

## COMMERCIAL SEED POTATO PRODUCTION PROGRAM FOR EXPORT

submitted by  
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### *Introduction*

It is recognized that Alaska can produce seed potatoes of excellent quality when judged on vigor and disease incidence. All potato growers should recognize the relationship between seed quality and the quality of the subsequent crop. Yield and quality are highly dependent upon the quality of seed. Deviations from expected performance in potato yield and quality are often blamed on the seed regardless of whether the allegations can be substantiated. Alaska's isolation, climate and relative freedom from disease and insect vectors provides an ideal environment for the production of high quality potato seed. This opportunity should be exploited to improve our economy by utilizing appropriate planning and management strategies to solidify Alaska's image as a viable potato seed production region.

### *Organization*

The development of a viable seed production unit will require considerable effort and cooperation. The organization driving the seed production effort must include members of the Alaska Seed Growers Inc., the Alaska Division of Agriculture, the University of Alaska Fairbanks Agriculture and Forestry Experiment Station and Cooperative Extension Service. A governing committee should be appointed to develop policy and procedures. This committee should include representatives of each agency and the secretary and/or president of the Seed Growers organization. Our respective roles in this effort will not be as one organization or another, but rather as a team of skilled individuals willing to devote the time, energy and thoughtfulness required to create and maintain a thriving and prosperous seed potato industry. Historically, the potato industry in Alaska has not opted to establish a strong centralized organization to manage its affairs. The result has been a lack of focus and development of long range goals. Setting goals in an organized effort is the initial step needed to institute change for the better.

### *Action*

The success of this venture requires that Alaska seed potato eclipse all other within the industry and that our organization must be able to substantiate that claim. We must clearly demonstrate that Alaskan produced seed will improve the buyers net returns. This can be accomplished by utilizing available technology in the following areas:

A. Disease control

1. continue field monitoring
2. latent testing for bacterial and virus diseases
3. on-farm field evaluation of nonseed acres
4. maintain clean seed production program
5. acquire clean germplasm
6. latent testing technology transfer to Seed Growers Inc.

B. Production and management

1. seed spacing
2. fertility
3. vine-kill
4. harvest practices
5. handling and storage

C. Education

1. Publish seed production guide for Alaska
2. Educate growers on proper disinfection techniques

The infrastructure required to generate the management information is in place. University, Division of Agriculture and seed growers have the expertise to answer the questions. Yield/quality trials would be conducted in Idaho and other locations to provide field demonstration data on Alaska seed. Marketing procedures from field through delivery need attention with transportation becoming extremely important.

Creating a five year plan establishes a goal and will help identify and integrate factors which must be addressed. Disease tested seed production, production management (fertility, irrigation, vine-kill), field disease monitoring, transportation, marketing, and buyer satisfaction are a few areas to be explored.