



DEPARTMENT INCREASES PRODUCTIVITY AND REDUCES FRAUD

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ANIMAL AND PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION SERVICE

/// CASE STUDY



To help ensure the nation's booming agri-economy, EDS, an HP company, developed a robust Web application for processing export certificates fast and flawlessly. The solution lets companies manage certificates and inspections online via automated processes while delivering better workload management, enhanced reporting capabilities and increased data storage for the federal agency.

CLIENT PROFILE

www.aphis.usda.gov

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service protects and promotes U.S. agricultural health. The federal agency also regulates genetically engineered organisms, administers the Animal Welfare Act and carries out wildlife damage management activities.

Established: 1972

"EDS was chosen as the contractor for the PCIT system because of its experience in developing large, complex IT systems. We also knew that it was capable of operating in an environment where change was the norm. EDS has helped us achieve the highest level of customer satisfaction possible."

Jo Ann Morris
PCIT IT Manager
USDA APHIS
Plant Protection and Quarantine

Federal agency seeks to automate crucial export documentation process

Charged with safeguarding America's animal and plant resources from agricultural pests and diseases, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) works to ensure public health as well as the national economy. Indeed, the infiltration of harmful pests into the nation's agriculture can result in production and marketing losses amounting to several billion dollars. Similarly, diseases that gain ground in the United States not only impact population health but also economic health as foreign trade partners invoke trade restrictions that can mean devastating losses to American producers.

To prevent this from happening, the USDA APHIS takes an aggressive approach to detecting and resolving potential pest and disease threats to U.S. agriculture. One internationally accepted form of risk mitigation, the phytosanitary certificate, ensures safe shipment of commodities by documenting the country of origin and confirming inspection in that country. Although the phytosanitary certificate process has been in use for many years, there was no standardized system for collecting export data for tracking, reporting and quality management. Rather, certificates were issued via a labor-intensive, four-part paper process with frequent reports of fraud, misuse and inconsistent compliance with APHIS export control policies.

In order to better protect the country's multibillion dollar agriculture industry, the USDA APHIS set out in search of an automated certificate process and export data collection system. The agency looked to EDS' expertise and experience for help.

EDS centralized export data with online tracking and reporting built in

While working with government officials, EDS developed the Phytosanitary Certificate Issuance & Tracking (PCIT) system. The secure Web application collects export data from applicants and enables the tracking of inspection and treatment information, as well as phytosanitary certificates issued by federal, state and local officials.

OPEN DESIGN DRIVES INNOVATION

EDS' solution is a well-blended mixture of innovative user interface and application design, leading-edge technology and compliance with USDA/APHIS IT enterprise architectural standards. The solution is built on open design, resulting in a lower total cost of ownership for the agency.

The initial solution relied on a J2EE application server that was later discontinued by the vendor, prompting EDS to propose an Oracle AS 10G platform. With the support of Oracle, EDS successfully converted the application from the old platform to the new one and is now in the process of implementing additional major system enhancements.

The solution was rolled out in a phased approach: first in December 2005, as a pilot system to 12 government duty stations and then to all the duty stations in the United States. So far, more than 120 duty stations are actively using PCIT.

Services featured

- Applications Development Services

By providing a system of record that allows electronic data exchange and leading-edge reporting, from trend analysis to quality control management, the solution establishes a vastly improved communications channel between officials and the agriculture industry, thus virtually eliminating fraud.

While the private sector uses the system to apply and pay for certificates, monitor application status and print export certificate copies online, federal and state officers access PCIT to create, edit and issue paper export certificates.

EDS is currently working to further enhance the system by building in federal government e-authentication, financial tracking and a more robust reporting platform that will make it possible to track workloads and identify peak export seasons for specific commodities.

What's more, PCIT will be instrumental in future trade negotiations, says Christian Dellis, senior export specialist and program manager for the PCIT system at the USDA APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine. "In the past, information about exports was difficult to obtain. With the PCIT system, information can be obtained instantaneously to be used for trade negotiations, market access requests and formalization of Pest Risk Analysis documents," adds Dellis. Additionally, the implementation of an e-payment solution will reduce the time it takes to process PC payments at duty stations.

USDA expedites certification by 10 percent annually and reduces fraud

Before the PCIT system, the creation of the Department of Homeland Security transferred qualified officers away from PC processing, overwhelming the remaining officers with an increased workload and inadequate data storage and retrieval capabilities. The new PCIT solution has transformed the way officials and the USDA operate now that crucial export data is accessible online through a secure, centralized source, and data input, tracking and reporting are streamlined.

In fact, the agency has issued more than 3 million federal phytosanitary certificates since 2001, enabling the export of \$50 billion in U.S. agricultural commodities. With issuance growing by 10 percent annually, the agency projects the annual figure will soon reach 500,000 as global trade increases. Thanks to its automated data collection and tracking system, the government is now equipped to manage expansions in trade. Meanwhile, improved oversight and management of the PC issuance process and standardization of the issuance process has reduced fraud, improved export policy compliance and enhanced service to the nation's agriculture industry.

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