



AMERICAN SPICE TRADE ASSOCIATION, INC.

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October 14, 2025

Kyle Diamantas
Deputy Commissioner of Human Foods
U.S. Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Ave
Silver Spring, MD 20903-1058

Re: Request for Additional Time for Implementation of Import Alert 99-52 (New
Import Certification Requirements for Spices from Certain Regions of
Indonesia)

Dear Deputy Commissioner Diamantas,

On behalf of the American Spice Trade Association (ASTA), I would like to extend our sincere appreciation for the opportunity to meet with you and your team on September 18 to introduce our Association. We value your openness to hearing from stakeholders like us. This letter addresses the new import certification requirements for spices from certain regions of Indonesia, expresses our continued commitment to partnering with FDA on this issue, and requests that the agency extend the October 31 effective date for Import Alert 99-52.

We have immensely appreciated the collaborative approach that FDA has taken on its ongoing investigation concerning potential Cesium-137 (Cs-137) contamination, especially in light of the government shutdown. Thank you to your team for sharing critical timely information with ASTA and our members about the investigation and new import certification requirements.

ASTA appreciates the thoughtful consideration by FDA in the use of the import certification requirement (via Import Alert 99-52), which balances the public health concerns related to this incident, while ultimately maintaining a path to secure the flow of spices from Indonesia into the U.S. We understand that this approach was taken due to a desire to



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minimize disruption to sourcing and supply chains. Once implemented, we believe that Import Alert 99-52 has the potential to do that effectively.

We see ourselves as a partner with FDA in protecting the safety and integrity of spices offered for sale in the U.S. We are committed to continuing to share information about Indonesian spice supply chains with the agency, assisting with educating exporters and importers about the new requirements, reinforcing the importance of compliance, and encouraging the Indonesian government to act quickly and collaboratively with FDA to implement an import certificate process.

However, while we are dedicated to working with FDA to support the implementation of Import Alert 99-52, we are deeply concerned about the achievability of the implementation date, October 31, 2025. It is impossible for many shipments arriving in the U.S. on or after October 31 to have these import certificates because the Import Alert was not in place when they left Indonesia. Shipping times of spices from Indonesia to the U.S. usually range from approximately four to six weeks and often longer due to logistical challenges and delays. Numerous factors impact shipping times, including port of departure, quantity of product in a given shipment (as lower quantities may require consolidation), shipping routes, seasonality, weather, and port congestion, etc. Consequently, many shipments which were already en route prior to the announcement date of October 3 are scheduled to arrive after October 31.

We understand shipments of spices from the Island of Java and Lampung Province arriving on or after October 31 without an import certificate will not be permitted entry into the U.S. nor will there be a process for these shipments to obtain entry without certificates. However, the Indonesian government has not yet stood up a program to issue import certificates. Thus, the requirement imposed on spices arriving after October 31 is an impossibility to achieve. Unfortunately, exporters of shipments that left prior to the FDA announcement on October 3 had no way of knowing that this new requirement would be in place at the time that the product left Indonesia. Current exports also are in limbo, since there is not yet a process established to obtain import certificates.

Even once the Indonesian government establishes an import certification program, there are going to be many practical challenges for exporters to overcome. There will be considerable demand for the import certificates from both our industry and the shrimp



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industry, and we anticipate that it will take time for the program to have adequate capacity to provide certificates in a timely manner. Our members also do not yet know what will be required substantively to obtain a certificate and whether this could add additional delays to the issuance process.

In light of these practical challenges, we respectfully request that the FDA extend the implementation date for Import Alert 99-52 beyond October 31, 2025. At a minimum, it is imperative for FDA to establish a grace period or other mechanism to facilitate the influx of shipments that left Indonesia before the announcement of this new requirement. Additional time would minimize supply chain disruption, reduce undue burdens on exporters, and allow the new process to be properly established and implemented.

We stand ready to work collaboratively with FDA, offer our support in disseminating information, educating industry participants, and facilitating compliance efforts. We would be happy to provide any additional information that may be helpful in facilitating a practical resolution to the implementation timeline.

Thank you for your leadership and your attention and consideration to this important issue.

Warm regards,

Laura Shumow
Executive Director
American Spice Trade Association

CC: Don Prater, Principal Deputy Director for Human Foods, FDA

Maria Knirk, Acting Director, Office of Enforcement, Office of Compliance
and Enforcement, Human Foods Program, FDA