

OPTICAL WATERMARK ON EXPORT CERTIFICATES

Submission by Singapore

The following communication, received on 20 August 2009, is being circulated at the request of the Delegation of Singapore.

1. Singapore hereby notifies that the Agri-Food and Veterinary Authority of Singapore (AVA) has developed an optical watermark system, to be applied to phytosanitary certificates, to be issued from 1 September 2009 onwards. It is likely that from this date certificates with optical watermark and the current certificates without the watermark may both be presented over a period of time. This is due to the validity period of certificates issued prior to 1 September 2009. Authorities of importing Members are familiar with AVA's phytosanitary certificates currently in use for plants and plant products, and Singapore hopes that the introduction of the optical watermark to these certificates will not cause any disruption to trade.

2. More information on phytosanitary certificates with the optical watermark system is provided below.

Phytosanitary Certificates with Optical Watermark System

3. Certificates with the optical watermark will have the following physical security features that will distinguish them from certificates without the watermark issued prior to 1 September 2009:

- (a) The optical watermark will comprise visible and invisible watermarks. The visible watermark displays the AVA logo, while the invisible watermark has the word "COPY". Both the visible and invisible watermarks will be embedded into the document and printed together with the document on a laser print. When photocopied, the visible watermark (i.e. AVA logo) will appear diminished, while the invisible watermark will clearly appear. To verify the authenticity of a certificate, when photocopied, the visible watermark should appear blurred, while the invisible watermark should be clearly seen. No special decoding equipment is required for this verification process of the watermark as the watermark is visible to the naked eye.
- (b) There will be a microprint under the words "Agri-Food & Veterinary Authority of Singapore", at the top right hand of the certificate. The microprint will appear as a very fine line on the certificate, which can only be viewed under a magnifying glass. The microprint comprises a repeating string of the certificate number. It will appear distorted when photocopied to detect any unauthorized reproduction of the document. Sample copies of the certificates with and without the watermark may be obtained from the Singapore SPS Enquiry Point.

- (c) A 2D Barcode with the certificate information embedded into it will be printed on the upper right hand corner of the certificate. Should importing authorities wish to verify the certificate, the 2D Barcode can be scanned, and the scanned image uploaded for verification via the AVA's website. The Online Certificate Verification System (OCVS), newly developed by the AVA, will perform image processing on the image uploaded and decode the 2D Barcode. The content of the document will then be presented, and this can be used to verify the integrity of the document. The URL for this is:
https://www.psi.gov.sg/NASApp/tmf/TMFServlet?app=AVAECLIPS&isNew=true&Reload=true&vs_StateMachine=Login.
- (d) The authorized signature on certificates bearing the optical watermark will be an electronic signature, and not signed by hand. There will be no signature on the certificate attachments.

4. The AVA has also developed an additional avenue for enquiries by authorities of importing Members, wishing to verify the authenticity of the certificates received. The Online Certificate Verification System (OCVS) provides an authentication service for all certificates issued by the AVA using the optical watermark. Should the importing authority wish to use the OCVS, a user ID and password will be issued upon request of the importing authority. These will give access to the OCVS. Upon entering the certificate number into the system, the OCVS will show the certificate details and verify that the certificate presented matches the certificate issued by the AVA. (Note: Certificate attachments cannot be viewed on the OCVS. To verify the attachments, the certificate number and date of issue printed at the top right hand corner of the attachment should match the accompanying certificate.)

5. Should you have any questions, or should you wish to request the user ID and password for the OCVS, please do not hesitate to contact the Singapore SPS Enquiry Point.
