



SEAFOOD INSPECTION PROGRAM
U.S. DEPARTMENT OF COMMERCE
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USA



December 24, 2009

Memorandum For: All Exporters of Fish and Fishery Products to the Russian Federation

From: Timothy Hansen 
Director, Seafood Inspection Program NOAA Fisheries

Subject: Status of Memorandum of Understanding with the Russian Federation

The Seafood Inspection Program (SIP) has been negotiating an inspection agreement with the Veterinary Phytosanitary Service (V.P.S.S.) of the Russian Federation. This agreement is necessary because of new legislation and regulations implemented by Russia that requires that all importing countries have a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with V.P.S.S. This requirement applies to all food products imported to the Russian Federation. The new regulations also require that the exporting country develop and publish a list of approved establishments. The main criterion for U.S. shippers appearing on this list is compliance with the food safety laws and regulations of the United States.

V.P.S.S. has established a deadline of December 31, 2009 for submission of the approved shippers list of approved establishments and signing of the MOU. The approved shippers list has been submitted to V.P.S.S. that contains 165 processing establishments that ship to the Russian Federation. However, V.P.S.S. is not processing any applications for import licenses until the MOU is signed by the U.S. Government. Currently there are only seven firms appearing on the list that participated in the audit conducted by V.P.S.S. veterinarians in August of 2009. Since processing of these applications will likely take some time it is probable that there may be some disruption in trade in the short term. SIP believes that the shippers list will be completed within 45 days after signing of the MOU.

The MOU negotiation was completed in early November via teleconference. In early December the Russian Federation Government sent a signed copy of the MOU to SIP. The document is currently in the State Department for clearance before signature by the Acting Assistant Administrator for Fisheries. NOAA Fisheries is making every attempt to get the clearance in time before the December 31, 2009 deadline. We have also asked V.P.S.S. for another abeyance to the deadline given that NOAA Fisheries has worked diligently to finish these tasks.

We will continue to communicate any changes that occur that may affect exportation to the Russian Federation on our website at: <http://www.seafood.nmfs.noaa.gov>.