



Victorian Certified Seed Potato Authority Inc.
Reg. A0029311P

CONDITIONS FOR THE VICSPA SEED POTATO CERTIFICATION SCHEME

**THIS ANNEX AND THE NATIONAL STANDARD ARE TO BE READ
TOGETHER AND FORM THE CONDITIONS FOR THE VICSPA
SEED POTATO CERTIFICATION SCHEME.**

If there is any conflict between the National Standard and The Conditions printed in this Annex, the Conditions in the Annex are to take precedent over those of the National Standards.

Enquiries should be addressed to:
Manager VICSPA,
Private Mail Bag 1 Healesville,
Victoria 3777, Australia
or

kblackmore@vicspa.org.au

For up to date information about the scheme, the seed growers directory
and copies of forms used in Certification visit:

www.vicspa.org.au

All rights reserved. This publication is Copyright. Other than for purposes of and subject to the conditions prescribed under the Copyright Act, no part in any form or by any means (electronic, mechanical, microcopying, photocopying, recording or otherwise) be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system or transmitted without prior written permission.

POTATO CERTIFICATION CONTACTS

Web Address: www.vicspa.org.au

Office Location: Institute for Horticultural Development,
1015 Myers Creek Road, Toolangi

Manager: * **Keith Blackmore**

Postal address: Manager, ViCSPA
C/O Private Mail Bag 1
HEALESVILLE Vic 3777

Phone: 035962 9043 **Mobile:** 0407 883 774

Fax: 035962 9045 **E-mail:** kblackmore@vicspa.org.au

Laboratory Accreditation Officer: Roger Osborn Phone: 035962 3218

***Certification Officer – Warragul based:** Russell Bell: 0418 129 175

E-mail: insp.bell@bigpond.com

Office Manager: Pauline McPherson

OTWAYS:

* **Bruce Fry** NRE, State Public Offices
83-85 Gellibrand Street
COLAC VIC 3250

Phone: 035233 5500 **Mobile:** 0419 207 781

Fax: 035231 3823 **E-mail:** bruce.fry@dpi.vic.gov.au

GIPPSLAND:

* **Alec Duff:**

Gippsland Inspection Services
55 Beazley Rd.
Cardinia Vic 3978

Phone: 0427 045 224

Fax: 035998 8334

E-mail: gduff@iprimus.com.au

PORTLAND/Mt Gambier

Field inspections: Bruce Fry see above for contact details
Andrew Hayton: 0427 160715

Tuber Inspections: Graeme Coysh Phone: 0402149822

KANGAROO ISLAND

Rick Morris:

Phone: 0427 715211

* Qualified QA auditors

Conditions 2003 2004 vs1 January 8 2004

CONTENTS	PAGE
1. THE ViCSPA SEED POTATO CERTIFICATION SCHEME.....	5
<i>1.1 Definitions.....</i>	<i>5</i>
<i>1.2 Purpose of the Scheme.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>1.3 Role of ViCSPA.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>1.4 Legislative basis for the Scheme.....</i>	<i>6</i>
2. RULES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF CERTIFIED SEED.....	6
<i>2.1 Approved planting material.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>2.2 Purchase of G3 Seed.....</i>	<i>6</i>
<i>2.3 Paddock Rotation.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>2.5 Isolation.....</i>	<i>7</i>
<i>2.6 Other crops rule.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>2.7 New growers.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>2.8 Application Forms.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>2.9 Application Fees.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>2.10 Closing date.....</i>	<i>9</i>
3. INSPECTIONS OF THE GROWING CROP	9
<i>3.1 Access for Inspectors.....</i>	<i>9</i>
<i>3.2 Final inspection and top removal.....</i>	<i>9</i>
4. GRADING, PACKING, TUBER INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION	10
<i>4.1 Size of tubers.....</i>	<i>10</i>
<i>4.2 Tuber standards quality.....</i>	<i>11</i>
<i>4.3 Seed containers.....</i>	<i>12</i>
5. OTHER GENERAL RULES.....	13

<i>5.1 Testing procedures for Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN)</i>	13
<i>5.2 Hygiene management</i>	13
<i>5.3 Bin Labeling & Records</i>	13
<i>5.4 Repacking of Certified seed</i>	14
<i>5.5 Breeding lines</i>	14
<i>5.6 Grow-on of samples for quality verification</i>	14
<i>5.7 Failure to observe Conditions of Scheme</i>	14
<i>5.8 Right of appeal</i>	14
6. EXPULSION OF MEMBER	15
7. VICSPA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT	17

Appendices:

1. Bin Declaration, 2. Quality Assurance

1. THE ViCSPA SEED POTATO CERTIFICATION SCHEME

1.1 Definitions

Conditions

"Conditions" means the Conditions of the ViCSPA Seed Potato Certification Scheme as published by ViCSPA

Scheme

Scheme means the ViCSPA Seed Potato Certification Scheme in this Appendix

Certification Officer

"Certification Officer" means a person authorized by ViCSPA to administer the Conditions of the Scheme.

Label

"Label" refers to ViCSPA's official certification label used to identify Certified seed.

Quality Assurance (QA)

"Quality Assurance" means the internationally proven method of ensuring that a product is of good consistent quality. QA is a system of planning and checking for quality at all stages of production. All checks are documented and audited by qualified auditors. The ViCSPA QA program was specifically developed for the production of Certified seed potatoes and been successfully conducted since 1991. Approximately 50% of the Certified seed is produced by registered QA businesses.

The details of the QA program are in the Operations manual and the Model Manual held by ViCSPA and in Appendix 2.

ViCSPA's operation of the QA program is externally audited.

Accredited Laboratories

"Accredited Laboratories" are those laboratories that are accredited by ViCSPA to produce minitubers, micro tubers and plantlets. Such laboratories must have met the standards for facilities and processes as specified by ViCSPA and their production stage must be inspected and passed by the ViCSPA Accreditation Officer or an authorized ViCSPA agent prior to sale.

Member Growers

To participate in the ViCSPA Seed Potato Certification Scheme, the grower/business must be a current member of ViCSPA. When a Company applies

for Membership a natural person shall be nominated as the ViCSPA member and shall hold the membership voting rights.

Where a ViCSPA member is a nominee of a company and is not involved in the day to day management of the growing crop and resulting product, documented management and accountability procedures are to be in place and approved by the Manager of ViCSPA to ensure that those directly involved in the production of certified seed are aware of and comply with the "Conditions" of the scheme and are responsible for the quality of the product produced. The nominated company member is responsible for submitting the application form.

When a sole ViCSPA member is remotely controlling a crop the same principles apply.

1.2 Purpose of the Scheme

The purpose of the ViCSPA Seed Potato Certification Scheme is to improve the efficiency of the Australian potato industry through the provision of cost efficient and effective technical and administrative services for the production of high quality Certified seed potatoes.

1.3 Role of ViCSPA

The role of ViCSPA is to establish and administer the Conditions of the ViCSPA Seed Potato Certification Scheme for the production of Certified seed potatoes.

1.4 Legislative basis for the Scheme

Victoria:

ViCSPA is approved by the Victorian Minister for Agriculture under the Plant Health and Plant Products Act 1995 to conduct a Certification Scheme for seed potatoes.

Other States:

Certification services provided in the other states are carried out under agreement with the relevant authorities.

2. RULES FOR THE PRODUCTION OF CERTIFIED SEED

2.1 Approved planting material

Seed growers are responsible for securing ViCSPA approved planting material up to generation 4. Proof of purchase in the form of labels must be provided at application. ViCSPA may request extra proof in the form of invoice/s

2.2 Purchase of G3 Seed

Growers may purchase early generation seed from other ViCSPA members with a view to further multiplying it to produce Certified seed.

Seed growers are responsible for forward ordering and purchasing of G3 seed. Certified seed growers who expect to have G3 available in the following year will be required to nominate the varieties. ViCSPA will provide a list of suppliers and varieties and order

forms to all members. Order forms will be in triplicate and copies forwarded to ViCSPA and the supplier.

In the event of a shortfall of G3 of a particular variety, ViCSPA may permit growers to hold back seed of G4 stock only if they can supply evidence of their intent to purchase G3. Evidence is an order form received by ViCSPA before 31st December each year.

Seed growers who supply G3 seed for further seed multiplication shall provide the Manager of ViCSPA with records of their final deliveries.

2.3 Paddock Rotation

“No application will be accepted for land that has grown bulbs, corms or tubers imported from a country with a known potato cyst nematode (PCN) infestation or planted with bulbs that were grown in a PCN-infested district in Australia.

Potatoes grown on land that has previously grown bulbs from other sources will be subject to 3 random under-grader samples taken by a Certification officer.”

2.4 Leased land

Growers submitting crops grown on leased land must submit:

- the owners' name
- the address of the property
- a map showing the location of the paddock in the property
- the cropping history for the previous five years
- ViCSPA may use a GPS device to map the location and area of the paddock

2.5 Isolation

Within each generation, different varieties must be planted with at least one blank row between varieties or a gap of two metres if planted in the same row.

However, within each generation, varieties with markedly different plant and tuber characteristics need not be separated by a blank row.

A markedly different plant and tuber characteristic normally means varieties with different colored tubers.

Note:

- G1, G2 & G3 have the same isolation rules
- **that the minimum distance that G1, G2 and G3 seed can be planted from Certified seed is 5 metres**
- G1, G2 & G3 crops must be at least 20 metres from all commercial crops

Isolation from G5 to Commercial crops

2 blank rows from crops planted with certified seed.

G1 & G2 Plots

G1 & G2 plots of each variety are to be planted in blocks of at least two rows and preferably in blocks of four rows with a gap left to allow roguing and inspection. Sufficient space is to be left to allow the movement of sprayers around them without damaging the foliage.

When a travelling irrigator is to be used in a seed crop, a minimum of two rows must be left unplanted to allow space for the loop of the hose to drag without damaging the crop. A pathway need not be left where the hose runs only in the furrow and movements of the irrigator and tractor in the crop do not damage plants excessively.

The "normal" headlands left for machinery movement must not be planted.

Isolation areas and headlands are to be kept reasonably free of weeds.

2.6 Other crops rule

Applications will not be accepted from growers who:

- Have any other commercial crops or have a financial interest in commercial of the same variety as that submitted for certification with the exception of growers acting in accordance with 2.7,
- Have a financial interest in commercial potatoes of the same variety as that submitted for certification, or
- Have allowed any commercial crops of the same variety as those submitted for certification to be grown on their properties or on other land, which they lease.

Crop inspections will only be carried out if a detailed paddock plan is provided. All areas of the property on which potatoes are grown must be disclosed on the application form and shown to the inspecting officer.

2.7 New growers

2.7. 1. Unless they have previous seed growing experience recognized by ViCSPA, new growers must grow a plot/s of **G1, G2, G3 or G4** seed, which must pass field inspection (with a filed rating of 1 or 2) before becoming eligible to submit a crop of Certified seed.

2.7.2. New growers may, with the approval of the Authorized ViCSPA officer, grow commercial potatoes of the same variety as the plots submitted for inspection for their own use only, in their first year.

2.8 Application Forms

Application forms will be provided to Members. A separate application form is to be used for each paddock.

Extra copies of the application forms are available from the ViCSPA web site www.vicspa.org.au by typing sebago in the grower login area.

2.9 Application Fees

Applications for inspection of crops and tubers for certification must be accompanied by a remittance of fees as determined by ViCSPA. Should any application be received by ViCSPA not accompanied by the required application fee, ViCSPA reserves the right to withdraw any or all services to the grower under the Scheme until such time as the application fee and any other monies owing pursuant to the Scheme by the grower to ViCSPA are paid in full. This right is without prejudice to any other rights that ViCSPA may have at Law.

2.10 Closing date

Before field inspections can take place a completed application form and fee must have been received at the Toolangi Office of ViCSPA.

In the last week of each month an application form is to be submitted for any areas planted during that month. This includes part paddocks. Late applications will incur a late fee.

3. INSPECTIONS OF THE GROWING CROP

3.1 Access for Inspectors

Unless otherwise requested by the seed grower, Certification Officers may inspect crops unaccompanied and without an appointment.

3.2 Final inspection and top removal

The final inspection shall take place close to crop maturity or just prior to top removal. ViCSPA aims to conduct the final inspections while the crops are still green and before they yellow off. Growers should contact their Certification Officer when the crop is ready for inspection.

Conditions of the ViCSPA Seed Potato Certification Scheme

Where a grower has requested a final inspection with intent to remove the tops to limit tuber size, the grower is responsible for removing the tops within one week of the inspection. Where crops are left standing after that time an extra field inspection may be carried out at the grower's expense.

ViCSPA reserves the right to reject any crop that is unsuitable for inspection.

In special circumstances ViCSPA may approve of the planting of seed tubers of one generation to produce seed of equivalent status.

4. GRADING, PACKING, TUBER INSPECTION AND CERTIFICATION

4.1 Size of tubers

The standard method of sizing Certified seed potatoes is now based on size dimensions. Unless otherwise agreed to by the buyer and seller prior to delivery, seed shall be graded to a standard of 35 mm to 75 mm using a square holed template as the standard. For all other lots, the size of the seed tubers certified must be shown on the Grower's Certification Statement and the invoice or a load certificate. When mutually agreeable tuber size specifications may be by weight.

4.2 Tuber standards quality

DEFECTS	MAX. PERMITTED PROPORTION % *
1. Soft rot	0.25%
2. Dry rot	2%
3. Eelworm or scab a) >5 sites/tuber b) <5 sites/tuber	1% 1%
4. Insect Damage ***	2%
5. Potato Tuber Moth	1.5%
6. Malformed	2%
7. Mechanical damage **	2%
8. Stem end discolouration	2%
9. Miscellaneous (e.g. green ends)	1%
10. Size Range :Oversize:	1%
:Undersized:	2%
Maximum tolerances (Items 1-10 above)	2%

* Percentage by number

The tolerance for black scurf (Rhizoctonia) is to be negotiated between the seed grower and the seed buyer.

** Mechanical damage is defined as any mark that cannot be removed with two passes of a potato peeler (3mm deep).

*** An additional 2% of tubers may show minimal feeding damage (ie. Where these tubers have no more than 2 feeding holes per tuber, not more than 3mm

deep, containing no soil and the damaged skin is healed). Tuber eyes must not be damaged.

The graded potatoes are to be practically free of soil.

4.3 Seed containers

Seed potatoes must be packed in containers branded with the words "Packed by" followed by the grower's name and address, and the name of the variety.

4.3.1 Containers

Containers less than 500 kg net capacity must be new.

4.3.2 Bulk bags

- **Only new bulk bags must be used.**

4.3.3 Bulk containers

- Used bins must always be washed, in good repair, free of soil and plant debris and accompanied by a signed Clean Bin Declaration (Appendix 1)
- **It is the grower's responsibility to ensure that the seed is only packed into clean bins.**
- New bins do not require the signed declaration
- Seed that has been repacked will not be recognized as Certified seed unless such repacking maintains the identity and integrity of the seed to the prior agreement of the Certifying Officer
- Certified seed which has been packed in bulk containers will continue to be recognized if:
 - ◇ It remains in the original containers
 - ◇ The original labels remain attached
 - ◇ The produce matches the description of the lot certified
 - ◇ A label containing the grower's name and address identifies the lot

4.4 Official Certification labels

4.4.1 Growers Responsibilities

The grower's signature on the certification label constitutes a warranty by the grower that the seed potatoes in the container were harvested from a certified crop and complied at the time of inspection of the tubers with the standards prescribed for Certified seed potatoes.

It is a breach of the Conditions of the Scheme for a ViCSPA member to have in their possession, a whole label (official ViCSPA certification label) that has previously been used on Certified seed. The exception being labels removed from rejected stock, which must be returned to the Certification Officer or held for audit.

4.4.2 Labels

Red Labels are to be used to label Certified seed that is to be sold to commercial growers. Red labels are available from the local Certification officer or the ViCSPA office.

Black labels are for seed sales to registered seed growers: All certified seed sold to registered seed growers for further planting in a seed scheme is to be labelled using the "Black" label. Black labels can be ordered from the ViCSPA office.

Labels for export lots are individually printed as required. Export label order forms are available from Export agents, the ViCSPA web site and the ViCSPA office. Growers should allow a minimum of 5 working days to allow for printing and postage.

Unless the produce from a provisionally certified crop passes a tuber inspection and the container carries an official certification label, the contents are not recognized Certified seed.

Any Certified seed remaining on the farm for 30 days after Certification must be re-inspected prior to leaving the farm.

5. OTHER GENERAL RULES

5.1 Testing procedures for Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN)

(Refer to page 41 National Standard)

1. All areas of Generations 1 to 4 (G1, G2, G3 & G4) must be sampled unless the seed is to be submitted as Certified.
2. 25% of the total area of Certified Seed or crops intended for sale as Certified seed must be sampled.

5.2 Hygiene management Facilities

- Packing sheds are to have a concrete or sealed floor

5.3 Bin Labelling & Records

- A record is to be kept of each day's planting and harvest.
- For storage of harvested seed at least one bin on the front of the stack must be labelled showing the variety, generation and date of

harvest.

5.4 Repacking of Certified seed

Repacking of Certified seed into smaller containers for retail sales may be permitted at premises approved for the purpose by ViCSPA. A fee will be charged to cover audit and inspection services.

5.5 Breeding lines

Breeding lines derived from the Breeding Program at the Department of Primary Industries, Primary Industries Research Victoria, Toolangi may be multiplied by member seed potato growers for evaluation purposes provided:

They are kept separate by two blank rows from Certified and G4 seed crops and 20 metres from G1, G2 & G3 seed crops; and

- They conform to the standards of varietal purity and disease freedom as required for Certified generation seed. As plant descriptions are not available, ViCSPA will inspect the growing crops for uniformity but not for varietal identity.

Crops that meet the field and tuber standards for Certified seed may be labelled as "Breeders seed".

5.6 Grow-on of samples for quality verification

Members may choose to retain identified samples of Certified seed lots sold and grow them on for quality verification purposes. Such plots are to be identified in the field and treated as commercial crops for the purpose of isolation. The produce is not to be sold as seed.

5.7 Failure to observe Conditions of Scheme

Growers who fail to observe the Conditions governing the production of seed potatoes or who act in any way against the successful conduct of this Scheme may be excluded from the Scheme.

5.8 Right of appeal

A grower shall have right of appeal with respect to services provided by ViCSPA by providing written notice to the Manager of ViCSPA no later than 48 hours from the date of the service being provided.

In the case of field inspections, provided that the Manager is not the Certification Officer who has provided the service, the Manager shall within 48 hours of receiving the notice of appeal from the grower, attend with the grower to inspect the crop and determine whether the crop meets the Conditions of the scheme.

In the event that the Manager of ViCSPA is the Certification Officer who has rejected the crop or provided the service, the Board of ViCSPA shall

appoint a suitably qualified person to inspect the crop within 48 hours of receiving the Notice of Appeal from the grower. The person so appointed shall attend with the grower and the Manager of ViCSPA to inspect the crop for compliance with the Conditions of the scheme.

The suitably qualified person appointed by the Board of ViCSPA shall be deemed to be authorized by ViCSPA to administer the Conditions of the Scheme for the purposes of conducting the appeal.

6. EXPULSION OF MEMBER

ASSOCIATIONS INCORPORATION ACT 1981 - SCHEDULE 3 (FROM THE RULES FOR VICTORIAN CERTIFIED SEED POTATO AUTHORITY INCORPORATED as amended 20/8/01)

" 8. DISCIPLINE, SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION OF MEMBERS

Subject to these Rules, if the committee is of the opinion that a member has refused or neglected to comply with these Rules, or has been guilty of conduct unbecoming a member or prejudicial to the interests of the Association, the committee may by resolution-

- 8.1.1** *fine that member an amount not exceeding \$500; or*
- 8.1.2** *suspend that member from membership of the Association for a specified period; or*
- 8.1.3** *expel that member from the Association.*

8.2 *A resolution of the committee under sub-rule (1) does not take effect unless-*

- 8.2.1** *at a meeting held in accordance with sub-rule (3), the committee confirms the resolution; and*
- 8.2.2** *If the member exercises a right of appeal to the Association under this rule, the Association confirms the resolution in accordance with this rule.*

8.3 *A meeting of the committee to confirm or revoke a resolution passed under sub-rule (1) must be held not earlier than 14 days and not later than 28 days, after notice has been given to the member in accordance with sub-rule (4).*

8.4 *For the purposes of giving notice in accordance with sub-rule (3), the Secretary must, as soon as practicable, cause to be given to the member a written notice-*

- 8.4.1** *setting out the resolution of the committee and the grounds on which it is based: and*

- 8.4.2** *stating that the member or his or her representative, may address the committee at a meeting to be held not earlier than 14 days and not later than 28 days after the notice has been given to that member; and*
- 8.4.3** *stating the date, place and time of the meeting; and*
- 8.4.4** *informing the member that he or she may do one or both of the following*
 - 8.4.4.1** *attending that meeting;*
 - 8.4.4.2** *give to the committee before that date of that meeting a written statement seeking the revocation of the resolution*
- 8.4.5** *Informing the member that, if at that meeting, the committee confirms the resolution, he or she may not later than 48 hours after that meeting, give the Secretary a notice to the effect that he or she wishes to appeal to the Association in general meeting against the resolution.*
- 8.5** *At a meeting of the committee to confirm or revoke a resolution passed under sub-rule (1), the committee must-*
 - 8.5.1** *give a member, or his or her representative, an opportunity to be heard; and*
 - 8.5.2** *give due consideration to any written statement submitted by the member; and*
 - 8.5.3** *determine by resolution whether to confirm or to revoke the resolution.*
- 8.6** *If at the meeting of the committee, the committee confirms the resolution, the member may, not later than 48 hours after that meeting, give the Secretary a notice to the effect that he or she wishes to appeal to the Association in general meeting against the resolution.*
- 8.7** *If the Secretary receives a notice under sub-rule (6), he or she must notify the committee and the committee must convene a general meeting of the Association to be held within 21 days after the date on which the Secretary received the notice.*
- 8.8** *At a general meeting of the Association convened under sub-rule (7)-*
 - 8.8.1** *business other than the question of the appeal may be conducted; and*
 - 8.8.2** *the committee may place before the meeting details of the grounds for the resolution and the reasons for the passing of the resolution; and*

8.8.3 *the member, or his or her representative, must be given an opportunity to be heard; and*

8.8.4 *the members present must vote by secret ballot on the question whether the resolution should be confirmed or revoked.*

8.9 *A resolution is confirmed if, at the general meeting, not less than two-thirds of the members vote in person, or by proxy, in favor of the resolution, In any other case, the resolution is revoked. "*

7. VICSPA BOARD OF MANAGEMENT

The members of the Board of Management and their background skills can be found on the ViCSPA website, www.vicspa.org.au

APPENDIX 1

VICSPA SEED POTATO CERTIFICATION SCHEME

CLEAN BIN DECLARATION

Bin Cleanliness Declaration for use when Certifying seed potatoes in **USED** half tonne bins or bulk trucks.

I,
.....Phone:.....
(Buyers name and address)
have agreed to purchase
from.....
.....
(Seed grower's name and address)
.....tonnes ofcertified seed
potatoes.(Variety)

I certify that bins supplied by me are:
(number of bins)

- in sound condition
- have been thoroughly washed and are free of all soil and debris
- have not been used in any farming operation where bacterial wilt or potato cyst nematode is known to have occurred within the last 5 years and
- that old ViCSPA certification labels have been removed and destroyed

I will accept an independent arbitrator assessment of the cleanliness/soundness of the bins in question and will pay for the return of the bins to my property should the arbitrator decide they are unacceptable.

Signed: Date:
(Buyer)

Signed: Date:
(Grower)

Note: Each lot of potatoes submitted for certification in used half tonne bins (or similar containers) or bulk truck must be accompanied by a Clean Bin Declaration.

APPENDIX 2

QUALITY ASSURANCE PROGRAM

The ViCSPA Scheme

Victoria has been operating a Seed Potato Certification Scheme since 1938/39. The ViCSPA Seed Potato Certification Scheme is the major source of Certified seed potatoes for South Australia and the eastern mainland states.

The aim of the Scheme is to improve the efficiency of the Australian potato industry by providing cost efficient and effective technical and administration services for the production of high quality Certified seed. The Scheme is based on pathogen tested stocks. Stocks derived from tissue culture are multiplied in the field for 1 to 5 years before being sold as Certified seed.

The ViCSPA Quality Assurance Program

Quality Assurance (QA) is an internationally proven method of ensuring that a product is of good, consistent quality. It is being used by manufacturers, processors and increasingly by farmers. QA is a system of planning and checking for quality at all stages of production. All checks are documented and audited by qualified QA auditors.

Registered seed growers with a minimum of three years experience in the seed Scheme may apply to join the Quality Assurance (QA) Scheme. ViCSPA reserves the right to determine who and how many businesses may enter the QA program.

Details of the QA program can be found in the QA Operations Manual and the QA Model Manual.

The commitment by a business to join the QA program is a significant one. The owner/manager must document their quality policy statement and their quality system (based on the model manual), undertake staff training and agree to have their quality system audited on a regular basis. Audits will be both announced (i.e. by appointment) and unannounced. Specialist auditors carry out at least three audits.

Non Compliance - Penalty

If a critical non compliance with the quality system is found during audit ViCSPA will terminate the QA agreement or suspend the QA agreement and impose normal tuber inspection at a penalty rate.

The QA Program

The Quality Assurance project commenced on 10 farms in Victoria during February 1991. The QA program is based on ISO-9002 (an International Standards

Organisation), which involves growers being responsible for quality management. In May 1992, the first 10 QA growers successfully adopted QA. The registered businesses produce 52 % of Victoria's certified seed potatoes.

Quality Assurance (QA) is defined as the systematic control of quality factors of a product through the whole production process to ensure that it meets market specifications. QA applies to the growing, harvesting, packing, transporting and marketing of the product. The purpose of QA is to ensure an output of Certified seed potatoes which consistently fulfils growers' objectives: namely to satisfy the needs of the customers.

One feature of QA production is the recording of all production processes by the growers. This allows subsequent review, if after purchase the Certified seed does not perform to the purchasers' expectation. A trace back helps identify what caused the problem and enables the management to learn and prevent it recurring.

The QA manual is based on identifying the hazards that occur during the management cycle and specifies the management steps to produce the desired quality product. Compared with the traditional method of inspecting the final packed product and rejecting produce that is below the required standard, it is a system of total quality control. The process aims to produce a quality product from the very start of the season.

Throughout the production process, both management and staff share responsibility for quality. The system involves farm staff training. Staff is given more responsibility for procedures.

ViCSPA Conducts Field Inspections

Under quality assurance the growing crop is still inspected twice by the Victorian Certified Seed Potato Authority Incorporated (ViCSPA). However, it is the grower's responsibility to inspect their product at final grading. The grower is responsible for planning, controlling and monitoring the quality of produce.

All growers participating in the QA Scheme keep records, which included hygiene records of their machinery and shed management, a farm diary, and a checklist which shows that every load has been inspected and whether it meets the required standards. Growers document procedures for the production of potatoes that comply with quality standards which ViCSPA checks and approves.

QA Manual

Each business adapts the QA model manual to suit their management needs. The manual is given a desk audit to ensure that it maintains the standards of the Scheme.

Conditions of the ViCSPA Seed Potato Certification Scheme

For the first year, growers follow the existing certification procedures but also implement their QA manual and practice their quality assessments. An initial audit assesses their ability to fully operate QA system.

The broad concept of QA is that the seed grower is given permission to Certify his product based on the fact that a quality management plan (QA manual) is in place. The documentation is part of the proof that the manual is being followed. The documentation along with grower and staff knowledge and 'show me how its done' questions are used by auditors to assess the compliance of the business with their manual. During each year at least one announced audit and two unannounced audits are carried out.

Reference: CD 17 Food and Agriculture Initiative, Development of Quality Assurance - Cost Benefit Analysis by M Cook, Department of Agriculture 1995