



ESA Section Potatoes
Position
On
VCU testing (Value for Cultivation or Use) in potato

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The ESA Section on Potatoes (SPO) represents the European Potato breeders involved in research, plant breeding, production and marketing of potatoes used for planting corresponding to the need of farmers, the processing industry and consumers.

Legal framework

- Council Directive 2002/53 Directive on the Common Catalogue of varieties of agricultural species

According to Directive 2002/53 potato varieties can only be placed on the market when these varieties are included in the Common Catalogue. The Common Catalogue is compiled on the basis of the national catalogues of the Member States. According to article 4.1 a variety must be of satisfactory Value for Cultivation and Use. Article 5.4 defines the general principle of Value for Cultivation or Use.

- Commission Directive 2003/90 Directive setting out implementing measures for the purposes of Article 7 of Council Directive 2002/53 as regards characteristics to be covered as a minimum by the examination and the minimum conditions for examining certain varieties of agricultural plant species

According to Annex III of this Directive VCU testing should include Yield, Resistance to harmful organisms, behaviour with respect to factors in the physical environment and Quality characteristics.

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Minimum standards for VCU testing

The ESA Section on Potatoes (SPO) considers that the testing for Value for Cultivation or Use (VCU) in the EU Member States should be organized in such a way to include the following key principles as minimum standards.

- **Classes**

Testing should be divided into 2 classes; one for starch types and one for consumption types. Each variety should be ranked in maturity groups from 1-9; 1 being very early and 9 being very late.

- **Yield**

Within each class the relative yield of each candidate variety should be assessed in comparison to local standard varieties. These local standard varieties should be well known and consistent over the years.

- **Disease**

VCU testing should include assessment of resistance to the following diseases:

- Late blight (foliage blight)
 - PVY-n (including PTNRD)
 - PCN (*G. rostochiensis*, *G. pallida*)
 - Wart disease (race 1)
- It is of great importance that protocols in relation to the testing for resistance to diseases should be harmonised as much as possible.
 - Candidate varieties should be compared to local standard varieties. These local standard varieties should be well known and consistent over the years.
 - Testing of resistance to additional diseases relevant to certain countries should be allowed.
 - Claims of breeders regarding susceptibility (rating 1) of candidate varieties for certain diseases should be taken into account in order to prevent unnecessary tests and to minimize testing costs.

- **Quality**

VCU testing should include assessment of the following quality traits:

- Sugar content – based on fry colour using a photographic scale
- Dry matter content – based on under water weight
- Cooking type – based on EAPR standards

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- It is of great importance that testing protocols should be harmonised as much as possible.
- Candidate varieties should be compared to local standard varieties. These local standard varieties should be well known and consistent over the years.
- **Additional criteria regarding the organization of VCU trials**
 - There should be no prerequisite regarding the entry into National List Trials.
 - VCU testing for National purposes is the responsibility of official authorities but can be supported by private companies in supplying testing facilities and testing data.
 - Testing should be reliable and cost effective.
 - Testing should be limited to 2 growing cycles / 2 growing years.
 - The criteria and rules for decision should be transparent and made public. However due to different local conditions and markets there is no need for harmonisation.
 - The time between the harvest of the VCU trials, the publication of the trial results and / or the decision based on the trial results should be limited and predetermined.

ESA Mission Statement

ESA is the voice of the European seed industry, representing the interests of those active in research, breeding, production and marketing of seeds of agricultural, horticultural and ornamental plant species.

Plants from seed are the origin of all food, provide innovative and environmentally friendly industrial products and beautify our landscape.

ESA's mission is to work for:

- ◆ effective protection of intellectual property rights relating to plants and seeds;
- ◆ fair and proportionate regulation of the European seed industry;
- ◆ freedom of choice for customers (farmers, growers, industry, consumers) in supplying seeds as a result of innovative, diverse technologies and production methods