



EASTERN PLANT BOARD

Ann Gibbs, President
Division of Plant Industry
Maine Dept. of Agriculture
28 State House Station
Augusta, ME 04333-0028
(207) 287-3891

Carol Holko, Secretary-Treasurer
Plant Protection and Weed Management
Maryland Dept. of Agriculture
50 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401
(410) 841-5920

2006 Resolution No. 4 Operational Review of the European Pre-clearance Program

There has been a significant increase in the occurrence of viruses, foliar nematodes, root-nematodes, and noxious weeds infesting perennial stock shipped from the European Union during the past five years. Industry workers and state agricultural inspectors have detected pathogens including arabis mosaic virus and *Hosta virus X* in *Hosta* plants, nematodes in bulbs, and weeds such as *Inula britannica* and *Rorippa sylvestris* associated with bare-root perennials. This near-epidemic of regulated non-quarantine pests is especially noticeable for plant material originating from the Netherlands. The frequency of detection has reached such high proportions that many importers have expressed their desires to limit or eliminate the European Union as a source of perennials.

The high incidence of infected material has become an economic burden on U.S. importing firms that grow out the product before sale. Since the infected stock is dormant when it arrives, the pest status is not evident until the company has invested time and resources in growing out the plants for potted plant markets. By the time the disease or pest symptoms are expressed, the financial loss has occurred. Bulb importers and resellers of dormant plants escape some of the investment loss, yet infested material sold by them finds a direct pathway to backyards across America.

The continuing interception of pests and diseases raises concern that a pathway exists for entry of quarantine significant organisms. This pathway has potential for the introduction of harmful organisms, which could impact multiple agricultural sectors. This is especially true for pathogens with multiple host species such as arabis mosaic virus, or nematodes such as Colombia root-knot nematode, which could threaten agricultural crops and adversely affect exports of plant materials to foreign markets. It appears that the existing pre-clearance program in Europe, while adequate for certain pests and diseases, needs to be re-evaluated for safeguarding failure potential for these more elusive pests and diseases which are being encountered on imported plant material.

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Resolved, By the Eastern Plant Board at its 81st annual meeting in Rehoboth Beach, DE on April 6, 2006, to request that the USDA conduct a pre-clearance program operational review for perennial plants and bulbs originating from Europe, to ensure the effectiveness of that program in excluding pests from entering the United States, through corrective or additional actions.

Be it further resolved, that the USDA work cooperatively with state departments of agriculture and import firms in the United States to conduct a higher level of integrity checks at U.S. ports of entry for those pests and diseases which now elude detection through the existing program.

Distribution:

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