



SOUTHERN PLANT BOARD

April 9-12, 2006  
Savannah, Georgia

**RESOLUTION No. 4**

**OPERATIONAL REVIEW OF THE EUROPEAN PRE-CLEARANCE PROGRAM**

Alabama

Arkansas

Florida

Georgia

Kentucky

Louisiana

Mississippi

North Carolina

Oklahoma

Puerto Rico

South Carolina

Tennessee

Texas

Virginia

In recent years, there has been a significant increase in the occurrence of viruses, foliar nematodes, root-knot nematodes and noxious weeds detected on perennial stock shipped from the European Union. Commercial industry, along with state agricultural inspectors, have detected pathogens including arabis mosaic virus and Hosta virus X in Hosta plants, nematodes in bulbs, and serious 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 and is likely due to the tremendous volume of material originating from that country. The frequency of viruses has reached such high proportions that many importers have expressed their desires to limit or eliminate the European Union as a source of perennials. Based on the threats, high-end retail and wholesale operators have adopted routine testing for viruses and nematodes to ensure their clientele are receiving quality pest-free plants.

The high incidence of infected plant 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 generally not evident until the individual nurseryman has invested time and resources in production for the retail marketplace. 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 damage the potato crop in the Central United States and also adversely affect exports of plant materials to foreign markets. It appears existing pre-clearance programs in Europe, while adequate for certain pests and diseases, need to be re-evaluated for safeguarding failure potential for these more elusive pests and diseases which are being encountered on imported plant material.

**RESOLVED** by the Southern Plant Board at its annual meeting in Savannah, Georgia on April 12, 2006, that USDA conduct a pre-clearance operational program review for perennial plants and bulbs originating from Europe. This program review is critically needed to exclude pests from entering and spreading throughout the United States.

**BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED** that USDA and DHS-CBP work cooperatively with state departments of agriculture and firms importing plant material into the United States in order to conduct a higher level of quality control inspection at U.S. ports of entry for those pests and diseases which now elude detection through the existing program.

Motion to adopt: Harry Fulton  
Seconded by: Shashank Nilakhe

**Distribution:**

Honorable Michael Johanns, Secretary of Agriculture, USDA  
Dr. Chuck Lambert, Deputy Under Secretary, USDA  
Michael Chertoff, Secretary, DHS  
Dr. Ron DeHaven, Administrator, USDA, APHIS, PPQ  
Dr. Richard Dunkle, Deputy Administrator, USDA-APHIS-PPQ  
Vic Harabin, Eastern Regional Director, USDA-APHIS-PPQ  
Phil Garcia, Western Regional Director, USDA-APHIS-PPQ  
Rick Kirchoff, CEO, NASDA  
Gus Douglass, NASDA Animal and Plant Industries Committee  
Bob Ehart, NASDA  
Ken Rauscher, President, National Plant Board  
Regional Plant Board Presidents

**Contact Address:**

Gray Haun  
Division of Regulatory Services  
Tennessee Dept. of Agriculture  
P.O. Box 40627  
Melrose Station  
Nashville, TN 37204

**President** Gray Haun, Tennessee (615) 837-5338  
**Vice President** Gene Cross, North Carolina (919) 733-3930, Ext. 218  
**Secretary-Treasurer** Sancho Dickinson, Oklahoma (405) 521-3864