

MAINE POTATO LADY TESTIMONY

- Hello. My name is Alison LaCourse. I am the owner of the Maine Potato Lady. We sell and ship certified seed potatoes to gardeners and market farmers all over the country.
- I have been in the business for over 30 years, 20 years in my own business and prior to that 10 plus years as the potato coordinator at FEDCO.
- I sell only certified seed and have done so for 30 years. I am proud to provide quality seed potatoes to my customers. I sell 45-55 different varieties of potatoes, some conventionally grown, some organically grown. Many of these are specialty varieties.
- Most of what I sell is Maine certified seed but I also import seed from selected sources in CO and NY. All of my importations have always been reported and legal.
- I've been importing seed from Rockey Farms in Saguache County, CO since I began in the business over 30 years ago. Saguache County is not and has never been under quarantine for CRKN. Most certified seed we import from Rockey Farms is shipped out of state, and a small percentage is sold to Maine gardeners and market farmers.
- Verlin Rockey was instrumental in many specialty heirloom varieties including the fingerlings being put into potato seed certification.
- His nephew Brendon Rockey has continued that focus on specialty certified seed potatoes, and has successfully incorporated sustainable agriculture practices like cover cropping and companion planting into the production system to improve soil quality and conserve water.
- Rockey Farms has tested for CRKN many times and has never had a positive result. Even now, the lab test on the current crop is negative verifying that Rockey Farms' attention to details and the health of the farm consistently produces high quality certified seed potatoes.
- The CRKN quarantine of Rio Grande county in Colorado is over 30 years old, and was in effect when I started in the business. This is the only specific county in Colorado named in current Maine law from which no seed potatoes can be brought into the state of Maine. Fully reported and legal shipments of certified seed potatoes have been made from Rockey Farms in Saguache County, CO for decades brought in by multiple buyers and farmers with no concerns being raised by the State of Maine.
- What is the situation that has prompted the immediate concern?
- To warrant a law change there should be current lab and or other testing with results of positive CRKN. I have not seen or heard of any existing such data.
- I feel this proposed law change is short sighted. I worry that potato seed growers and potato farmers across the country will interpret the proposed

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law change as being political and market-share driven and targeting one farm and one state.

- This proposed law change will be very detrimental to not only Rockey Farms but to my company and others as well.
- Thank you very much for hearing my concerns.