



Department
for Environment
Food & Rural Affairs

T: 01904 465632
helpline@defra.gsi.gov.uk
www.defra.gov.uk

To: NFU, Potato Council, BPTA, PPA, FPSA, FPC

Your ref:
Our ref:
Date: 21 October 2013

Dear Sir/Madam

IMPORT OF POTATOES

This letter is being issued by the UK Plant Health Authorities to remind you of requirements concerning the import of seed and ware potatoes.

The arrangements described in the letter are designed to protect our plant health status and it is vital that those involved in importing potatoes take note of the requirements, to mitigate the threat of introducing harmful organisms. Any outbreak of a harmful organism, like potato ring rot, would have substantial effects on affected businesses as well as for the reputation of the wider industry. Your continued support in helping to keep the UK free of such organisms and cascading this important message is appreciated.

Since 7 December 2012, requirements have been in force which mean that:

- **Poland** (seed and ware) – these must be accompanied at the time of import into England by a ring rot test certificate issued by the Polish Plant Health Authority. While it is not a legal requirement for Polish consignments to be accompanied by the certificate after import, it is important that the certificate is retained following import to demonstrate compliance with the import requirements. Ensuring that consignments are accompanied by the certificate until their final destination will also help to avoid unnecessary delay during surveillance by the PHSI. In addition to the requirement for a test certificate, it is necessary for all consignments being imported into England to be notified to Fera in writing at least 2 days in advance of the intended date of import, providing certain information (as described in the Annex). This applies to both seed and ware potatoes. The notification supplements details which the Polish Plant Health Authority provides to recipient member states about tested consignments.
- **Romania, Spain and Portugal** (seed and ware) - all consignments being imported must be notified to Fera at least 2 days in advance of the intended date of import, providing certain information (as described in the Annex).



These requirements were introduced in response to the high levels of ring rot outbreaks in Poland and Romania and in light of evidence that UK companies were sourcing potatoes from this region, following the poor UK harvest last year. Ring rot was intercepted in a consignment of ware potatoes from Poland in 2012 and a number of other Member States have received potatoes which were not in compliance with the EU and Polish requirements. In relation to Spain and Portugal, while there have been no interceptions of Epitrix to date and EU legislation is now in place against this pest, we have placed the previous voluntary notification arrangements on a statutory footing for both seed and ware to improve our intelligence and monitoring of this trade.

The EU single market means that potatoes being imported from EU member states are not subject to routine inspection at points of entry to England. However potatoes are included in the PHSI's quarantine surveillance programme, which involves inspections at premises where potatoes are produced, traded and used. Such inspections are risk-based and may involve a check of records, official sampling and testing, or a combination of these. The information generated through the statutory notification programme will help to target inspections in the most effective way.

In the event of non-compliance with requirements, Inspectors have powers to act under the Plant Health (England) Order 2005. The requirements would be described in a statutory Notice and could include re-export of the consignment or destruction in accordance with specified options, such as processing, landfill or animal feed after boiling. In some circumstances, where the inspector determines that there is limited risk of ring rot being present, official sampling and testing at the importer's expense may be offered to determine that this is the case.

As a reminder of the specific requirements which apply to the import of potatoes:

For **seed potatoes** please note:

- Imports from outside the EU are prohibited, except from **Switzerland** where equivalent measures to those for EU countries are in place, which means the potatoes must be accompanied by a plant passport/official certificate. Such seed potatoes are subject to the statutory notification system described in the Annex. Compliance with the system helps to provide intelligence on the trade and facilitates a rapid response in the event of any problems, as in the ring rot outbreak in England earlier this year. This outbreak was dealt with quickly and effectively thanks in part to the ability of the PHSI to trace relevant deliveries using information provided through the statutory notification system.

For **ware** potatoes please note:

- **Algeria, Egypt, Israel, Libya, Morocco, Syria, Tunisia and Turkey** – imports from these countries all require a phytosanitary certificate (issued by the respective plant health authorities).
- **Egypt** - in addition to a phytosanitary certificate, companies wishing to pack, wash or otherwise process Egyptian potatoes are required to apply to the relevant UK Plant Health Authority for annual authorisation to be licensed to handle ware potatoes. Specific conditions are imposed by the Authority and imports of ware potatoes are subject to testing for brown rot. The fee for this must be paid for by the importer. If you are interested in applying please contact your local Fera office for further details.

- **Switzerland** – equivalent measures to those for EU countries are in place, which means the potatoes must be accompanied by a registration number.

Ware potatoes are prohibited from all other non-EU countries and will be subject to statutory action, which may include destruction, where found.

For all other Member states there are no import restrictions. However supplies from these countries must be accompanied by a registration number shown on the packaging or with the vehicle, in line with legal requirements, to ensure they meet plant health requirements.

The UK Plant Health Authorities are urging processors and traders to source their potatoes carefully, to avoid any delays or rejections when consignments arrive in the UK. While the poor conditions seen in 2012 have not been repeated in 2013, this does not mean that buyers will not be seeking potatoes from areas which would not normally be marketed in the UK. We also encourage you to carry out good hygiene and biosecurity, to avoid the risk of introducing and spreading harmful organisms. This will also ensure you are doing your part in protecting potato production in the UK.

We cannot emphasise enough the importance of knowing where you source your potatoes from, to safeguard the UK potato industry and keep the UK free from quarantine pests and diseases. You can help by considering carefully the choice of where to source your potatoes from and by remaining vigilant for any symptoms of disease. If you receive potatoes which do not comply with the above requirements, you should inform the relevant Plant Health Authority immediately.

If you have any questions about this letter, or wish to discuss the requirements for importing potatoes, please contact your local Fera Plant Health and Seeds Inspector. Details can be found at <http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/contactUs.cfm>

Yours faithfully



Office of the UK Chief Plant Health Officer
Defra, Sand Hutton, York YO41 1LZ

Annex: Statutory notification requirements

All seed potatoes being introduced into England from another EU Member State or Switzerland must be notified.

Ware potatoes being introduced into England from Poland, Romania, Spain and Portugal must be notified.

At least two days prior to the intended date of introduction into England of the potatoes, the importer must supply details of:

- (a) the intended time, date and means of introduction of the potatoes;
- (b) their intended point of entry into England;
- (c) their intended use and destination;
- (d) their variety and quantity; and
- (e) the producer's identification number.

Notification can be made to the PHSI directly on the eDomero system:

<http://edomero.defra.gov.uk>

Registration and user guidance can be found on the Homepage.

Seed or ware notification application forms can be accessed from the "Specific Plant Health Notification" drop down menu.

In exceptional circumstances notifications can instead be made via the following mailboxes, provided all the required information is present and submitted during office hours (09:00 to 17:00 Monday to Friday)

Seed potatoes PHSI-North@fera.gsi.gov.uk

Ware potatoes planthealth.info@fera.gsi.gov.uk