Food and Drug Administration's (FDA) Voluntary Qualified Importer Program (VQIP) Offers Additional Benefits for CTPAT Partners

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The Voluntary Qualified Importer Program (VQIP)) Voluntary Qualified Importer Program (VQIP) | FDA) and the Customs Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (CTPAT) are both voluntary programs that promote supply chain security, though they serve distinct purposes. VQIP, administered by the FDA, is designed to expedite the entry of human and animal food imports into the United States. In contrast, CTPAT, managed by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP), focuses on enhancing overall supply chain security and preventing acts of terrorism. While CTPAT participation is not required for VQIP, importers are encouraged to enroll to access additional CBP benefits, such as reduced inspections and potentially shorter border wait times.

While participation in VQIP is voluntary, it is a fee-based program that offers expedited review and import entry of human and animal foods into the United States for eligible importers. To qualify, importers must source food from facilities certified under the FDA's Accredited Third-Party Certification program and meet additional requirements that demonstrate a strong commitment to food safety and security.

To qualify for VQIP, applicants must meet all eligibility criteria outlined in the VQIP guidance. Participation in CTPAT offers added benefits during the VQIP application process. Specifically, CTPAT members who disclose their participation within their VQIP application are exempt from submitting additional details about transportation-related food defense procedures, helping streamline the application. The FDA encourages food importers to join CTPAT, as doing so not only strengthens supply chain security but also allows VQIP-approved importers to take advantage of entry benefits offered by U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP). Among other advantages, CTPAT participants approved for VQIP will receive expedited entry for all foods listed in their approved VQIP application.

CBP and FDA are actively exploring opportunities to further integrate their respective programs. For more information about the VQIP program, please contact the VQIP Team through the Importers Help Desk at FSMAVQIP@fda.hhs.gov.

Thank you for your partnership with CTPAT.

CTPAT Program

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