



E-cert FACT SHEET – Electronic Certification

What is E-cert?

E-cert is an electronic system designed to generate export certificates for traded food and agricultural commodities. Certificates provide assurances to importing countries concerning food safety and animal and plant health.

What does E-cert do?

The system generates an electronic message in place of the current paper certificate issued for the clearance of product.

What Information does it contain?

The same information currently provided on agreed export paper certificates. This information is negotiated on a country by country basis.

Beginnings

Australia and New Zealand have collaborated to develop and implement a web-based system for electronic certification, known as E-cert. This partnership was formed following the Food Safety Quadrilaterals in Hawaii in 2002 where Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the USA made commitments to trial E-cert for meat shipments during 2003.

What is Driving Paperless Trade?

Cross border security is a fore-front issue heightened by the escalated threat of bio-terrorism. The World Customs Organisation (WCO) has recognised the benefit of prior notice of cargo movement in order to apply risk assessment protocols to ensure public safety.

IT requirements

You will need a PC with an internet connection with access to the World Wide Web, with a minimum browser requirement of Netscape 4.7 or Internet explorer 4.

The data may be viewed on-screen or downloaded in extensible mark-up language (XML) format for integration into import management systems.

Ratification processes to recognise E-cert/XML as the international standard for SPS messages and associated business processes are underway in United Nations (UN) and CODEX (International food standards).

When will the E-cert System be available?

The system is now available to interested trading partners to trial.

What Commodities does it cover?

Edible Meat, Dairy, Seafood, Grains and Horticulture

Is it Secure?

E-cert provides an unprecedented level of certificate security. The data is retained on a secure website and is protected by security firewalls, full audit trails are generated, and the transmission of the data is protected by encryption using HTTPS or SFTP secure transmission protocols.

What are the benefits?

- E-cert will strengthen the security of traded food and agricultural products. Certification data will be securely transferred direct from Government to Government reducing the opportunity for fraudulent activity.
- E-cert will improve resourcing at ports of entry by providing prior notice of imports. The electronic certificate will be available on the internet within minutes of authentication by the issuing government.
- Real time SPS data sharing will enable borders to be able to verify container contents prior to arrival in compliance with emerging World Customs Organisation pre-shipment notification requirements.
- Being internet-based it is an easy to access and affordable system to verify electronic certificates on-screen.
- Data is easily downloaded and integrated into existing import management systems.

International Support

APEC Pathfinder Initiative endorsed by APEC Leaders Meeting in Los Cabos in 2002, Food Safety Quadrilaterals (Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States of America), Codex Committee of Food Inspection and Certification Systems.

Supporters

As an APEC Pathfinder E-cert has been profiled at a number of forums including the Paperless Trading Symposium, e-Commerce Steering Committee, Agricultural Technical Cooperation Working Group, counter Bio Terrorism Action Plan, meetings with government officials and in line with E-cert implementation plans, Australia will demonstrate at Codex Committee on Food Inspection and Certification Systems.

Next Steps

- The following documents have been created to assist participants in evaluating their readiness for E-cert:
 - Self Assessment Guide
 - APEC E-cert Implementation Plan
- Australia and New Zealand will continue awareness raising and regional capability-building activities and provide support to early adopters.
- To participate in this initiative please contact ecertadministrator@daff.gov.au. Following this we will work with you to tailor an implementation plan to best suit your current practices and IT infrastructure.

AQIS Contacts:

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