



NATIONAL POTATO COUNCIL

50 F Street, NW, Suite 900
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 682-9456 phone
www.nationalpotatocouncil.org

November 22, 2021

The Honorable Tom Vilsack
Secretary
U.S. Department of Agriculture
1400 Independence Avenue, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20250

Dear Secretary Vilsack:

The U.S. potato industry would like to thank you for your strong support in addressing the evolving threat of the virulent potato wart disease (*Synchytrium endobioticum*) on Prince Edward Island (PEI) in Canada.

Today, we have become aware that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) has taken science-based steps to protect their domestic industry as well as the U.S. from further risk from potato wart disease. These steps were undertaken by CFIA in coordination with the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine division.

It is our understanding that CFIA has suspended the shipment of seed potatoes from PEI to other Canadian provinces and also instituted new measures on fresh (table stock) and processing potatoes in order to limit disease transmission. Additionally, CFIA is suspending export of all potatoes from PEI to the U.S. until this evolving situation can be fully ascertained and the risks to the U.S. industry mitigated. Equipment that has worked in PEI fields also has additional restrictions before it can enter the U.S.

As you are aware, this situation has been evolving for a number of years. In late 2020, CFIA took the step of suspending PEI seed potato exports to the U.S. after potato wart was found in two seed fields. As we stated earlier this year when CFIA eventually rescinded that suspension after finding no evidence of further disease;

"Though the absence of such evidence appears positive on its face, the lack of clear answers from CFIA does concern our industry. Potato wart is a disease that can lie dormant in the soil for years but if undetected can reemerge and cause tremendous harm."

Unfortunately, CFIA has again detected potato wart disease this time in fields producing potatoes for processing. These detections are particularly disconcerting, as they come less than a year after the detections in seed fields and just seven months after CFIA viewed the situation as under control and lifted any export restrictions.

Should potato wart be transmitted to the United States, it would have severe consequences. Beyond the domestic costs to growers and the industry, the U.S. would likely immediately lose access to all international fresh potato markets costing the industry over \$225 million in annual

exports.

Recognizing this potential impact and the clear evidence through repeated detections that PEI's potato wart disease situation is not under control, we are strongly supportive of USDA's efforts to enhance CFIA's measures to limit risk from PEI potatoes until the situation can be fully ascertained and mitigated.

We respect the difficult situation facing potato growers on PEI due to this threat. As additional information becomes available, the U.S. industry stands ready to engage with APHIS, CFIA and the Canadian industry to assess appropriate measures for risk mitigation.

Thank you again for USDA's work on this important matter. We sincerely appreciate the strong engagement by USDA APHIS and all of USDA in addressing this significant threat.

Sincerely,



W. Kam Quarles
Chief Executive Officer
National Potato Council

State Signatories: Colorado Potato Administrative Committee
Empire State Potato Growers
Idaho Grower Shippers Association
Idaho Potato Commission
Maine Potato Board
Potato Growers of Michigan
North Carolina Potato Association
Northern Plains Potato Growers Association
Oregon Potato Commission
Pennsylvania Co-Operative Potato Growers
Virginia Potato and Vegetable Growers Association
Washington State Potato Commission
Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association

Cc: Undersecretary of Marketing and Regulatory Services
Administrator of APHIS
Deputy Administrator – APHIS Plant Protection and Quarantine