MAINE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE CONSERVATION & FORESTRY

Seed Certification Program

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Seed Potato Certification

In 2026, sixty-four growers from Aroostook, Penobscot, Lincoln, and Piscataquis counties participated in Maine's Seed Potato Certification Program, planting 9,008 acres. All but three growers were from Aroostook. While statewide acreage has remained relatively consistent over the past four years, average acreage per grower rose from 122 acres in 2025 to 141 acres in 2026.

FIG 1: A seed potato field in Houlton, ME

Growers planted more than 95 varieties and breeding lines. Five varieties--Caribou Russet, Lamoka, Atlantic, Waneta, and Russet Burbank (Montana Strain) -- accounted for 41% of the total acreage.

The growing season began with cool, unusually wet conditions in May, followed by warmer weather in June.

Conditions were generally favorable in July and August, although uneven rainfall caused moisture stress in some fields. Summer field inspections began in late June and continued through late August.

Since completing field inspections, the program has focused on post-harvest testing and the potato cyst nematode (PCN) survey. The program is currently processing post-harvest test entry applications and receiving post-harvest test samples from growers. Inspectors have also begun collecting soil samples from recently harvested seed potato fields. This year's PCN survey aims to collect soil samples from 3,024 acres. Soil samples will be delivered to the APHIS-PPQ Laboratory in Avoca, New York for PCN analysis.

The PCN survey is a collaborative effort between USDA APHIS and the Maine Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, supported by federal funding through Section 7721 of the Plant Protection Act.

2025-26 Shipping Inspection

Maine produced an estimated 2.7 million hundredweight (CWT) of certified seed potatoes in 2025. About three quarters of the total production remained in the state for seed, table, and processing potato production.

During the 2025–26 shipping season, Maine Seed Certification Program staff inspected shipments totaling 828,881 CWT. These included 121,607 CWT sold within the State of Maine, 493,795 CWT shipped to other U.S. states, and 213,479 CWT shipped to Canada.

Maine-certified seed potatoes were shipped to 22 other U.S. states and five Canadian provinces. The leading destinations outside Maine were Florida (19.2%), Ontario (12.9%), New York (11.1%), Quebec (9.2%), and North Carolina (9.0%). Canada remained Maine's largest international market, receiving approximately 30% of shipments sent outside the state, its highest share since the year 2022.

Import Requirements

Maine has strict seed potato import requirements to protect growers and the potato industry from the introduction and spread of serious pests and diseases. Anyone planning to bring seed potatoes into Maine to produce seed, table, or processing potatoes should review these requirements before arranging a shipment.

First, confirm that the seed's place of origin is not subject to a quarantine restriction. The person receiving the seed must obtain a Maine import permit before the shipment enters the state. The application must include supporting documents, such as the North American seed potato health certificate, current crop-year post-harvest test results for PVY and PLRV, and bacterial ring rot test results. Additional documents may be required depending on where the seed was produced or whether it is nuclear seed.

After receiving the permit, notify the Seed Certification Office or your area Certified Seed Specialist at least seven days before the expected arrival. Every imported lot must be inspected and released by the Department before it is distributed, sold, or planted. Only a seed inspector may collect an official sample; a sample collected by a grower or dealer does not meet that requirement. For details visit Maine Seed Potato Import Requirement document or contact the Seed Certification Office on 207-764-2038.

An import permit and import inspection are mandatory for seed potatoes entering Maine. Failure to comply may result in removal or destruction of the seed lot at the owner's expense and applicable civil penalties.

Waiver Request

Maine's seed potato certification rule, Chapter 252, Section 2.H(1), allows growers to request a temporary waiver of field-year designation and/or post-harvest testing requirements. Growers seeking a waiver must submit a written application to the Seed Certification Office in Presque Isle that includes:

1. The specific request, including seed quantity, variety, generation, post-harvest test results, and other relevant details.
2. Documentation of the quantity and availability of seed of that variety in Maine and other states and provinces, including disease levels in the available seed.
3. The potential economic effects on the potato industry if the waiver is denied, including possible losses of contracts or established markets.
4. The possible effects of granting the waiver on the seed industry.

The application may describe the effects on an individual farm, but it must also address seed availability and the broader industry considerations required by the rule. Complete, current documentation helps support timely review.

Before making a final decision, the Commissioner provides an opportunity for public comment and reviews the request with the Seed Potato Executive Council. The

Commissioner may grant a waiver for good cause, provided it does not jeopardize the quality of Maine seed potatoes.

Growers are encouraged to manage their crops to keep virus levels within certification tolerances. Maintaining low virus levels helps protect the quality, marketability, and reputation of Maine-certified seed potatoes.

Staff Participation in Industry Events

Seed Certification Program staff participated in several potato industry events this summer, as highlighted below.

On July 16, Program Manager Sita Ghimire joined DACF Deputy Commissioner Jo D. Saffeir at the Maine Potato Board's annual industry dinner. Sita also participated in three Fieldman's Breakfast events during the summer.

On July 29, six staff members attended a Syngenta field tour on insect and fungal disease management, post-harvest disease management, new products, and Project Nema.

FIG 2: A Syngenta representative discusses a potato fungicide trial during the field tour[1]

On August 4, two staff members attended the University of Maine's open house at Aroostook Farm in Presque Isle, where researchers presented work on potato breeding, insect management, nutrient management, remote sensing, and Potato virus Y management.

[1] No specific endorsement is intended or implied by the content of this newsletter.

These events gave staff opportunities to exchange information with growers, researchers, industry partners, and elected officials. We thank the Maine Potato Board, Syngenta, and the University of Maine for organizing the events and inviting us to participate.

From Around the Web: Major Potato Industry Events

- World Potato Congress, Oct 26-30, 2026, Naivasha, Kenya
- Potato Expo, Jan 5-7, 2027, Denver, Colorado
- 2027 Maine Potato Summit, Jan 14, 2027, Presque Isle, Maine
- Potatoes USA Spring Meeting, Mar 8-10, 2027, Denver, Colorado
- Annual Meeting of Potato Association of America, Jul 25–28, 2027, Minneapolis, Minnesota