

Mitigating Biothreat Risk at the Border

Dr. Romelito Lapitan

Agrobioterrorism Countermeasures

DHS

The U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) is America's premier law enforcement organization and the guardian of our Nation's borders. CBP's mission is to protect the American people, safeguard our borders, and enhance the nation's economic prosperity. CBP is the frontline of defense against entry of biological threats that may be damaging to American agriculture, natural resources, and public health. On a typical day each year, CBP officers and agriculture specialists inspect thousands of agricultural and biological imports entering through the ports of entry for pests and diseases, and enforce compliance to the regulatory requirements of partner government agencies. While CBP employs a layered screening approach to detection of highly regulated or illicit agricultural commodities, its enforcement capacity is limited by the guidance provided by partner regulatory agencies. The global biological threat landscape is changing at a pace that international sanitary controls and government regulations may not timely adjust; thus, underscores our border's vulnerability to entry of exponential biology. Near-real time surveillance of emerging and immediate biothreats and risk contextualization in trade and travel environments could provide timely decision and operational support to CBP's biothreat exclusion efforts.