

# **Horticulture Innovation Australia**

## **Final Report**

### **Review and Update of the National Standard for Certification of Australian Seed Potatoes**

Scott Williams  
Miracle Dog Pty Ltd

Project Number: PT15004

**PT15004**

This project has been funded by Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited using funds from the Potato Industry and funds from the Australian Government.

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ISBN 0 7341 3886 5

Published and distributed by:  
Horticulture Innovation Australia Limited  
Level 8, 1 Chifley Square  
Sydney NSW 2000  
Tel: (02) 8295 2300  
Fax: (02) 8295 2399

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# Contents

Summary .....	3
Keywords .....	4
Introduction .....	5
Methodology.....	6
Outputs.....	8
Outcomes.....	9
Evaluation and Discussion .....	10
Recommendations.....	11
Scientific Refereed Publications.....	12
IP/Commercialisation .....	13
References .....	14
Acknowledgements.....	15
Appendices.....	16

## Summary

Certified seed potatoes underpin the multi-million dollar national potato industry including the increasing seed potato export sector. Since 2013, the Australian National Standard for Certification of Australian Seed Potatoes has been managed by the Australian Seed Potato Council (ASPC) which comprises the four respective State-based seed potato Certification Authorities.

While the four state-based Standards have been regularly updated, the Australian National Standard has not been formally updated for some time (2007). Additionally, the National Standard did not include the requirements for minituber certification.

To review and update the Australian National Standard, a comprehensive review of existing relevant background documents was undertaken (including the previous National Standard, the various State-based Standards and the international (UNECE) Standard), significant industry consultation conducted (including a major industry workshop), along with industry feedback on a revised draft version before a final updated version of the Australian National Standard for Certification of Australian Seed Potatoes was submitted to Hort Innovation in November, 2016. It is attached to this Final Report.

The revised Standard:

- Includes a comprehensive definition of terms;
- Has been totally restructured to provide easier comprehension;
- Is updated with the most recent scientific knowledge; and
- Adopts the common terminology used in the UNECE Standard, where appropriate.

It should be noted that this project developed a minimum National Standard for commercial quality and marketing requirements used for the certification of seed potato. It complements and supports other international seed potato phytosanitary Standards such as ISPM 12 and ISPM 33. It also complements interstate trading requirements and conditions.

## Keywords

- Australian Seed Potato Council (ASPC)
- Certification Authority (CA)
- Department of Agriculture and food Western Australia (DAFWA)
- Horticultural Innovation Australia Limited - (Hort innovation)
- International Standards for Phytosanitary Measures (ISPM)
- PT15005 – associated project 'National Governance framework for Australian Seed Potato Certification – An Options Paper'
- Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (TIA)
- United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE)
- ViCSPA – the Certification Authority responsible for Victoria, South Australia and northern New South Wales

## Introduction

The Australian potato industry recognises the need for an Australian National Standard for the Certification of Seed Potatoes as a prerequisite for positioning itself to capitalise on the opportunities for domestic and international supply of seed potatoes.

The purpose of this project was to review and update the Australian National Standard to ensure that, irrespective of the state of origin of seed potatoes, buyers will receive seed which complies with an agreed standard. In doing so the Standard should align with the goals of the UNECE Standard, in that it can act as a reference intended to facilitate trade by:

- Creating a harmonised certification system;
- Promoting its use; and
- Defining harmonised quality requirements for seed potatoes.

Seed potato certification used to be delivered by State Departments of Agriculture as a service to their potato industry. Over the past 10 – 15 years, State governments have reduced services to agriculture and stepped back from some seed potato certification services, depending on state department preferences. This development was a driver for the formulation of a National Seed Potato Certification Standard; the most recent version of which was last published in 2007. While the National Standard has not been reviewed for some time, the four state-based standards have been regularly updated. Additionally, the existing National Standard did not include the requirements for minituber certification.

Over the last four years, liaison between the four seed potato certifying agencies and industry has been coordinated by the Australian Seed Potato Council (ASPC). The ASPC was established in 2013 and is a collaboration of all seed Certification Authorities in Australia with representation of seed growers and buyers.

## Methodology

The project team used a comprehensive process of review, consultation, development of draft versions of the Standard for public comment and final review. The following method was used to review and revise the Australian National Standard for the Certification of Australian Seed Potatoes:

- Start-up meeting held with Hort Innovation;
- Team meeting to refine the method, compilation of documents and development of an initial consultation list;
- Initial and regular contact with members of project PT15005 to ensure clear lines of communication;
- Development of a unique website for the review of the National Standard and a unique email address for enquiries. The website included a copy of the current Standard and a series of questions to help guide submissions (see <http://www.seedpotatoreview.org/>). Content on the website included:

*Submissions should focus on the National Standard only and should address the following questions:*

- 1. Is a National Standard important for the Australian potato industry? If so why? If not, why not?*
  - 2. In what way are you impacted by the National Standard?*
  - 3. What do you consider to be the strengths of the existing Standard?*
  - 4. What do you consider to be the weaknesses of the existing Standard?*
  - 5. How could any such weaknesses be overcome by changes to the Standard? Please specify particular sections of the report to which you refer (e.g. provide section numbers or page numbers of the current Standard).*
- Communication of the existence of the review and the availability of the website for industry input was communicated regularly through normal channels (via the AUSVEG website for several weeks, HIA e-news to members, existing industry contacts etc);
  - Review of numerous background documents including:
    - The existing (2007) National Standard;
    - State-based Standards;
    - International (UNECE) Standard; and
    - PT 13010 - Seed Potato Certification Review.
  - Engagement with Certification Agencies to receive input into the redrafting of the National Standard;
  - Weekly 'project team' teleconferences;
  - Regular discussions with the project leader for PT15005 including joint teleconferences with HIA management;

- Attendance at a number of meetings which were accessed to enable direct consultation with industry including:
  - A meeting with Potato Processing Association of Australia; and
  - A meeting with minituber producers.
- Redrafting of the National standard and incorporation of minituber requirements;
- Consultation with growers, buyers, processors, certifiers and regulators;
- Development of a list of key issues for consideration at an industry workshop;
- Pre-workshop meetings with numerous members of the seed certification industry;
- Attendance and presentation at an industry workshop on June 2, 2016;
- Revision of the draft Standard based on feedback and agreements at the industry workshop;
- Circulation of the draft Standard to industry for comment (this was directly sent to all workshop attendees plus 'advertised' via AUSVEG news and website);
- Receipt of feedback from industry (submissions closed end September);
- Consideration of all feedback received; and
- Development of final version of minimum Australian National Standard.

## **Outputs**

The following outputs were developed over the course of the project:

1. A presentation of key issues in relation to the draft Standard was made to the industry workshop (Melbourne, June 2016)
2. Progress Report for Milestone 102 – submitted to Hort Innovation (July 2016)
3. Update on progress to potato industry conference (Bendigo, August, 2016)
4. Revised draft National Standard for industry review (August, 2016)
5. Final National Standard for the Certification of Australian Seed Potatoes (November, 2016)

## **Outcomes**

The key outcomes arising from this project are largely two-fold:

1. A comprehensive process of consultation which has enabled industry to provide input into the revision and update of the minimum Australian National Standard
2. A fully revised version of the Australian National Standard for the Certification of Seed Potatoes

## **Evaluation and Discussion**

As noted in this report, the primary outcome arising from this project is the development of an updated version of the Australian National Standard for the Certification of Seed Potatoes. This document should now be provided to the ASPC for progression with industry.

Submissions received on the draft National Standard were largely positive, although there may remain a couple of areas that industry may wish to further consider.

## **Recommendations**

The revised minimum Australian National Standard for the Certification of Seed Potatoes should now be passed to the ASPC for progression with industry. This process may also unearth a couple of items for further consideration as noted in this report.

## **Scientific Refereed Publications**

Not applicable

## **IP/Commercialisation**

As per the Research Agreement between Hort innovation and Miracle Dog for project PT 15004, resultant IP (the new National Standard) will be:

*'owned by the parties as tenants in common in equal shares and co-branded by Hort Innovation, ViCSPA, DAFWA, Crookwell Seed Potato Growers and the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture'*

## References

- Included in Standard

## **Acknowledgements**

The authors wish to acknowledge the financial support provided by Hort Innovation using potato levy funds that allowed this project to proceed. The assistance and guidance of Dr Anthony Kachenko of Hort Innovation through the process is also acknowledged.

Members of the Australian Seed Potato Council and relevant state-based 'Certification Authorities' provided significant in-kind support and great assistance in identifying issues that needed to be addressed in the Standard and potential solutions. Technical information and guidance from an international perspective was provided by Dr Nigel Crump, Deputy Chair, UNECE Specialised Section Seed Potatoes. The assistance of ViCSPA staff and its agreement to share their minituber certification process is especially noted.

Finally the project team is grateful for the input provided and support received from a broad range of potato industry participants and organisations – growers, buyers, processors, researchers and advisors.

## **Appendices**

- Australian National Standard for the Certification of Australian Seed Potatoes, November 2016