

## Agriculture Specialists Intercept Record Number of Pests on Fruit Shipments

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Philadelphia, Pennsylvania - Customs and Border Protection agriculture specialists reported a one-day record of 21 pest interceptions on bananas, pineapples and other fruits originating in Central America and delivered aboard ships to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, Wilmington, Delaware, and Camden, New Jersey, marine terminals on June 18.

The inspections by CBP agriculture specialists resulted in the fumigation or re-export of 150,000 cases of fruit from various Central American countries.

Some of the senior CBP agriculture specialists have been inspecting fruits, vegetables, cocoa and an assortment of other perishable commodities arriving to U.S. ports by merchant ships for 30 years from countries across the world. According to these agriculture specialists, the 21 pests identified represent the largest one-day total ever seen in the maritime perishable cargo pathway and affirms CBP's efforts in the challenge to protect American agriculture.

"Some of the pests found, like mites, weed seeds, beetles and ants, are not easy to find and are significant interceptions," said Allan Martocci, CBP area port director for Philadelphia. "Finding the pests takes a sincere effort and experience to be successful. I commend our agriculture specialists for their hard work and passion for their job."

CBP agriculture specialists have extensive training and experience in the biological sciences and agricultural inspection. Their mission of preventing the introduction of harmful pests into the United States also provides CBP with the expertise to recognize and prevent the entry of organisms that could be used for biological warfare or terrorism.

"Protecting our agriculture and economic interests from harmful pests and diseases remains a priority mission for us, and it requires as much serious focus as does intercepting terrorists or terrorist weapons, illegal narcotics, and counterfeit commercial goods, and enforcing trade and immigration laws," said Martocci.

The intercepted pests were preserved and sent to the U.S. Department of Agriculture for further identification.

CBP agriculture specialists in the Area Port of Philadelphia intercept and safeguard against hundreds of harmful, non-indigenous insect pests every year that arrive via air or sea shipments.