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Mr. Osama El-Lissy
Deputy Administrator
USDA APHIS PPQ
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. El-Lissy:

The National Plant Board is concerned about the response to *P. ramorum* in 2019. The National Plant Board believes that there should be a review of: 1) communications about shipments of potentially infected plants; and 2) the *P. ramorum* program to ensure that it is effective in preventing the shipment of infected material.

The National Plant Board believes that a hotwash committee should review the communication associated with the 2019 *P. ramorum* response, comparing the response to the guidelines in the program manual. The results of the hotwash should be used to inform future processes and procedures. The Interagency Review Committee (IRC) developed a template and guidelines for conducting a hotwash. A hotwash can be initiated when it is determined communication may have impacted the response to an emerging pest issue. The National Plant Board believes that the *P. ramorum* response in 2019 requires a review as suggested in the draft IRC hotwash template and guidance. Following this guidance ensures adequate representation, leadership, timeliness, analysis, and reporting of conclusions.

Additionally, the National Plant Board is concerned that the current *P. ramorum* program guidance and processes may not effectively prevent the shipment of infected material. A robust program ensures protection for receiving states and includes rapid response to any detection of infected material. It is understood that the *P. ramorum* committee will be meeting in October in Sacramento. The National Plant Board believes that this meeting should serve as a starting point to ensure that the concerns of receiving states inform future program directions and that processes are reviewed to make certain adequate protections are in place.

The National Plant Board believes that the response to a *P. ramorum* detection in 2019 exposed vulnerabilities in the *P. ramorum* program. The National Plant Board believes that a hotwash examining communication in this incident will identify opportunities for improving the program. The National Plant Board would like to work with APHIS PPQ to convene a hotwash committee to initiate this process. The National Plant Board also believes that the *P. ramorum* guidelines should be reviewed to ensure that the process results in preventing the shipment of potentially infected materials.

Sincerely,

G. John Caravetta, National Plant Board President

Cc:

Alan Dowdy, Associate Deputy Administrator, USDA APHIS PPQ
Samantha Simon, Executive Director, USDA APHIS PPQ
Betsy Randall-Schadel, National Operations Manager, USDA APHIS PPQ
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