



STATE OF IDAHO



C. L. "BUTCH" OTTER
GOVERNOR
CELIA R. GOULD
DIRECTOR

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Contact: Michael Cooper
Bureau Chief
208-332-8620

Purchasing Potatoes for Planting Certified Seed Ensures Good Yield and a Healthy Crop

Boise - Enacted by the Idaho State Legislature in 1996, the Idaho Seed Potato Law requires that all potatoes for planting purposes offered for sale or distribution into or within Idaho be inspected and certified. Certification agencies such as the Idaho Crop Improvement Association provide inspection and certification services for a variety of seed types, including potatoes. Certifications help to ensure variety purity and health of the seed.

Potato plants can be plagued with many diseases – bacterial, viral and fungal – and some of these are passed on through potato tubers. Certified seed potatoes are tested for major potato diseases, and have been selected to provide the best results with the highest yield potential. Potatoes seen in the supermarket should not be used for seed. They may have been treated to prevent sprouting, which will cause the plant to not produce a viable potato yield.

Producers of seed potatoes rigorously clean and protect their premises and do a rigorous selection to increase seed over a few generations from isolated nuclear stocks. The first leaf meristem is used in tissue culture because it has a far lower risk of containing virus particles.

An exception to the law allows for potato growers to plant back potato "eliminators" grown by them on their farm, provided they are no more than one generation removed from Certified Seed planted by them and that has been tested by the Idaho State Department of Agriculture and found substantially free from disease. Growers seeking this exemption need to get their samples in early as the test takes up to two weeks once the sampled potatoes have sprouted.

Organic growers are not exempt from this requirement. Certified organic growers are required to plant certified "organic" seed potatoes, as well as, certified seed potatoes tested for major potato diseases, as outlined above. This seed would be better for organic growers since they are less likely to have disease issues during the growing season and disease control options for organic growers can be rather limited.

Penalties for a violation of this law can run as high as \$10 per hundredweight of potatoes in violation of the law.

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