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Beijing Raises Biosecurity Wall Around Agricultural Imports Amid CLso Concerns

China has introduced stringent new phytosanitary regulations targeting *Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum* (CLso), a destructive bacterial pathogen linked to severe yield and quality losses in potatoes, tomatoes, peppers, carrots and several other vegetable crops. The measures, which come into force on August 1, 2026, represent one of Beijing's most significant recent interventions to strengthen agricultural biosecurity and safeguard domestic food production systems.

Issued jointly by the General Administration of Customs of China (GACC) and the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Affairs (MARA), the regulations follow repeated detections of the pathogen in imported planting material and reflect growing global concern over the movement of transboundary crop pests and diseases through international seed trade.

At the centre of the new framework is a broad restriction on the import of seed potatoes and other propagative materials from countries and territories where CLso has been officially reported. The list includes major agricultural exporting regions across North America, Europe and Latin America, significantly tightening access to one of the world's largest agricultural markets.

China has also suspended import approvals for tomato, pepper, carrot, coriander, celery and parsley seeds from Italy and South Korea following confirmed detections of the pathogen. Future imports from these countries will only be permitted if seed lots originate from officially designated pest-free production zones and undergo rigorous laboratory testing prior to shipment.

Beyond country-specific restrictions, the new rules introduce a stricter compliance regime for seed exporters worldwide. Shipments of host crops destined for China must now undergo testing using the internationally recognised ISPM 27 DP21 PCR diagnostic protocol and be accompanied by phytosanitary certificates certifying freedom from CLso infection.

Chinese customs authorities have been directed to intensify inspections at ports of entry, verify documentation more rigorously and enforce zero-tolerance measures against non-compliant consignments. Any shipment found carrying the pathogen or lacking required certification will be denied entry and either returned or destroyed. Meanwhile, agricultural authorities will expand post-entry quarantine monitoring and surveillance to strengthen early detection and containment capabilities.

The regulations were formally notified to the World Trade Organization under SPS notification G/SPS/N/CHN/1387, highlighting China's intent to align its actions with international sanitary and phytosanitary standards while addressing rising concerns over invasive plant pathogens.

For the global seed industry, the move underscores a broader shift toward stricter biosecurity governance in agricultural trade. As countries increasingly prioritise food security, domestic crop protection and supply chain resilience, exporters may face growing pressure to invest in traceability systems, advanced diagnostics and enhanced phytosanitary compliance. Industry analysts suggest China's latest action could become a benchmark for future regulatory responses to emerging plant health risks, further elevating biosecurity as a strategic factor in global agricultural commerce.