

SENATE BILL REPORT

ESB 5959

As Passed Senate, March 17, 1997

Title: An act relating to seed potato production.

Brief Description: Allowing for the establishment of restricted seed potato production areas.

Sponsors: Senators Anderson and Morton.

Brief History:

Committee Activity: Agriculture & Environment: 2/27/97, 3/4/97 [DPA].
Passed Senate, 3/17/97, 49-0.

SENATE COMMITTEE ON AGRICULTURE & ENVIRONMENT

Majority Report: Do pass as amended.

Signed by Senators Morton, Chair; Swecker, Vice Chair; Fraser, McAuliffe, Newhouse, Oke and Rasmussen.

Staff: Bob Lee (786-7404)

Background: Growers of seed potatoes may apply for certification to the Department of Agriculture. Seed potatoes may be certified if they meet standards set by department rules relating to the presence of plant disease, nematodes and other factors.

Concerns exist regarding introduction of plant diseases and insect pests into traditional seed potato production areas that may increase the risk of seed potatoes not meeting seed certification standards.

Summary of Bill: Growers of certified seed potatoes may submit a petition to the Department of Agriculture requesting the establishment of a restricted seed potato production area. The petition is to include a description of the proposed boundaries of the restricted seed potato production area, and the restrictions that are proposed to apply to the growing on nonseed potatoes. Petitions must be signed by at least 50 percent of the growers in the proposed area who have produced at least 50 percent of the certified seed potatoes in each of the two preceding years.

The Department of Agriculture must investigate the need of establishing a restricted seed potato production area within 60 days of receipt of a petition. The director may propose rules and hold public hearings in the area affected by the proposed rules. The department has authority to adopt rules in accordance with the Administrative Procedure Act to establish a restricted seed potato production area to prevent increased exposure to plant diseases and insect pests that would adversely affect the ability to meet certification standards for seed potatoes.

Appropriation: None.

Fiscal Note: Requested on February 21, 1997.

Effective Date: The bill contains an emergency clause and takes effect immediately.

Testimony For: Growing of certified seed potatoes requires conditions that are as free as possible from plant diseases and insect pests. A source of diseases and pests is from other potatoes that are grown in the vicinity of the seed potato fields. Other states have established areas that are restricted from growing other potatoes in order to protect seed potatoes from such infestations.

Testimony Against: None.

Testified: PRO: Mike Schwisow, Washington State Seed Potato Commission; Marlys Bedlington, Washington State Seed Potato Commission/potato grower; Roger Hawley, Washington State Seed Potato Commission Chairman; Mary Beth Lang, Department of Agriculture.