

Four Reasons Why You Should Declare Agricultural Goods at Customs

Traveling is an exciting activity; the plane tickets, new restaurants and museums all make a trip something to be happy about. However, one thing you might not consider as you travel is [invasive pests](#). Bringing fruits, vegetables, plants, plant products, animals, or animal products back with you when you travel can contribute to the spread of invasive species into the U.S.

The customs process as you enter back into the U.S. after traveling internationally is meant to protect agriculture and natural resources from being impacted by damaging invasive pests. Many travelers fail to declare agricultural items at customs for a variety of reasons. Here are four common arguments against declaring and why they can be harmful.

1. “My souvenir or snack is not an agricultural item; I do not need to declare it”

Items that you would not think of as agricultural products like wooden souvenirs, processed snacks, teas and rocks can all carry invasive pests. [Don’t Pack a Pest](#) is an initiative that works to educate travelers on what items are potentially prohibited and why. Check out [their website](#) for a list of agricultural items you should avoid bringing.

2. “Customs and Border Protection only inspects and takes my items because they want me to purchase them in the U.S.”

[CBP works to protect](#) the U.S. from threats to American agriculture. They inspect your items to keep new or existing invasive pests from entering the U.S. If they do throw away any of your items, it is because the CBP officers believe they pose a risk to agriculture and not to force you to spend your money in the U.S.

3. “I do not visit farms; I would never affect agriculture”

Invasive pests impact more than just farms, and they can reach agriculture without you ever visiting a farm. Invasive pests like [Emerald Ash Borer](#), and [Invasive Carp](#) are two common

examples of invasive species in Minnesota that do not affect farmers, but greatly impact natural resources. You could be bringing back an invasive pest that infects the trees in your neighborhood or other plant and animal life nearby. Additionally, invasive pests can find their way to farms without you ever stepping foot on one. Meat can carry animal diseases and if thrown away these pathogens can eventually reach farms.

4. “I don’t want to be punished if they find anything prohibited in my luggage”

You will not be punished for any agricultural goods you may have in your luggage if you declare them. They may still be confiscated if they are prohibited. If you fail to declare items and your luggage is inspected, you could face [fines up to \\$1,000 or more](#) per violation.

Customs is an easy process once you understand why it is important, so enjoy your next vacation but be sure to declare any agricultural goods you might pack and [Don’t Pack a Pest](#).