WORLD TRADE

ORGANIZATION

Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures   Original: English

OPTICAL WATERMARK ON EXPORT CERTIFICATES

Communication by Singapore

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The following communication, dated 23 June 2008, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of <u>Singapore</u>.

1.   Singapore is providing the following information for the attention of the Competent Authorities for animal health, plant health and food safety of other Members.

2.   The Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) has developed an optical watermark system, to be applied to the following export certificates issued by the AVA:

(a)   export health certificates for ornamental fish and live food fish;
(b)   food export certificates for various food products;
(c)   free sale certificates for various food products and animal feed;
(d)   veterinary certificates for animals and animal products; and
(e)   certificate of freedom from disease.

3.   In principle, the certificates issued with the optical watermark will look essentially similar to the certificates which you had been receiving. However, there are the following physical security features which will distinguish the certificates with the optical watermark from those without the watermark:

(a)   The optical watermark will consist of two features, a visible watermark and an invisible watermark. The visible watermark displays the logo of AVA, while the invisible watermark has the word "COPY". Both the visible and invisible watermark will be embedded into the document and printed together with the document on a laser print.

(b)   When photocopied, the visible watermark (i.e. logo of AVA) will deteriorate, while the invisible watermark will appear. To verify that a document is a photocopied version of the original document, one only has to check that either the visible watermark is not clearly visible or the invisible watermark is clearly seen. No special decoding equipment is required for this verification process of the watermark as the watermark is visible to the naked eye.

(c)   In addition, there is a micro printing, found under the words "Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore", at the top right hand side of the certificate. The micro printing appears to be a very fine line on the certificate and this can only be viewed under magnifying glass. The microprint comprises a repeating string of the certificate

number. It will appear distorted when photocopied to detect any unauthorised reproduction of the document. Sample copies of the certificates with and without the watermark may be obtained from the Singapore SPS Enquiry Point.

(d)   There is also a series of processes to embed the certificate information into a 2D Barcode before being transferred into the actual printout. This 2D Barcode is printed on the bottom right hand corner of the certificate. It can be easily verified using a normal flatbed scanner or a 2D barcode scanner. You just have to scan in the 2D Barcode and upload the scanned image for verification via the AVA's website at the following URL: https://www.psi.gov.sg/NASApp/tmf/TMFServlet?app=AVAECLIPS&isNew=true&Reload=true&vs_StateMachine=Login. Our Online Certificate Verification System (OCVS) will perform image processing on the image uploaded and decode the 2D Barcode. The content of the document will be presented for you to verify the integrity of the document.

(e)   The authorized signature on certificates bearing the optical watermark will be electronically applied, and not signed by hand. There will be no signature on the certificate attachments.

(f)   As an added feature, the AVA will also allow enquiry by the authorities of the importing countries, through our OCVS. A user ID and password will be issued on request by the authority of the importing country. This will give access to the OCVS that will allow you to view the certificate details and verify that the certificate presented matches the certificate issued by the AVA. This is done by entering the certificate number of the certificate that you wish to verify through the certificate verification website. This provides an authentication service for all certificates issued by the AVA using the optical watermark. Certificate attachments, however, cannot be viewed on the OCVS. Verification of the certificate attachments may be carried out using the certificate number and date of issue printed at the top right hand corner of the attachment. This certificate number and date of issue should match the accompanying certificate.

4.   Certificates with optical watermark will be issued from 14 July 2008 onwards. However, we wish to advise you that it is likely that from this date onwards, both certificates with optical watermark and those without the watermark may be presented over a period of time. This is due to the validity period of certificates issued prior to 14 July 2008. We hope that your authorities are familiar with AVA's certificates currently in use for these commodities and that the introduction of the optical watermark to these certificates will not cause any disruption to trade.

5.   Should you have any questions or concerns arising from the changes described above, or for requests for user ID and passwords, as mentioned in paragraph 3(f), please do not hesitate to contact the Singapore SPS Enquiry Point.

6.   We look forward to your continued acceptance of export certificates issued by the AVA.

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