



CPC International Postal Update

By John Cicchitti

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Pandemic adaptations, new technology, business struggles, potential privatizations, and mystery seeds from China took up international postal headlines from July-September. Below is a snapshot of these important developments.

Royal Mail Fined for Delays



Royal Mail's logo on a delivery truck. Photo: Wikimedia.

Ofcom, the U.K. government's regulator of broadcasting, communications and postal industries, fined Royal Mail £1.6 million for overcharging its customers on stamps and not meeting delivery standards, reported [The Guardian](#). Ofcom has a statutory duty to ensure private companies do not abuse their relationship with consumers. It requires Royal Mail to hit a one-day delivery standard for first-class post at a 93 percent rate. But mail only reached its destination on time in 91 percent of deliveries.

Royal Mail has faced other challenges in the past year. Brexit led to economic uncertainty surrounding the service, its CEO abruptly quit in May 2020, and it eliminated positions for thousands of management staff earlier this year. CPC covered these issues in a [previous update](#).

Brazil's Postal Service Aims to Privatize

Brazil is looking to raise \$2.7 billion in the 2021 sale of its postal service, Correios, [Bloomberg](#) reported in September. Potential buyers include FedEx, DHL, Magazine Luiza, and Mercado Libre. Amazon indicated it is not interested.



Correios's logo. Photo: Wikipedia.

Fabio Faria, Brazil's communications minister, emphasized that any sale would require the buyer to maintain Correios's Universal Service Obligation. "The postal service reaches 95% of the country's locations and this has to be maintained, even if the buyer outsources the service in some regions," he said.

Ireland Commits to Sustainability, Partnership with Amazon



*Ireland's political leaders with Amazon executives.
Photo: Amazon.*

The chief executive of Ireland's postal service, David McRedmond, welcomed the arrival of an Amazon delivery center in Dublin. McRedmond told [CNBC](#) that Amazon's presence would be "complementary" to An Post, the Irish postal service, and not a competitor. An Post has seen a surge in parcel volume during the coronavirus pandemic, and Amazon's presence could help speed delivery times.

An Post is also working to make its operations greener. According to [Post and Parcel](#), McRedmond said the service "commits to sustainability at its core." He added that postal services would continue to lead "on the decarbonisation agenda and on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goals."

Mystery Seeds from China

Over the past few months, Americans started receiving unexpected packages filled with seeds. Investigators determined these originated in China. Over 9,000 Americans [reported](#) unsolicited seed delivery. U.S. agriculture officials instructed citizens not to plant the seeds, with experts worrying the unknown plants might bring problems to domestic flora.

As the year went on, the seed packages spread around the world, with other countries receiving them. Residents in Canada, New Zealand, and Europe opened their mail to find bags of mysterious seeds delivered to them, according to [The Guardian](#).

[The New York Times](#) reported that experts had identified many of the seeds as "cabbage, hibiscus, lavender, mint, morning glory, mustard, rose, rosemary and sage." U.S. and Chinese officials are cooperating to find the exact origin of the seeds.



*A package of seeds sent from China to U.S. residents.
Photo: U.S. Department of Agriculture.*

In response to the phenomenon, Amazon banned the sale and delivery of foreign seeds to its U.S. marketplace, [CBS](#) reported.

Israel to Privatize Much of Postal Service

The Israeli government is planning to sell 40 percent of its stock in the Israel Postal Company, and keep the rest. [CTECH](#) reported in July that the government would sell 20 percent of postal stock to a strategic private investor, while 20 percent would be available to the public.

The aim of privatization is to improve service. "After examining the privatization of postal companies around the world, we saw that companies that were joined by a strategic investor became more efficient, of better quality, and significantly improved the level of service to their customers," one official told CTECH.

Malaysia Pushes to Cut Illegal Postal Wildlife Trafficking

The Malaysian government is looking to stop illegal wildlife trafficking through the mail, [Traffic.org](#) reported in August. Traffickers try to use Pos Malaysia, Malaysia's postal service, to smuggle animals to foreign destinations. Pos Malaysia gathered with other government officials in August to discuss ways to curb the trade.



Pangolins are just one of many types of animals being trafficked through Pos Malaysia. Photo: Wikimedia.

Digital Service Helps Kenyans Track Mail

In a country where 80 percent of people own a cellphone but postal services are sporadic, former Kenyan government official-turned-businessman Abdulaziz Omar is looking to improve deliveries. He has unveiled MPost which alerts users via text when a delivery reaches their post office of choice, for a price of \$3 a year, [The Christian Science Monitor](#) reported. The program aims to help Africans, only one in five of whom get mail at their doorsteps, better track their deliveries to the post office.

Brazil Postal Workers Strike Again

Angered at Brazilian postal service Correios' handling of worker health, The National Federation of Workers in Postal and Similar Companies [announced](#) a strike in August. The strike continued through much of September, with [negotiations](#) between the

company and workers ongoing. Workers believe that the coronavirus pandemic endangers their health, and demand better protection.

This is the second time in as many years that Brazilian postal workers have gone on strike. Workers protested President Jair Bolsonaro's cuts to the service with a 2019 work stoppage. CPC covered that strike in a [previous update](#).

Australia Post Letters Fall, Packages Rise

Similar to other countries, Australia's postal service saw the ecommerce demand of the pandemic raise its package volume, while its mail business was lower. Australia Post saw a 15 percent rise in package revenue to \$5.5 billion in FY2020 compared to FY2019, and a 10 percent decline in letter revenue to \$2.0 billion in the same period, the service [announced](#).

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