

**Concise Explanatory Statement**  
***for amendments to***  
**Chapter 16-324 WAC**  
**Certification of Seed Potatoes**

On November 25, 2014, the Washington State Department of Agriculture held a hearing in Bellingham to accept testimony on its proposal to amend chapter 16-324 WAC by:

- 1) Repealing the requirement for laboratory testing of lots entered in the post-harvest testing for PVY;
- 2) Clarifying the definition of seed potato farm;
- 3) Requiring a certificate of compliance for evidence of eligibility for the transfer of seed lots between seed potato farms;
- 4) Authorizing the department to permit seed growers to plant lots in which the eligibility hasn't been determined under certain conditions; and
- 5) Including the bacterium *Candidatus liberibacter* with the tolerance for phytoplasmas.

**Reasons for Adopting the Rule:**

Seed potato certification is an effective means of controlling systemic diseases/pests such as virus diseases in commercial potato crops. As a vegetatively propagated annual crop, potatoes tend to accumulate viruses that eventually affect production and quality. Washington commercial potato growers rely on certified seed to minimize the effects of these pests. Growers want to eliminate redundancy in the post-harvest test, clarify eligibility, and add a new emerging pest to the tolerances for field inspections.

This chapter establishes standards for seed potato certification. The proposed amendment repeals the requirement for laboratory testing of seed potato lots entered in the post-harvest test. The proposal also clarifies the definition of "seed potato farm," defines the documentation needed when transferring seed potatoes to another seed farm within the state, and adds the bacterial pathogen *Candidatus liberibacter* to the phytoplasma tolerance. The current rule requires all generation 1 (G1) lots over ¼ acre and all lots sold to other seed potato farms to be post-harvest tested. The post-harvest test also includes a laboratory test for potato virus Y (PVY). Although the post-harvest test results don't affect the status of certification, they do affect the eligibility for re-certification. This proposal will repeal the laboratory test component of the post-harvest test and reduce costs to program participants. A more precise definition of seed potato farm and specifying documentation to confirm eligibility of seed potato lots purchased from other growers within the state will increase transparency of the program without additional costs to the growers. Adding a permit section to the rule will protect the growers from unforeseen problems such as unusual weather that could delay planting.

**Summary of Comments:**

The public comment period ran from October 22, 2014, until close of business on November 25, 2014. During that time, one written comment was received regarding the proposed amendments.

***The following summarizes the testimony regarding the proposed amendments:***

**Jeff Bedlington** – representing Cascade Farms, Inc. Mr. Bedlington stated, “I am in support of the proposed rule changes.”

**Difference Between Proposed Text and Published Text:**

None