

UK Chief Plant Health Officer Unit
Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs
Room 11G32
Sand Hutton
York
YO41 1LZ

30 November 2015

Dear Professor Spence,

Consultation on strengthened protection against *Epitrix*

AHDB is a statutory levy board, funded by farmers, growers and others in the supply chain. Our purpose is to equip levy payers with independent, evidence-based information and tools to grow, become more competitive and sustainable.

AHDB potatoes welcomes the opportunity to respond to the consultation on proposed new national legislation to protect against the risk of introduction of *Epitrix*, a damaging pest of potatoes, being imported from Spain.

1. Do you support the proposals for national legislation?

Epitrix potato flea beetles pose a significant risk to UK potato production as evidenced by the UK Risk Register. This assessment states that if *Epitrix* potato flea beetles are accidentally introduced to the UK, they are likely to spread relatively quickly, as the adult beetles can fly. Eradication would be almost impossible, unless detected very early, because the pests can feed on a wide range of hosts. Control measures, once established would be difficult and costly.

There has been an increase in the number interceptions by APHA from potatoes imported from Spain, including from non-demarcated areas, and it is apparent that this risk is increasing.

From a plant health perspective the requirement to wash potatoes before export provides the most effective mitigation measure and **we support this proposal**.

2. If not, why not?

Not applicable.

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3. Do you support the proposal to exempt potatoes from the Balearic Islands? Please provide supporting evidence including, if relevant, details of how the origin of such potatoes can be assured?

The Balearic Islands are geographically isolated from mainland Spain and there is no evidence of *Epitrix* flea beetle being present on the Islands. The risk posed by imports from this region are less than that from mainland Spain and import consignments to the UK need to be notified currently and are subject to APHA inspection. This has provide a degree of protection to date. Maintaining the freedom from *Epitrix* on the Balearic Islands is important to the Spanish Plant Health authorities. Provided there is robust EU and national legislation in place to achieve this and also enhanced monitoring to determine the presence or otherwise of *Epitrix* on the Balearics, **an exemption may be appropriate but only if it can be demonstrated that the origin of the potatoes is the Balearic Islands and that issues surrounding the identification and labelling of potatoes from the Balearics can be resolved.** Such an exemption, if approved, should be subject to revocation if the risk is shown to significantly increase by, for example, identification of damage on tubers or interception of *Epitrix* flea beetles on potatoes imported from the Balearics or findings of *Epitrix* on the Islands.

4. Are there particular consequences associated with the proposals which have not been drawn out in the consultation paper and which need to be considered?

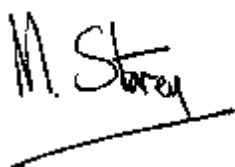
No

5. Do you have evidence available on potential impacts of the proposed measures, to contribute to an assessment of costs and benefits? For instance, any information on potential additional costs that the measure is likely to impose on businesses (and what type of costs – e.g. financial or time), numbers of business affected etc

The UK Risk Register provides information on likely impacts nationally of *Epitrix* and it is difficult to quantify the cost of additional measures that would need to be adopted because of the proposed measures. Businesses operating in this area would be best placed to provide such details.

If there are any queries about this consultation response please contact me.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Storey', with a horizontal line drawn underneath it.

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