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GAIN Report

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Hong Kong's Import Regulations for American Ginseng

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Report Highlights:

This report seeks to clarify that American ginseng from the United States, if hand-carried to Hong Kong for personal use or as a gift, is not required to provide any export certificate. This report elaborates Hong Kong's import requirements for American ginseng for commercial shipments and for personal use.

There has been no change in Hong Kong's import regulation of ginseng. The Hong Kong government requires commercial American ginseng shipments, regardless of country of origin and whether wild or cultivated, to provide an export license issued by the exporting country and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) export certificate for customs clearance. Note: American ginseng is the species name for the ginseng variety most commonly produced or grown in the United States and Canada.

Depending on the country of origin, the introduction of American ginseng to Hong Kong by travelers as personal luggage does not need to have an export license. Travelers carrying American ginseng from the United States to Hong Kong for personal consumption do not need to provide any export license. However, travelers are advised to carry with them the receipt provided by U.S. retailers in order to prove that the American ginseng was legally purchased in the United States.

American ginseng is a scheduled species under CITES and Hong Kong has in place the Protection of Endangered Species of Animals and Plants Ordinance to observe CITES requirements. The implementation of the Personal and Household Effect provision of CITES is at the discretion of each signatory member. Both the United States and Hong Kong observe the Personal and Household Effect provision under CITES. Therefore, Hong Kong allows travelers bringing in a reasonable amount (no amount is specified) of American ginseng from the United States to do so without a U.S. export license/CITES certificate, as long as the product is for personal consumption.

The Hong Kong government explained that they require travelers to show an export license for American ginseng if they enter from some other countries, such as the European Union, China, and Canada, because these countries choose not to observe the Personal and Household Effect provision under CITES. Since these countries require travelers to have an export license for bringing American ginseng out of the countries, Hong Kong requires them to show an export license upon arrival to Hong Kong so as to mirror export requirements for each corresponding country. American ginseng bought in Canada has a special label on the packaging, instead of providing an export certificate.

There are frequent violations concerning travelers bringing in American ginseng from places not observing CITES' Personal and Household Effect without showing the required documentation. The lack of export certificates leads to the confiscation of these products. The HKG, therefore, recently reminded the public of the need to show an export license for American ginseng in general in a [press release](#), which did not go into details as to the requirements of individual export countries.

The Hong Kong Economic and Trade Office in San Francisco states “for import of American ginseng into Hong Kong as personal or household effects, and an export permit is not required if it is –

1. legally acquired;
2. carried by person or included in personal luggage; and
3. in a small quantity for personal use.”

The full statement is provided at this [link](#).