



Sea container cleanliness

Invasive pests travel around the globe in and on the agricultural and forestry products we trade. They also catch a ride on and in the millions of rail wagons, trailers and sea cargo containers that crisscross our oceans and continents on trains, trucks and ships. Once introduced, pests are very difficult and expensive to control or eradicate. They can severely damage agricultural production, affect property values, and reduce water availability and quality. The total cost of lost revenue and clean-up can run into billions of dollars.

The Sea Container Initiative

The IPPC have adopted CPM Recommendation (R-06) on *Sea containers*¹, the purpose of which is to protect agriculture, forestry and natural resources against pests. This Recommendation helps promote sea container cleanliness and it complements the IMO/ILO/UNECE Code of Practice for Packing of Cargo Transport Units (CTU Code)². Everyone involved in moving containers has an opportunity to protect our crops and forests by ensuring that containers and their cargo are free from unwanted pests such as plants, insects, snails and soil. This guidance could assist countries in developing national or regional guidance and harmful invasive pests can be regulated as quarantine pests. Please consult the International Phytosanitary Portal (IPP) page on Sea Containers, at the link below, for more information on this initiative³.

1 <https://www.ippc.int/en/publications/84233/>

2 <http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/guidelinespackingctus/intro.html>

3 <https://www.ippc.int/en/core-activities/capacity-development/sea-containers>



Container ship alongside in Port Tanjung Pelepas. ©Michael Downes

Impact of pests on international trade

Pests threaten crops and forests. They also have a very real impact on international trade. When a contaminated container is found at a port or other border crossing, the cargo owner, importer, or shipper may experience:

- delayed cargo release, due to inspection of the container
- demurrage charges due to cargo holds, and
- unexpected costs associated with having the container quarantined, moved, sealed and treated, cleaned, or re-exported back to origin at the cargo owner's expense

By taking reasonable steps to keep containers and their cargo clean, the spread of pests through commerce can be prevented and clean containers are likely to move through ports quicker, easier and cheaper. As a result, you may experience:

- reduced port-of-entry inspections to verify that the container is clean
- greater certainty that containerized cargo release will be as expected, and
- fewer unexpected expenses, such as demurrage charges due to cargo holds or costs associated with having your container quarantined, sealed and treated, cleaned, or re-exported back to origin.

Recommended self-inspection practices for industry

The risk for pests to contaminate containers and cargo is greatest at the packing location. Shippers or packers, acting on behalf of shippers, can put some simple measures in place to minimize pest contamination during packing. Others in the supply chain should also put measures in place to reduce the risk of pest contamination while the container is in their control. These measures should be in accordance with individual roles and responsibilities in the supply chain and should take into consideration all safety and operational constraints.

Measures may include:

- Visually inspecting the outside and inside of the sea containers for contaminants such as plants, seeds, insects, egg masses, snails, and soil.
- Where required, sweep, vacuum, or wash containers before packing to remove potential contaminants. Be aware that environmental factors, such as heavy rains, may increase the likelihood of certain types of contamination.
- Ensure cargo packed into the sea container is clean and free of visible contaminants.
- Clear and clean the cargo staging and packing area to ensure that it is free from contaminants. Containers placed on grassy areas may be more vulnerable to contamination by insects and snails.
- Do not keep containers under bright lights, which will attract insects to the cargo staging area and increase the likelihood of contamination. If containers must be kept under bright lights, check them regularly for signs of insects and egg masses and clean containers as needed to remove these contaminants.
- Where appropriate, use baits, traps, or barriers to keep pests out of the cargo staging and packing area. For example, you can use a salt barrier to prevent snail infestations.
- Where applicable, sweep, vacuum, or wash containers to remove contaminants, such as soil or animal droppings.

For more information

To view industry standards for packing and cleaning containers, visit the following links:

- Joint Industry Guidelines for Cleaning of Containers¹
- IMO/ILO/UNECE Code of Practice for Packing Cargo Transport Units (CTU Code)²

To learn about various National Plant Protection Organizations sea container initiatives around the world please visit the IPPC Sea containers page on the IPPC.

1 <http://www.worldshipping.org/industry-issues/safety/joint-industry-guidelines-for-cleaning-of-containers>

2 <http://www.unece.org/trans/wp24/guidelinespackingctus/intro.html>



Yantian Port, China. ©Michael Downes

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MORE INFORMATION

<https://www.ippc.int>