



At a Glance

Why We Did This Review

We conducted this review of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA's) Federal Insecticide, Fungicide and Rodenticide Act (FIFRA) import inspection program to determine whether the EPA is effectively identifying imported pesticides for inspection and sampling to deter imports of harmful pesticides and protect human health and the environment.

Illegal imports of pesticides can present significant human health and environmental risks, and have been linked to poisonings of children and pets. Illegal imports include high-risk pesticides that can be counterfeit, produced at unregistered establishments, or produced using unauthorized ingredients. According to the EPA, inspections are a key method to deter the import of harmful pesticides.

This report addresses the following:

- *Ensuring the safety of chemicals.*
- *Compliance with the law.*

Send all inquiries to our public affairs office at (202) 566-2391 or visit www.epa.gov/oig.

[Listing of OIG reports.](#)

EPA Can Better Reduce Risks From Illegal Pesticides by Effectively Identifying Imports for Inspection and Sampling

What We Found

The EPA is at risk of not effectively identifying imported pesticides for inspection and sampling. EPA regions did not meet the voluntary frequency goal of inspecting 2 percent of all shipments of imported pesticides nationwide in fiscal years 2015 and 2016. In fiscal year 2016, the EPA's

10 regions conducted only 73 inspections of 46,280 pesticide shipments. This is an inspection rate of 0.002; an inspection rate of 2 percent would have been about 926 inspections. Consequently, there is limited assurance that imports in violation of FIFRA will be identified or prevented entry into the United States.

We found that in two EPA regions, inspections were more likely to be conducted close to the regional office rather than where the greatest number of pesticides entered the region. In the last 5 years, the seven EPA regions we reviewed had sampled and tested the integrity of only seven pesticides out of approximately 145,000 shipments of imported pesticides. Regional resources available to carry out inspections are not considered part of strategic planning, and regional participation in achieving the agency's inspection frequency goal is voluntary.

The EPA's implementation of the required U.S. Customs and Border Protection Automated Commercial Enterprise system for automatic processing of import notices will allow EPA regions more time for targeting and inspections. However, the agency has no guidance or training available on how EPA regions can use information from this system to target future inspections or develop their own targeting strategies. Guidance or protocols for how EPA regions can coordinate with U.S. Customs and Border Protection will also help to ensure that the EPA is notified of any potentially illegal pesticides not found during the agency's review of import notices.

Low rates of inspections and sampling can create a risk that the EPA may not be identifying or deterring the import of pesticides harmful to people or the environment.

Recommendations and Planned Agency Corrective Actions

We made four recommendations that the Assistant Administrator for Enforcement and Compliance Assurance establish national compliance monitoring goals based on regional resources; implement controls to monitor and communicate progress on regional goals; develop guidance and train EPA regions to use the Automated Commercial Enterprise system for regional targeting of importers, manufacturers and pesticide products; and direct each EPA region to develop guidance or protocols for coordinating with local U.S. Customs and Border Protection offices regarding illegally imported pesticides. The EPA concurred with developing protocols for coordinating with local U.S. Customs and Border Protection offices. The remaining three recommendations are unresolved.