

The position of the Specialized Section on silver scurf of seed potatoes

(Agreed at fortieth session in March 2011)

- The cause of silver scurf is the fungus, *Helminthosporium solani*, which is spread by infected seed pieces and potato debris in soil. This disease disfigures the potato surface and separates the epidermis from the tuber, causing excess moisture loss and shrivelling of tubers during the storage period.
- As with all certification programmes, a standard for silver scurf has to take into consideration the feasibility and concerns of buyer as well as seller. Tubers can become infected with silver scurf in the field as well as in storage. Progression of the disease is slowed down below 7° C and below 90 per cent relative humidity. The optimal spread of the spores happens during handling of the tubers. Chemical treatments are limited.
- Research indicates that there is no correlation between the percentage of the surface of the tuber affected and the potential contamination towards the rest of the tubers and/or the next crop. Surveillance of the disease indicates that it is ubiquitous in potato-production systems.
- The effect of the silver scurf on tubers is regulated in the UNECE Standard through the tolerance for shrivelled tubers, i.e. tubers which have become excessively dehydrated and wrinkled, as these tubers lose vigour in the progeny crop.