
Letter to the editor -

Potato spindle tuber viroid

Sir — Table 1 and the associated text in Dr. Singh's paper "Viroids and their potential danger to potatoes in hot climates" (Canadian Plant Disease Survey, 63(1), 13-18) provides misleading information with regard to the status of PSTV in Scotland, since the reader is given to believe from the title of the table that PSTV occurs in Scotland.

PSTV does not occur in Scotland, or the rest of the UK. It has been intercepted in breeding material passing through quarantine; it has been detected in, and eliminated from, advanced breeding lines; but it has never been found in commercial cultivars in the field or elsewhere in the UK.

M.J. Richardson
Head, Potato and Plant Health Division
Department of Agriculture and Fisheries for Scotland
East Craigs, Edinburgh EH12 8NJ

In reply to statements in Dr. Richardson's letter that "Table 1 and the associated text provides misleading information with regard to the status of PSTV in Scotland", Scotland is mentioned only in Table 1. It contained a listing of viroids reported from various countries and PSTV in Scotland was included on the following evidence: In a discussion-review paper (Harris *et al.* (1979) Plant Health, 231-237) the following comments were made about PSTV in Scotland: (1) "With reference to the Commonwealth Potato Collection infection was confirmed in five out of the 13 lines originally suspected to be infected (Commack & Harris, 1973)". (2) "One mild strain was found in seedlings of *Solanum gourlayi* Hawkes held by the Commonwealth Potato Collection and another strain was intercepted from certain imported clones of *S. tuberosum*". (3) "Seed-transmitted viroid has been detected in wild-tuber bearing *Solanum* species kept in the Commonwealth Potato Collection. In two lines, approximately 10% of true seed was infected, while in other, nearly 100% infection was found. Infection was recovered in one instance, from 7-year-old true seed".

It is now further reinforced from Dr. Richardson's letter that PSTV had indeed "been detected in, and eliminated from, advanced breeding lines". This is similar to the present situation in Canada.

Although PSTV has been known in various countries for a long time, there has been no report of serious economic losses anywhere in the world. PSTV should be treated as a minor disease which can be kept under control by proper certification schemes.

R.P. Singh
Agriculture Canada
P.O. Box 20280
Fredericton, N.B.
E3B 4Z7
