

The position of the Specialized Section on blackleg of seed potatoes

(Agreed at thirty-ninth session in March 2010)

- Blackleg occurrence in seed potato crops is an important indicator of quality. In the UNECE Standard for Seed Potatoes, strict tolerances for blackleg in the growing crop and at lot inspection underpin, as part of the rot tolerance, the control of this disease in certified seed.
- Disease expression in the progeny crop is not always directly related to either inspection findings or bacterial loading in mother tubers. This is due to the importance of the environmental and agronomic influences in the epidemiology of this disease. However, regular inspections remain an effective tool to limit the spread of the disease.
- Conditions which favour blackleg, particularly excessive moisture and in the case of *Dickeya*, high temperatures, can lead to spread of the disease. For the time being, enforcing strict tolerances at certification continues to be the best available regulatory mechanism to control blackleg in marketed seed potatoes.
- Good agronomic practices, such as forced ventilation immediately after harvest, removal of diseased tubers prior to planting, allowing mother tubers to fully deteriorate prior to harvest, are all important in blackleg control.