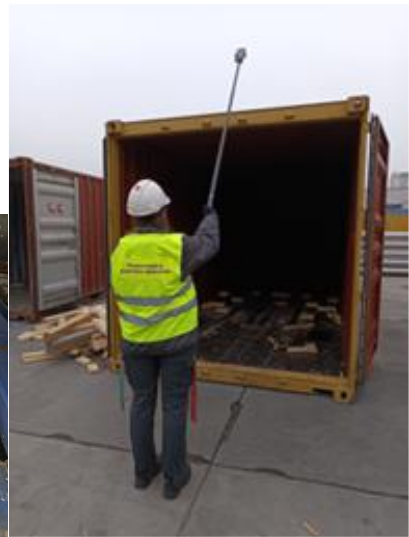




September 2025

EU sea container cleanliness survey (March – December 2024)



Background

The survey was performed across the EU for a duration of ten months (March to December 2024), using the IPPC guide for sea container survey for National Plant Protection Organization (NPPOs).

The survey was carried out by Plant Health inspectors in collaboration with the customs services in the EU Member States.

The survey targeted empty containers and packed containers with goods other than those subject to EU Plant health import inspections

Objectives of Survey:

- To gather data on the phytosanitary risk associated with sea containers arriving in the EU from third countries
- To contribute to the pool of data needed by the international plant health community to Decide on the level of phytosanitary risk posed by the sea container pathway.

Outcome

A total of 3457 sea containers originating from at least 70 countries were surveyed (See Fig. 1).

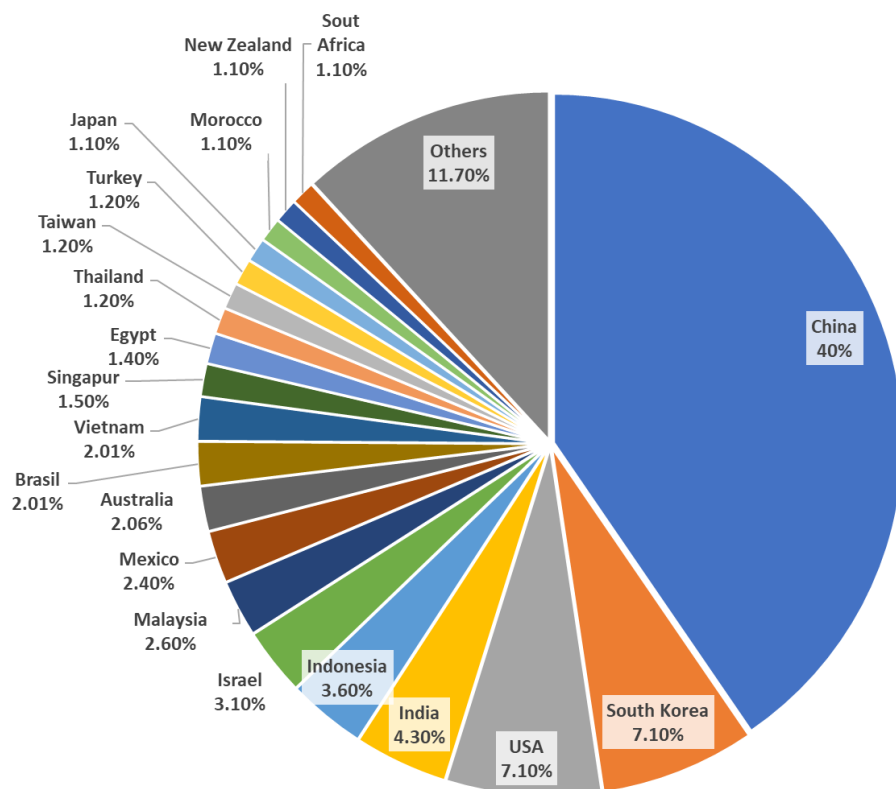


Fig.1. Countries of origin and corresponding percentages of sea containers surveyed

The findings from the survey are summarised in Tables 1a and 1b below:

Table 1a. summary of survey findings

No. of controlled containers	No. of clean containers	No. of unclean containers	No. of containers contaminated with soil/sand	No. of arthropods in unclean containers	No. of identified arthropods regulated as quarantine pests in the EU	No. of containers contaminate with plant debris, wood, seeds(grains) and others
3457	3192	265	63	85	0	68

Table 1b. percentages of clean vs unclean containers

Percentage of clean containers	Percentage of unclean containers
92.4%	7.6% Comprising of: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 1.9% plant residue contamination (wood debris, seeds...) ▪ 1.8% soil/sand contamination ▪ 2.4% arthropod contamination ▪ 1.5% other contaminations (feces, feathers, dead or live animals...)

Evaluation of Phytosanitary risk

- Other than soil which is prohibited from introduction into the EU from third countries, all other contaminants identified were not considered to pose a phytosanitary risk to the EU.
- Of the 85 arthropods detected during the survey, 30 were identified at the genus/species level whereas 55 were not identified. Many inspectors did not continue with the identification of the species unless it was not obvious that the detected arthropod was not a regulated organism in the EU. A large majority of the unidentified arthropods were spiders.

Location of contamination

- Over 90% of contamination was detected inside the container
- Over 88% of the internal contamination was located on the floor and around 4% contamination in the ceiling (spiders)

Conclusions:

- The EU surveys indicate that other than contaminations due to presence of soil/sand over 98% of sea containers arriving in the EU from third countries do not constitute a phytosanitary risk to the EU territory
- Based on this survey, the sea container pathway is not considered to be of significant phytosanitary risk to the EU.

NOTE:

The focus of the survey was on phytosanitary risk in accordance with the EU Plant health Law¹. Relevance of the identified contaminants to other sectors/EU legislations (for example, Biodiversity/ legislation on Invasive Alien Species) was not checked.

¹ Regulation (EU) 2016/2031 of the European Parliament of the Council of 26 October 2016 on protective measures against pests of plants, amending Regulations (EU) No 228/2013, (EU) No 652/2014 and (EU) No 1143/2014 of the European Parliament and of the Council and repealing Council Directives 69/464/EEC, 74/647/EEC, 93/85/EEC, 98/57/EC, 2000/29/EC, 2006/91/EC and 2007/33/EC. *OJ L 317*, 23.11.2016, pp. 4–104. <http://data.europa.eu/eli/reg/2016/2031/oj>