

Voluntary Report – Voluntary - Public Distribution

Date: December 03, 2025

Report Number: GT2025-0016

Report Name: Cutting Excessive Inspection Costs in Guatemala

Country: Guatemala

Post: Guatemala City

Report Category: Agricultural Situation, Detained Shipments, Livestock and Products, Poultry and Products, Sanitary/Phytosanitary/Food Safety

Prepared By: Karla Tay

Approved By: Marcela Rondon

Report Highlights:

A significant regulatory change (Ministerial Decree 168-2025) in Guatemala will improve the competitiveness of U.S. agricultural exports by eliminating excessive inspections on refrigerated and frozen products, revoking Ministerial Decree 340-2019, and reducing inspection rates from 100% to less than 10%. This landmark decision was achieved through successful engagements by FAS and U.S. companies and is expected to save thousands of dollars in inspection fees.

Executive Summary:

On October 27, 2025, a pivotal change occurred with the publication of Ministerial Decree 168-2025 in the Official Gazette, which effectively removed the justification for excessive inspections of refrigerated and frozen cargo by the Intraregional Organization for Animal and Plant Health (OIRSA). This is a significant step in Guatemala's efforts to establish a risk-based inspection system, which will facilitate trade in agricultural products.

Additionally, Guatemala's Ministry of Agriculture, Livestock, and Food (MAGA) took a crucial step by abolishing the problematic Ministerial Decree 340-2019. This previous regulation allowed quarantine inspectors at Santo Tomas Port to impose excessive inspections on frozen and refrigerated containers, leading to delays and logistical challenges for importers.

MAGA set an initial inspection rate of 3% for poultry and meat imports from the United States across all Guatemalan ports. This targeted approach aims to streamline the inspection process while ensuring food safety and compliance. The revocation of Ministerial Decree 340-2019 marks a significant advancement towards reforming the inspection system; it will enable MAGA to ensure a more efficient and transparent inspection process moving forward. Implementing a risk-based approach to inspection is a core part of international best practices to facilitate trade while ensuring food safety.

Issue Overview:

On November 26, 2019, MAGA published Ministerial Decree 340-2019, which approved quarantine services by the Plant and Animal Protection Service (SEPA), as implemented by OIRSA at the first cold room facilities at Santo Tomas Port, operated by Frio Maya company. Before Frio Maya's investment, Santo Tomas Port lacked cold room facilities, making this investment essential as it handles most of the country's container cargo entering through the Atlantic.

Following the implementation of Decree 340-2019, inspections of refrigerated and frozen containers increased, with poultry frozen containers achieving 100% inspection rates by 2024. This resulted in substantial costs for companies which reported excess port costs up to thousands of dollars due to unnecessary inspections from February 2024 to September 2025, leading to additional delays at ports.

Expected Outcome:

In calendar year 2024, the United States exported a record high of \$885.7 million in consumer-oriented goods. Most of these exports consisted of refrigerated and frozen containers, including poultry, meat,

dairy products, processed vegetables, and food preparations. The reduction in inspection rates is projected to save U.S. companies thousands of dollars, enabling them to remain competitive in the Guatemalan market. This success not only benefits exporters but also enhances the availability of quality U.S. agricultural products for Guatemalan consumers. Between February 2024 and September 2025, one company alone paid at least \$343,000 in unjustified inspection fees. Overall, unnecessary inspection fees for U.S. agricultural exports exceeded \$40 million during that period. By reducing inspection costs and barriers, U.S. companies can now compete more effectively in Guatemala, ultimately benefiting both economies.

Attachments:

No Attachments.