

Michigan Seed Potato Advisory Committee (MSPAC) Meeting
March 30, 2021
9:00 AM
Virtual Format - ZOOM Call

Robin Rosenbaum welcomed everyone to the meeting at 9:00 AM.

Robin made the introductions of the committee:

Jeff Thorland-Montcalm county potato grower

Gary Walther-Chairman of MSPA

Tim Kunze-seed operations manager for Black Gold Farms

Jaime Wilbur-MSU Potato and Sugar Beet Pathologist

Robin mentioned the Associate Members:

Jeff Axford-Executive Director for Michigan Seed Potato Association (MSPA)

Kelly Turner- Executive Director for Michigan Potato Industry Commission

Elizabeth Dorman, MDARD

Director McDowell, MDARD

Robin explained that the MSPAC was created in 2018, and the Michigan Department of Agriculture & Rural Development, Director Gordon Wenk, appointed members to the committee. The committee consists of 5 members as follows:

- Two commercial potato growers who do not grow seed potatoes
- The current chair of the Michigan Seed Potato Association
- One person employed by Michigan State University
- One person employed by the department

Initial appointments were established for a term of slightly over three years, expiring June 24, 2021.

The advisory committee duties include advising the director in establishing rules under this act, assisting in the determination of availability of seed potatoes, recommending whether to grant permission to plant uncertified seed potatoes, recommending independent auditors to perform records reviews under section 5, and consulting with the director regarding the administration and enforcement of the act.

Robin explained that beginning January 1, 2021, the Seed Potato Act 94 of 2018 requires any person growing potatoes in the state in combined seed lots of 1 acre or greater has to register with the department. The department is required to complete an audit on 10% of the registered growers.

Robin continued to explain that the Seed Potato Act 94, of 2018 was passed in late 2018. The MSPAC continued their work in 2019 developing what is now known as Regulation 629 which further describes some of the requirements in Act 94. Through Regulation 629, provisions were established to allow for exceptions to the requirement to plant only certified seed in the state of Michigan. An application for exception must include all the following:

- a) Name and address of applicant

- b) Affiliation of company information
- c) Cultivar
- d) Location, acreage, and hundredweight for planting
- e) Reason for exception request
- f) Names of 3 or more certified seed growers contacted to source seed
- g) Desired seed source
- h) Proof of seed potato certification process, including which state in the process the seed lot failed

Robin asked if there were any questions about the purpose of the meeting.

Chris Long attended the meeting to discuss his research exception request. Chris is a potato specialist at MSU. He wants the university to remain compliant and has some questions. He works with 347 unique varieties and receives them from 35 unique seed sources in 9 counties with 43 trials. 23 are seed growers, however, he does not ask for paperwork. 12 are universities and non-certified seed is provided. An excel spreadsheet presented, has a list of all the varieties with seed sources. Chris needs to be able to do the research. Robin asked what percentage of the trials is considered uncertified seeds. Probably 50/50. Robin reiterated that this exception process only pertains to uncertified seed. She further inquired if this is enough to plant more than an acre? Chris replied that individual varieties for more than an acre are certified. It appears that this exception request is a moot point as no uncertified seed is being planted on more than an acre. Chris said he tries to weigh out the impact of what he is bringing in to try to keep the risk down. Jeff Thorlund stated he has no issues with what Chris is doing and he lives close to the Montcalm location. Jeff Axford agreed that Chris won't be doing anything to cause an issue. Chris asked for clarification of whether he needs to request an exception in the future. Robin clarified that it only needs to be requested if it is uncertified seed being planted on 1 acre or greater.

Robin reminded the group that it may not always be Chris doing research, it could be anyone wanting to do research. Perhaps as a committee we need to look at the regulation to include more clarification for research varieties.

Jeff Axford introduced the Lady Liberty exception request from Iott Seed. For the 2020 crop year Iotts entered two seed lots of Lady Liberty seed for certification planted in the same field. Both seed lots were FY3's. A 4-acre lot with Hanson seed Farm as the seed source and a 25 acre lot with Iotts as the seed source.

During the 2020 summer field inspections Snowden volunteers were found to be spread throughout the field. The spread was uneven with heavier concentrations in low areas and in areas that would normally have heavier snow cover making it difficult to determine an accurate percentage. We also found a small amount of Manistees in the larger lot which were the result of volunteers from the previous growing season.

All inspections and testing were completed on the two seed lots in anticipation of an appeal being made. No disease issues were found in the subsequent inspections. The post-harvest test showed a 0.37 % mixture level.

Since Lady Liberty is a new variety that is in high demand, the mixture is with another chipping variety, the purchasers of the seed have all indicated that they still want the seed, and there were no disease issues found in the samples, Jeff recommended that the exception request be approved. Additionally, they will not be replanted and will go to production. They are going to Thorlund, Lennard Ag and Sandyland Farms.

Dr. Jaime Wilbur asked if the seed went through the certification and winter grow out and wanted to know if they were under threshold. Jeff responded that they were visually inspected but did not have the ELISA test done on them.

A motion was made by Robin to recommend approval of the exception request. Motion carried.

Robin asked about future meetings, if the members were able to receive the attachments over email okay and if the ZOOM call worked for them. All replied that it worked well. This may be the preferred format for future meetings.

Robin adjourned the meeting at 9:37 am.