



NATIONAL POTATO COUNCIL

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November 16, 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 the strong support of Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service's (APHIS) Plant Protection and Quarantine division in defending U.S. domestic potato production from invasive pests and diseases.

In particular, we sincerely appreciate APHIS' rapid efforts late last year to address the detection by the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA) of the virulent potato wart disease (*Synchytrium endobioticum*) in two fields on a seed potato farm in Prince Edward Island (PEI). At that time, we strongly supported the APHIS coordination of a voluntary suspension by CFIA of all seed potato exports to the U.S. from PEI as they worked to investigate the nature of these detections.

As we stated earlier this year when CFIA eventually rescinded that suspension on seed potatoes after finding no evidence of further disease;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, in the last month 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.

In response, it is our understanding that CFIA has again voluntarily suspended exports of seed potatoes from PEI to the U.S. However, this action does not appear to comprehensively address the situation and additional measures should be taken.

As indicated, the most recent detections are in processing fields, not seed fields. Furthermore, CFIA does not appear to be instituting any new measures for other Canadian provinces receiving potatoes or equipment from PEI.

Should potato wart be transmitted to the United States, it would have severe consequences.

Beyond the domestic economic 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 urge USDA to undertake the following preventive measures;

1. Immediately suspend all exports of potatoes to the U.S. from PEI to address the most recent area of detection.
2. Restrict equipment working in PEI potato fields from crossing the border into the U.S.
3. Engage with CFIA to limit the ability for PEI potatoes to inadvertently transmit potato wart disease through other provinces via seed, equipment, or other pathways.

Thank you again for USDA's work on this important matter. We would appreciate any information you may have on these actions.

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