



STATE OF MAINE
DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, CONSERVATION & FORESTRY
DIVISION OF ANIMAL & PLANT HEALTH
28 STATE HOUSE STATION
AUGUSTA, MAINE 04333-0028

WALTER WHITCOMB
COMMISSIONER

PAUL LEPAGE
GOVERNOR

ANN GIBBS
DIRECTOR

January 6, 2016
Re: Florida Post Harvest Test

Dear Grower/Shipper,

Please let this letter serve as a notice that the 2015 Florida Post Harvest Test was halted early on January 4, 2016 due to severe crop loss resulting from rain and flooding at the farm location in Homestead, Florida. The area received approximately 13 inches of rain during the first two weeks of December that rotted seed pieces and drown viable plants that had emerged. This is the first time in over 25 years that the Department has lost the crop in Florida. The last time there was an issue it was due to frost damage.

The decision was based on several factors; notably, reports from the contracted farm manager, Joe Borek and weekly crop reports from a third party crop consultant, Glades Crop Care. Their written reports and detailed photographs from the farm in Homestead gave us indication that there would not be enough surviving samples for the virus readings in early January. Based upon this information Seed Inspector Peter Voisine was sent to Florida the week of December 28 to further document the extent of damage to the crop. His plant counts and photographs confirmed that only one lot out of approximately 1,100 planted had more than a 200 plant count out of the 400 tubers planted. Therefore a decision was made to end the test based on these results.

The Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, Division of Animal & Plant Health, was very hopeful that the 2015 Florida test crop would yield great results based upon the quality of seed that was sent to Florida for planting. Unfortunately weather conditions beyond anyone's control after planting were such that it did not make the test viable for this year. Because of this the Department **will not** be printing a Florida test book for the 2015-2016 season. The Department Seed Potato Certification Rule, Chapter 252(F)(2)(5)(a), states "Samples with less than 50% emergence will be so designated in the annual Post-Harvest Test booklet. Such samples shall be granted certification on the basis of the results of the summer field inspection."

Since the weather conditions of Florida affected the entire crop of samples sent for certification, it has been decided to revert back to all the field readings that passed listed in the 2015 Certified Seed Potato Book which is located at this web address: http://www.maine.gov/dacf/php/seed_potato/index.shtml. Photographs of the Florida test will also be posted on the website listed above so that growers can see the damage.

Attached to this letter is a copy of the Post-Harvest Test report submitted to the seed Executive Council meeting on December 21, 2015. This report outlines specifics as to the timeline of events that influenced the Department's decisions to conclude the Florida test for 2015.

Please contact the department if you have questions regarding this decision or require additional information on laboratory testing samples for this year.

Best regards,

Eric Hitchcock
Seed Certification Program Manager

E. Ann Gibbs
Director of Animal and Plant Health