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Addressing shortage of Seed Potatoes in Ireland

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Letter addressed to Head of Plant Health, DG Sante in European Commission June 2024

“Since 1 January 2021, the European Union no longer allows the import of seed potatoes from Great Britain due to existing EU Plant Health Regulations and the lack of an agreement on equivalence requirements.”

Current Situation

- Significantly reduced availability of seed potatoes on the EU market
- Harvest yield of seed potatoes(EU) 15 to 20 % lower in 2023 vs 2022
- Extreme weather conditions (heavy rain, flooding)
- Extreme pressure from late blight/new strains of blight e.g. EU43
- Rising demand for processed potato products
- Dramatic upward price fluctuations
- Farmers have switched to the use of non-certified seeds
- Land-use shift: more area dedicated to table potatoes and less to seed and starch varieties.



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Since 2022, the EU's top five seed producing Member States – the Netherlands, France, Germany, Denmark, and Belgium - have seen a collective reduction of 10,000ha in seed cultivation, bringing the total area down to c.84,200 hectares

Scotland

The Republic of Ireland used to take more than 6,000t a year of Scotland's 25-30,000t annual seed potato exports – product that is valued because of its high plant health status

Scotland enjoys favourable climate conditions for seed potato production with low aphid levels and low virus infections.



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Seed Potato area by Member State 2023 (vs 2022)

Surface (ha)	2022	2023	2022 vs 2023
Netherlands	41,283	37,785	-8.47%
France	22,981	20,292	-11.70%
Germany	17,926	16,565	-7.59%
Poland	5,925	5,491	-7.72%
Denmark	4,851	5,011	3.30%
TOTAL EU	104,789	96,863	-7.53%

Source: ESCAA



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COPA asked the Commission for their views on the legal interpretation of Article 42.4 of the EU Plant Health Regulation 2016 No.2031. (Letter to DG Sante May 2021)

Commission position:

UK chose to stay out of the Single Market, rather than align itself with the EU's sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) regulations, so the UK was to blame for the trade restriction.

Europatat Letter to DG Sante (June 2024)

Agreement requested between EU and UK on bilateral trade in seed potatoes.

Request made to European Commission to organise an audit in Great Britain during the 2024 growing season in order that trade might resume in the 2025 season

- Seed Potato Sector Audit in the UK by European Commission took place over 2 weeks in October

Civil Dialogue Meeting on Seeds(March 2025): Stakeholders including COPA to renew request.



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Thank you

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