



UNITED STATES – EXPORT INFORMATION

USDA lifts restrictions on Alberta seed potatoes – 2009/01

Effective January 28, 2009, the United States Animal and Plant Health Inspection Services (APHIS) lifts the restriction on Alberta Seed Potatoes going to the US. As a result of CFIA following all necessary steps to comply fully with U.S. import requirements, Alberta will be able to resume the export of seed potatoes to the U.S.

In October 2007 a cyst nematode was found on seed potatoes at two farms. The discovery of the worm-like growth led CFIA to immediately quarantine the two farms, issue a voluntary ban and advise USDA (as part of a MOU). The US border was closed to all Alberta seed potatoes to prevent the spread of potato cyst nematodes until further testing by CFIA and USDA APHIS. This ban only affected seed potatoes, not commercial potatoes. Potato cyst nematodes are recognized internationally as quarantine plant pests; however, they do not pose a threat to human health but can reduce yields by up to 80% if it becomes established.

CFIA tested a large number of soil samples and confirmed that all seed comes from fields that were sampled and tested and shown to be free of PCN. The U.S. market is now open to all Canadian seed potatoes that meet PCN Phytosanitary Guidelines. These guidelines will soon be amended based on recommendations contained in a 2008 Independent International Science Panel report on PCN. The amendments will be made jointly by the CFIA and U.S. Department of Agriculture in full consultation with industry representatives.

The Government of Canada is committed to ensuring continued market access for Canadian seed potatoes while working to protect the sector against the spread of PCN.

Sources / links of interest:

Potato Growers of Alberta - <http://www.albertapotatoes.ca/abtabpga/doc.nsf>

Canadian Food Inspection Agency - www.inspection.gc.ca