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Canada suspends export of PEI potatoes; U.S. agrees with decision

By

Craig Levitt, managing editor

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The National Potato Council, as well as various grower organizations applauded the announcement by Canada's Acting Chief Plant Health Officer David Bailey to prevent the spread of potato wart from Prince Edward Island by restricting the movement of PEI potatoes to the U.S.

“The U.S. potato industry appreciates CFIA for acting quickly and recognizing the dire threat to the U.S. and Canadian potato industries should potato wart be spread beyond PEI,” said NPC President and Maine potato grower Dominic LaJoie.

The Prince Edward Island Potato Board was not as pleased and has a different view: “It is the understanding of the Potato Board that this suspension comes as a result of a request from the United States Department of Agriculture, under threat of implementation of a federal order. Furthermore, the USDA’s basis for this action is predicated on feedback from a segment of the American potato industry, which is advocating for this suspension. Based on the communications that our growers, dealers, exporters and staff have had with numerous contacts in the United States, it is apparent that these calls for border restrictions are not representative of the majority of American industry stakeholders and buyers who need and want PEI potatoes this marketing season.”

The Prince Edward Island Potato Board is calling for an immediate reversal of government-imposed restrictions on the movement of fresh potatoes, calling on representatives from both sides of the border to resolve this issue.

It is believed that should potato wart be transmitted to the United States, the U.S. potato industry would likely lose access to all international fresh potato markets, costing the industry over \$225 million in annual sales.

The USDA commended Canada for implementing the necessary measures to safeguard against the transmission of potato wart disease.

“I appreciate Canada’s action to suspend the movement of all potatoes from Prince Edward Island to the United States,” said Agriculture Secretary Tom Vilsack. “Our risk assessment demonstrated that this action is necessary to protect U.S. potato producers from possible exposure to the Federally designated select agent *Synchytrium endobioticum*, commonly known as potato wart. We look forward to working with the Canadian Food Inspection Agency as they delimit the infestation and trace the sources so that appropriate mitigation measures can be imposed and trade restrictions relaxed.”

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