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## AQIS approves OPI for California cherries

Pre-clearance programme for cherry imports allows traders to plan with greater security and confidence



**T**he Australian Quarantine and Inspection Service (AQIS) have announced their approval for a pre-clearance programme for imports of California cherries.

Their announcement on Friday 19 April cleared Offshore Pre-shipment Inspection (OPI) by officers of the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, effective from that date.

OPI is currently available for cherries from the Pacific Northwest region in states including Washington, Oregon and Idaho.

AQIS have advised all importers that intend to participate in the OPI programme to contact their US-based suppliers to plan their next imports of fresh cherries.

Any import permits that are currently valid will be reissued to reflect the changes to the USA cherry offshore pre-shipment inspection programme.

The announcement came after considerable lobbying from Australia-based importers of US produce.

"The announcement means

fruit will be inspected in California," says John Baker, chief executive of Produce Marketing Australia, "and as soon as it is passed, the trade will know the product will not be held up at this end."

The programme will allow traders to plan with more security and confidence, Baker added.