compelling evidence to change the ISPM 15, all nations should adapt to the new standard and maintain a harmonized global standard so the intent of the ISPM 15 is upheld and global commerce remains unconstrained by arbitrary, assorted rules.

The industry needs to be aware of the breakdown of the harmonization of the standard. NWPCA will continue to work with the technical group and the international community to encourage use of the harmonized ISPM 15 standard.

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