SEED POTATO MARKETING ARRANGEMENTS FOR THE 2024

CROP

1. **PLANT HEALTH REQUIREMENTS**

Marketing of Northern Ireland seed potatoes is governed by “The Seed Potatoes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016 (S.R. 2016 No. 190)”. Plant Health matters are specified in “The Plant Health (Official Controls and Miscellaneous Provisions) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2020 (S.R. 2020 No. 293) (as amended)”. Fees are determined by the “The Seed Potatoes (Crop Fees) Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2009 (S.R. 2009 No.59) (as amended)”. All seed growers, applicants and sellers are advised to make themselves aware of the detailed requirements of these Regulations.

1. All seed potatoes marketed must be from a crop which has been certified and classified by the Department. The standards for grading and packing of all consignments are set out in [The Seed Potatoes Regulations (Northern Ireland) 2016](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/nisr/2016/190/contents#:~:text=Amendments%20and%20revocations.%20These%20Regulations%20consolidate%20with%20amendments%20the) Additional phytosanitary or quality requirements may be required by certain importing countries.
2. Export to EC countries, GB and any movement within NI. Before marketing basic seed potatoes, a plant passport (label) supplied by the Department must be affixed to each package or container and sealed by the Department’s Plant Health Inspection Branch (PHIB).
3. Exports to non-EC countries (excluding GB) and the Canary Islands. Seed potatoes for shipment to non-EC countries and the Canary Islands must be accompanied by a phytosanitary(plant health) certificate issued by PHIB.
4. Merchants are advised to give growers a reasonable amount of time to grade and pack consignments in order to allow at least two days for “curing” prior to farm inspection, sealing and loading for despatch. This is particularly important for shipment in containers.
5. Guidance on packaging, labelling and inspection procedures is given in the following paragraphs.
6. The fee for the inspection and sealing of seed potatoes from the 2024 crop is unchanged at £4.80 per tonne sealed. This includes the supply of plant passports (labels).

**2. BAGS AND CONTAINERS**

Bags should be new, clean, and of a type approved by DAERA.

Merchants intending to market seed potatoes in 500 kg, 1,000 kg or heavier bags or boxes must inform the local inspector of their intention prior to the commencement of packing to facilitate inspection. All bags must be new**.**

Growers should note that big bags must be sealed by threading the yellow plastic seal through a pre punched hole in the label and sealing it around the mouth of the bag.

Boxes or containers should be new or if previously used for any purpose, must be cleaned and disinfected to the satisfaction of the inspector.

**3. BRANDS**

All packages or containers used for seed shipment should contain the following particulars, which will be known and referred to as the Standard Brand:-

Northern Ireland Pre-Basic Seed Potatoes or Basic Seed Potatoes

The name, or initials or trade brand or other symbols (e.g. plant health registration number) identifying the person at whose request the pre-basic seed potatoes or basic seed potatoes are sealed.

Net Weight (kgs)

The letters and figures in the Brand should be at least 50mm in height. It is suggested that “Northern Ireland” should be emphasised by branding in letters greater than 50mm.

Information shown in the Brand must correspond with that on the passport.

Where it is intended to market seed potatoes in packages or containers that do not have the Standard Brand the Department should be contacted to ensure that the proposed branding is acceptable.

**4. EU Exit**

**When the United Kingdom (UK) left the European Union (EU) on 1st January 2021 imports of GB (Scotland, England and Wales) seed potatoes were prohibited. The agreement reached between the UK and the EU in February 2023 removed this prohibition and, when the required conditions are met, GB seed potatoes may be imported into Northern Ireland (NI).**

**The scheme for allowing GB Seed Potato Imports is known as the Northern Ireland Plant Health Label Scheme (NIPHLS).**

Growers must sign a declaration stating that they agree to abide by the rules of the scheme prior to bringing in GB seed potatoes. GB seed must be grown in Northern Ireland and not move to an EU member state including the Republic of Ireland. In addition, those intending to import GB seed potatoes should arrange to register on TRACES NT to notify the import. More information can be found at <https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/moving-gb-seed-potatoes-northern-ireland-under-niphl-scheme>

When growers purchase seed potatoes from the ROI or mainland Europe, DAERA should be notified prior to the importation. This will permit stocks to be tested and the results known well in advance of planting. Growers are reminded that EU grades A and B (Blue label grades) are prohibited in Northern Ireland. The seed should also satisfy the Protected Zone requirements for Northern Ireland (Colorado Beetle and Beet Necrotic Yellow Vein Virus), and this will be evidenced with the abbreviations LPTNDE and BNYVV being printed on the seed potato label.

The seed potato import notification form can be found online at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/seed-potato-import-notification-form>

**5. VOLUNTARY EXPORT STANDARD**

In agreement with exporters and growers, the Department is inspecting lots for export to the Canary Islands and non-EU countries to a tighter standard than the standard required in the EU. Growers were previously informed of this initiative and the hope is that this move will reduce rejections and increase trade to these destinations. The standard is as follows:

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Disease, pest, damage, blemish or impurity** | **Percentage tolerance** | **Group tolerance** | **Overall tolerance** | **Allowable surface area** |  |
| **Rots including Blight** | **0.2%** | **0.2%** | **4.7%** |  |  |
| **Gangrene/Dry/Wet Rot** | **0.2%** |  |  |
| **Blackleg/Soft Rots** | **0.2%** |  |  |
| **Black Scurf** | **1.5%** | **1.5%** | **12.5%** |  |
| **Common Scab** | **1.5%** | **12.5%** |  |
| **Powdery Scab** | **1.5%** | **12.5%** |  |
| **Skin Spot** | **0.5%** | **12.5%** |  |
| **Damage/ Misshapen** | **1.0%** |  |  |  |
| **Earth and other extraneous matter** | **0.5%** |  |  |  |  |

This is a strict standard especially for skin disease, for example it allows only 1.5% of tubers to have more than 12.5% common scab whereas the EU standard is 5% at 33% common scab.

**6. IMPORTING COUNTRY REQUIREMENTS**

Importing countries may specify additional conditions and regulations and apply stricter tolerances than the voluntary export standard. **Sellers or their agents should make contact with officials from the importing country to ensure that all additional requirements are met and understood before grading commences**.

The following are the main requirements for **some** of the countries which import Northern Ireland seed potatoes.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **COUNTRY** | **MAIN REQUIREMENTS** |
| **Canary Islands** | **Black Scurf – 5% with greater than 10% surface area**  **Spraing (PMTV and TRV) – 1.5%**  **Silver Scurf – 50% of tubers with greater than 50% surface area**  **Practically no soil, seed should be brushed with no adhering lumps**  **Wood packaging should comply with ISPM 15 (some recent GB imports have been re-handled due to pallets without the ISPM 15 mark)** |
| **Morocco** | **Powdery Scab – Nil tolerance**  **Silver Scurf – 5% of tubers with greater than one third surface area** |
| **Egypt** | **Frost and misshapes – 0%**  **Pink Rot, Blight and Spraing - 0.1%**  **Internal brown, black spot or vascular discolouration – 0.5%**  **Hollow Heart and Black Heart– 0.5%**  **Powdery Scab – 1% of tubers with greater than 10% surface area**  **Common Scab – 1/3 tubers free from scab, remainder not more than 1/16 surface area**  **Black Dot (Colletorichum coccodes) – no tubers with more than 20% surface area**  **Silver scurf – 20% tubers by weight with greater than 20% surface area**  **Rhizoctonia solani (all symptoms including black scurf, elephant hide, cracking, etc.) - up to 5% of tubers by weight with greater than 10% surface area**  **Tubers should be maximum size 55mm**  **Wood packaging should comply with ISPM 15** |
| **Saudi Arabia** | **Bacterial Rots and Spraing – Nil**  **Adhering and loose soil - 1%**  **Tubers should be maximum size 55mm. No inner label** |

Since 2019 the Canary Islands have relaxed their Silver Scurf and Black Scurf requirements, see previous table. However, this remains a challenging market and we advise growers not to relax their selection and grading for this market.

With recent Colorado Beetle findings in England and Denmark the Canary Islands are especially concerned with soil on seed potatoes. Growers should ensure samples are as clean as possible.

DAERA inspectors will assist growers in the selection of stocks for this very strict market and growers should contact inspectors well in advance of export for guidance in this

respect. A sample from the prospective stock may be washed prior to grading to assess the level of skin blemishes accurately.

**7. OFFICIAL PASSPORT**

1. An official passport (label) with the grower’s Plant Health Registration number printed in permanent black ink must be attached to all packages or containers.

(b) For potatoes grown under contract, the passport must show both the applicant’s and contract grower’s plant health registration number e.g. UK/NI 8888-9999 where “8888” represents the Applicant and “9999” the Grower.

(c) The passport will show the Union Grade, Field Generation and stock Crop Number

(d) Passports must not be re-used.

Passports bearing manuscript changes will **not** be sealed. Any unauthorised amendments or changes made after sealing will render the passport invalid.

**(e) Ordering Plant Passports**

Plant Passport labels are now ordered online using the Seed Potato labels application system available via DAERA Online Services, which can be accessed at the following link:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/services/daera-online-services>

A user guide can be found at:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/publications/seed-potato-label-online-user-guide>

Labels will usually be dispatched within 2 working days after the application is made and will be posted to the delivery address provided when the order is placed online.

It is the responsibility of the applicant/ grower/ merchant/ agent to manage their orders to ensure they leave sufficient time to receive their order. **DAERA Forest Service Plant Health cannot FastTrack orders** and all orders will be processed by date submitted.

**8. CHEMICAL TREATMENT**

Where stocks have been treated with a chemical this must be stated on a suitable label

attached to the bag. DAERA are prepared to print details of the chemical treatment used

on tubers on the Plant Passport. Growers/applicants wishing to have the chemical

treatment recorded on the Plant Passport should state the chemical treatment on the

Label application. Chemical treatment must be stated in terms of **active ingredient** not

the chemical trade name. The chemical treatment can still be printed on a separate label and attached to the bag.

DAERA does not guarantee that any chemical treatment stated on the Plant Passport

has been applied or that it has been applied in the correct manner. It is the

grower/applicant of the stock who has responsibility to ensure that the “Stated Chemical

Treatment” has been applied correctly.

**9. INSPECTION**

(a) Seed Potatoes for marketing in EC Countries will only be inspected and sealed on the farm or store, as appropriate, prior to transport to their final destination. It is essential that the Inspector is presented with the correct quantity and the details of destination. **Inspections will only be carried out if suitable inspection facilities are available on the premises, namely, an inspection shute, adequate lighting and access to the consignment to permit the inspector to collect the required sample in safety.**

(b) All seed potatoes for shipment to non-EC destinations and the Canary Islands must be: -

1. inspected and sealed on the farm;
2. re-presented for check inspection if they remain in the store for more than 14 days after inspection and sealing;
3. **DOCUMENTARY REQUIREMENTS**
   1. The seller of seed potatoes should provide the purchaser with a document giving the details of the lot within 14 days of delivery;
   2. This document should include the variety, net weight, Union Grade, size and grower’s UK/NI number;
   3. For seed potatoes marketed within Northern Ireland the seller is encouraged to supply a copy of the SD1 (Sealing Document) for the lot to the buyer. Providing a copy of the SD1 will ensure that the all-documentary requirements are met;
   4. Seed growers should note that where a stock is moved to another grower’s/seller’s store for grading an SD1 should accompany the load.

**11. TRANSPORTATION**

(a) **In Northern Ireland**

All potatoes transported on trailers, flat beds and lorries should be covered in such a way that they are completely protected from rain and frost.

(b) **To Great Britain and the Republic of Ireland**

Loads on trailers, flat beds and lorries should be double sheeted from end to end and insulated sufficiently to protect the load from frost.

“Tautliners” are satisfactory provided the floor, sides and tops of the bags are adequately protected from frost and condensation by the use of insulation and moisture absorbent materials e.g. corrugated cardboard.

(c) **To Foreign Destinations**

1. When cargoes are laid down in sheds there should be heavy tarpaulin-type covers and/or heating equipment sufficient to prevent frost damage.
2. Non-insulated containers are satisfactory provided the floor, sides and tops of the bags are adequately protected from frost and condensation by the use of insulating materials e.g. corrugated cardboard. Such containers should not be left outdoors during frosty weather after loading.
3. The seller should ensure that the shipping agent sets the temperature in reefer containers to a suitable level for the duration of the voyage and the

variety exported.

1. Growers are encouraged to carry out a “Hot-Box” test prior to export to identify lots suitable for export.

**12. PHYTOSANITARY CERTIFICATES (FOR DESTINATIONS OUTSIDE THE EC AND FOR THE CANARY ISLANDS)**

1. **Ordering Phytosanitary Certificates**

The previous paper-based method for requesting Phytosanitary certificates has been replaced with an online system called PECOL which can be accessed on the following link:

<https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/phytosanitary-export-certificate-online-pecol>

Please enter all necessary information on the online form including, your Business I.D, consignor, variety, quantity, Union Grade, consignee and eventual destination. Incomplete forms may delay the issue of the certificate. DAERA will aim to provide

the phytosanitary certificate within 10 working days of the online application being submitted. More details can be found on the above link

**Please submit an application at the earliest opportunity if considering an export.**

b) **The Department will not:-**

Issue phytosanitary certificates at variance with those already agreed and normally accepted by countries of import unless the shipping merchanthas reached **PRIOR** agreement with Plant Health Inspection Branch **BEFORE** finalising the transaction with the customer.

**13. VARIATIONS FROM THESE ARRANGEMENTS**

Variations from the above arrangements will not **normally** be permitted, however, requests for minor variations **PRIOR TO THEIR IMPLEMENTATION** will be considered.

It is the responsibility of the merchant to inform his haulier or agent of the shipping arrangements.

**14. THESE ARRANGEMENTS ARE FOR GENERAL GUIDANCE ONLY. DETAILS OF INDIVIDUAL SHIPMENTS TO NON-EC COUNTRIES SHOULD BE CLEARED IN ADVANCE WITH PLANT HEALTH INSPECTION BRANCH, CLARE HOUSE, 303 AIRPORT ROAD WEST, BELFAST BT3 9ED (TELEPHONE 028 9052 4148 or 028 9052 4168)**

**15. PLANT BREEDER’S RIGHTS**

Merchants should note that it is their responsibility to ensure that they have received the necessary consent for marketing seed potatoes of any variety which is subject to Plant Breeder’s Rights.

**16. FURTHER INFORMATION**

Further information on Northern Ireland Seed Potatoes, including details of how to apply for Phytosanitary Certificates and Plant Passports and the Register of Pre-Basic and Basic Seed Potato Crops 2024 can be viewed on the DAERA Internet site at [www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/seed-potatoes](https://www.daera-ni.gov.uk/articles/seed-potatoes)

**Issued by Plant Health Inspection Branch**

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**1st October 2024**