How to Check a Supplier Against FDA Import Alerts Before You Ship

SourcingFrom

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An FDA import alert lets the FDA hold a firm's or product's shipments at the US border without examining them, so the importer must prove the problem does not apply. This guide explains red, green and country-wide lists, which alerts matter most for Indian goods, and a ten-minute routine to check a supplier before you ship.

The Short Version

- On 23 September 2026, 241 Indian firms sat on the red list of Import Alert 99–08 for pesticides.
- Indian shrimp is held unless the processor is on the 16–35 green list, and black pepper has been under country-wide alert 28–02 since 1987.
- Search the legal name of the firm that makes your product, browse the India country page and save the dated result.
- A clean alert search is a gate, not a pass. Lab packages did not stop many refusals.
- Getting off an alert often needs five consecutive non-violative commercial shipments.

On 9 October 2026 the FDA republished Import Alert 99–08, its standing list of processed foods held at the US border for pesticide residues (Import Alert 99–08). Its previous revision was dated March 2025. Three weeks earlier, when we counted it for this guide, 241 Indian firms sat on its red list, 79 of them added since 2021 (FDA import alerts, India, our count, 23 September 2026). Nothing about that page is static. Firms are added, firms earn their way off, and the alert you checked at the quote stage may not be the alert your container meets at the port.



That's the point of this guide. An import alert is the single most useful public check a US food, cosmetics or supplement buyer can run on a supplier, and it costs nothing but ten minutes. We read every alert that names India and counted the firms on each list, so you'll see where the real risk sits. India is our worked example. The method works for any origin. One honest caveat – an alert tells you about a firm's history at the border, not about the lot you're buying, so it's a gate, never a quality certificate.

1. What an Import Alert Actually Does

Most buyers picture the FDA opening containers and testing them. It mostly doesn't. Of 1,320 Indian spice lines refused between January 2021 and August 2026, the FDA sampled 87 itself (FDA import refusals, our count). The rest were refused on paper, and an import alert is usually that paper.

An alert lets the FDA hold a firm's or a product's shipments on arrival without looking inside. The agency calls it detention without physical examination, DWPE for short. Once goods are held, they're refused unless the importer shows the problem named in the alert doesn't apply to this shipment (FDA, import alerts). In plain words, the burden flips. Before the alert, the FDA has to find a problem. After it, you have to prove there isn't one.

Each alert carries up to three lists, and reading them wrong is the most common mistake we see -

- **Red list** (sometimes yellow). The firms and products named here are held. If your supplier is on it for your product, expect detention.
- **Green list.** The firms named here are exempt from an alert that otherwise catches everyone. If an alert is country-wide and your supplier isn't on its green list, your goods are held.
- **No list at all.** Some alerts cover a whole product from a whole country. Black pepper from India has sat under one, Import Alert 28–02, since 1987.



So "my supplier isn't on the alert" can be good news or bad news. It depends on which list you were reading.

2. The Alerts That Matter for Indian Goods

We counted every alert naming India on 23 September 2026. Fifty-eight alerts mention Indian firms or products. A handful carry almost all the weight.

Alert	What it holds	Indian firms on the red list	All firms on the list	Ir
99-19	Salmonella in food	295	1,222	2
66-41	Unapproved new drugs promoted in the US	285	1,921	1
45-02	Illegal or undeclared colours	257	2,760	9
99-08	Pesticides in processed foods	241	1,891	1
66-40	Drug manufacturing practice not met	110	469	2
53-06	Cosmetics with colour additive violations	97	514	1
99-39	Misbranded foods	81	695	1
16-81	Salmonella in seafood	63	1,125	6
99-42	Heavy metals in food	26	210	1
23-14	Mycotoxins	26	155	1

Source: FDA import alerts, India, our count of red-list firms, 23 September 2026.

Read the table by your product, not by the totals. If you buy spices, 99–19 is the alert to know. Its Indian entries carry 842 spice product lines, ahead of snacks (185) and nuts and seeds (94). If you buy basmati or vegetables, it's 99–08, where Indian entries name chlorpyrifos 204 times, tebuconazole 186 and carbendazim 155. If you buy sweets, namkeen or bakery goods, it's 45–02, and the colours named most are tartrazine (579 mentions) and sunset yellow (497). If you sell Ayurvedic or herbal products, look at 66–41 and 99–42 together. One is about the claims on your label, the other about lead (170 mentions) and mercury (110) in the product.

None of this is a verdict on Indian makers. India is one of the largest food and pharmaceutical exporters to the US, so it's bound to fill more lines on any list, and alerts follow where the FDA chose to look. The useful reading is narrower - for your product, which hazard has the FDA already linked to Indian suppliers, and is yours one of them?



3. Two Country-Wide Alerts That Flip the Logic

Two alerts work the other way round, and both catch buyers who check only for their supplier's name.

Shrimp Under Import Alert 16-35

Raw and cooked shrimp from India is held unless the processor is on the green list. 234 Indian firms were on it on 23 September 2026. For shrimp, the question isn't "is my packer on the alert" but "is my packer on the green list, and is it also clear of the seafood red lists" (16–81 Salmonella, 16–129 nitrofurans, where 13 Indian firms sat). Our frozen shrimp page covers the rest of the shrimp checks.

Black Pepper Under Import Alert 28-02

Country-wide since 1987. Indian black pepper clears when it carries the Export Inspection Council certification the alert describes. Ask for it on the PO, not at the port. The black pepper page explains how it fits with the Salmonella and filth record.

4. How to Run the Check in Ten Minutes

Here's the routine we'd run before any US order of food, supplements, cosmetics or devices from any country.

1. **Get the legal name and every address that makes your product.** Not the trading name on the WhatsApp profile. Alerts list the firm and the address that made the goods, and a trader may ship goods made in someone else's unit. That's a normal business model, so ask plainly who makes it.
2. **Search the alert database.** The FDA search box matches each word separately, so put the firm name in double quotes for an exact match

(FDA, import alerts). Try the name with and without "Pvt Ltd", and try the town.

3. **Browse the country page too.** The India country page lists every alert that names an Indian firm. Open the ones that match your product type and read the lists. Search can miss a spelling variant, and browsing can't.
4. **Check the product, not just the firm.** A firm can be red-listed for one product and clear for another. The entry names the product and the problem.
5. **Check the country-wide alerts for your product** (shrimp and black pepper above, and any other alert that names your product for all of India).
6. **Write the date down.** Save the page or a screenshot with the date in your supplier file. If you import food, it belongs in your foreign supplier verification file anyway.
7. **Check again before the goods ship.** The 99–08 republication on 9 October 2026 is the reminder. A month between quote and loading is plenty of time for a list to change.

If you find your supplier on a red list for your product, don't panic and don't accuse. Ask them when they were listed, for what, and what they've done since. Some firms are working through removal. Some were listed years ago for a product they no longer make. But don't let your first shipment be the test. If you'd rather someone ran the check and talked to the factory for you, SourcingSync does supplier verification in India.

5. A Clean Name Doesn't Mean a Clean Shipment

The lookup is a gate. It isn't a pass. The FDA can still detain any shipment, and the refusal data shows plenty of trouble that never touched an alert.

US refusals of Indian snack foods went from 15 lines in 2021 to 789 in 2025. Most 2025 lines carried "manufactured under insanitary conditions" charges, and the FDA sampled only 83 of 1,439 snack lines over the period (FDA import refusals, our count). Those refusals follow the facility, so a clean alert search plus a clean lab report isn't the whole story for snacks. You want to know how the plant is run.

Lab paperwork isn't a shield either. 149 refused Indian spice lines, 113 rice lines and 149 seafood lines had a private lab package on file and were refused anyway (our count). When a food is tested to get goods released or a firm off an alert, the test must come from a lab accredited under the FDA's LAAF programme, run on a sample taken after arrival unless the FDA agrees otherwise (21 CFR 1.1107). A pre-shipment report from India is your own quality control. Our food import testing guide sets out how to build that test plan per border.

6. What Getting Off an Alert Looks Like

Buyers ask this when a good supplier turns out to be listed. The honest answer is that it's slow, and it's the supplier's job with your help.



Each alert has a guidance section that says what evidence the FDA wants. For pesticides, the 99–08 text asks for information that shows the manufacturer has "resolved the conditions" so future shipments will comply, and it allows private lab analysis to support release of an individual shipment, with the FDA free to take its own audit samples (Import Alert 99–08). Many alerts add that a minimum of five consecutive non-violative commercial shipments may be required before the agency treats the problem as overcome (Import Alert 66–78, citing the Regulatory Procedures Manual chapter 9–8). Splitting one big shipment into small ones to make up the five doesn't count.

So if you love a listed supplier, the real question is whether you can afford to be one of the five test shipments, with every one of them held and tested on arrival. For a first order, usually not. For an established line where the supplier has fixed the cause and you can absorb the delays, sometimes yes. A US customs broker who handles FDA entries will tell you what the held-

shipment process costs at your port. Check this with your broker before you commit.

SourcingFrom Intelligence

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01 **Four alerts carry most of the Indian food risk.** 99-19 Salmonella (295 Indian firms), 45-02 colours (257), 99-08 pesticides (241) and 99-39 misbranding (81). Spices lead 99-19 with 842 product lines. *(FDA import alerts, India, our count, 23 Sep 2026.)*

02 **India is about a quarter of two red lists.** 295 of 1,222 firms on the Salmonella alert and 110 of 469 on the drug manufacturing alert 66-40. A red-list search belongs in every US-bound supplier check. *(FDA import alerts, India, our count.)*

03 **For shrimp, the list that matters is green.** Indian shrimp is held unless the processor is on the 16-35 green list, which held 234 Indian firms. *(FDA import alerts, India, our count.)*

04 **A lab report didn't stop refusals.** 149 spice, 113 rice and 149 seafood lines were refused with a private lab package on file. *(FDA import refusals, our count, 2021 to Aug 2026.)*

What we don't know yet

- ☐ How many listed Indian firms are working through removal at any time. The FDA doesn't publish pending petitions.
- ☐ Whether each refused lab package was sent before shipping or after detention. The refusal data doesn't say.

Questions Buyers Ask

My supplier says their certificate proves they're fine. An export certificate, a lab report or an ISO certificate says nothing about alert status. Only the

alert page does. Check it yourself.

The firm on the alert has almost the same name as my supplier. Compare the address and the product. Indian firm names repeat a lot, so a near-match isn't a match. If you can't tell, ask the supplier for their FDA facility registration details and compare.

Do alerts cover non-food goods?

Only what the FDA regulates, so food, drugs, cosmetics, supplements, devices and some electronic products. Clothing, toys and leather fall under other agencies, and our guides on children's product safety and restricted substances cover those.

I import into the EU or Australia. Is there an equivalent?

7. Back to Import Alert 99-08

When we first counted 99–08, it had been sitting at its March 2025 revision for eighteen months. By the time we finished writing, it had a new one. That's the habit worth building. Check the alert when you shortlist, check it when you sign, and check it when the goods load. It takes ten minutes each time, and it's the cheapest due diligence in US importing.

8. Next Steps

- The full supplier check for India, including registries and alerts: verifying Indian suppliers.
- How to test food before it ships, by border: food import testing.
- US rules for Indian goods: India to the US.

- Why one spice lot can pass one border and fail another: same spice, three borders.
- Product-level risk: black pepper, basmati rice, frozen shrimp, Ayurvedic supplements.