The Food and Environment Research Agency

To importers of potatoes from Spain and Portugal
22 February 2011

Epitrix - notification of imports of Spanish/Portuguese potatoes

Dear Sir/Madam

This letter seeks your co-operation in protecting UK potato production, by helping to prevent the introduction of Epitrix, a damaging pest of potatoes. Epitrix is now present in Portugal and Spain. Fera is asking you to notify introductions of all potatoes (seed or ware) originating from these countries. If this pest was allowed to establish in the UK it would be impossible to eradicate and would cost many £m annually to control.

By making notifications, this will enable the Plant Health and Seeds Inspectorate to carry out targeted inspections for the pest and to build up evidence on whether problems are arising and, if so, where from. It is hoped that this pre-emptive system will be sufficient to protect against the pest and to avoid more stringent statutory measures in the event that the pest is considered to represent an increased threat, such as from an outbreak in the UK.

While the notification scheme is voluntary at present, we are investigating the possibility of statutory arrangements in future. The scheme imposes a negligible burden and we would urge you to co-operate, to help to protect the UK potato industry collectively, and to avoid the prospect of more stringent measures in future.

We are asking you to provide the following information at least 2 days in advance of deliveries:

Expected delivery date
Grower name & address (including country of origin)
Grower official registration number
Where the potatoes will be available for inspection & Contact telephone number
Load number
Have the potatoes been washed or brushed?

This information should be sent to PHSI-Cambs@fera.gsi.gov.uk

The notification scheme is effective immediately and if you require any further information a Plant Pest Fact Sheet and additional information can be found on our website at:
http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/plants/plantHealth/pestsDiseases/index.cfm

Please contact your local PHSI for more details or if you suspect any quarantine plant pest or disease. Details are available at: http://www.fera.defra.gov.uk/contactUs/contactPlh.cfm

Yours faithfully

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