



THE MINISTRY OF HEALTH & WELLNESS

Environmental Health Department

Port Facilitation Protocols:

Introduction:

The functions of the Environmental Health Officers at the ports of entry are governed by the requirements under the Health Services Act, Cap 44 and the associated regulations; the Quarantine Act, Cap 53 and the associated regulations; and the International Health regulations.

The focus of the port health unit is to anticipate, identify, assess and control environmental hazards and risk factors that play a role in the spread of communicable diseases into and out of these ports.

Specifically, to the Bridgetown Port, Health Officers are engaged in the following activities:

1. The granting of free pratique.
2. The inspection of food.
3. Surveillance of water quality.
4. The inspection and certification of vessels.
5. The investigation of illnesses.
6. The isolation/quarantining of “infected” vessels, people and personal effects.
7. The general sanitation of the port facilities.

Generally, the department supports the necessary risk-based approach to the activities of the port health officers in order to facilitate the timely movement of persons and goods at the Barbados Port Inc. It is believed that this approach will not compromise the health of the society nor the reputation of Barbados if applied prudently.

The following protocols have therefore been developed to assist with the Port Facilitation project. Activities that are not associated with the port facilitation exercise are not covered in this document.

Use of Maritime Single Window:

Arriving vessels will be assessed and practised through the Maritime Single Window. To ensure that diseases with low minimum incubation periods are considered, the Officer will only grant clearance within 2 to 3 hours of the vessel arriving.

Where a public health risk exists, the vessel will be treated according to the procedures laid out in the International Health Regulations. (Vessels arriving from “infected” ports or ports where there may be a public health concern, pratique will be granted only after the vessel had been boarded and assessed).

Vessels with sick or dead onboard will **not** be cleared using the single window facility unless the Officer in charge or the Medical Officer of Health is satisfied that the sickness or death is not associated with the incidence of a communicable disease.

The Ministry of Health and Wellness maintains the right to visit and board any vessel to perform an inspection or conduct an investigation.

Vessel Inspection:

Vessels which are at berth but display no visual signs of rodent control measures, *will* be boarded for inspection purposes, and if necessary goods and personal effects quarantined for further inspection.

Other vessel inspections will continue as routine.

Food Inspection:

To facilitate the quick movement of imported foods from the port, all foods and importers will be attributed a risk profile. This profile is based on the below, and attracts a specific inspection rate.

1. Foods are categorized
 - a) Low risk- green
 - b) Medium - orange

c) High risk – red

The following factors assist with these categorizations.

- i. Nature of foods, e.g. potentially hazardous or highly perishable foods.
- ii. Historical data.
- iii. Packaging.
- iv. Degree of post purchasing processing required.

Each category will attract a different inspection rate.

2. Importers are designated as:

- a) Trusted traders – low risk
- b) Non-trusted traders – medium risk
- c) High risk traders

The following factors were used to assess importers.

- i. Historical data, e.g frequency of condemnation, food handling practices.
- ii. Source / origin of product.
- iii. Sanitary condition of warehouse facilities.

3. Below is the matrix used by the department to designate the rate of inspection to be applied.

Table 1: Inspection Rate Matrix

	Low risk foods (1)	Medium risk foods (2)	High risk foods (3)
Trusted Traders (1)	1	2	3
Non trusted traders (2)	2	4	6
High risk traders (3)	3	6	9

- a) 1 – 2 will attract a 0% – 20% inspection rate. A 5% sample size will be used.
- b) 3 – 4 will attract a 20% to 60% inspection rate. A 10% sample size will be used.

- c) 6 - 9 will attract a 60% to 100% inspection rate. A sample size of 10% will apply.

Notwithstanding that the above rates, if on inspection the Officer determines that a larger sample is warranted to confidently make a decision as to the fitness for consumption of the entire lot, he may increase the sample size as he sees fit.

In addition to the foregoing,

1. Foods imported as samples will be treated according to their risk profile.
2. Consignments of less than 500kgs of medium and low risk foods will not attract an inspection.
3. Recalled, damaged or any other contaminated/compromised products (insects, rodent, chemicals) from uninspected lots are to be stored in a suitably constructed area for EHOs to conduct the legal procedures pertaining to the destruction and disposal of these products.
4. Certificates of Wholesomeness or Unwholesomeness will be issued for foods which were inspected. However, for record-keeping purposes, the Port Health Unit must be supplied with
5. For foods that were released without an inspection and subsequently requires an inspection in the opinion of the importer, will be facilitation by Officers at the Polyclinic in whose jurisdiction the warehouse is located.