



USDA-APHIS-PPQ
Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
4700 River Road
Riverdale, MD 20737

September 29, 2023

Submitted via: PPQPRAComments@usda.gov

RE: Regulatory Options for Tomato brown rugose fruit virus in the Fruit for Consumption and Plant Propagative Materials (Including Seeds) Pathways

On behalf of our members across the fresh fruit and vegetable supply chain, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association is pleased to offer comments to the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service in relation to the Assessments and Potential Regulatory Options for Tomato Brown Rugose Fruit Virus (ToBRFV).

About CPMA

Based in Ottawa, the Canadian Produce Marketing Association (CPMA) is a not-for-profit organization representing companies active in the marketing of fresh fruit and vegetables in Canada, from the farm gate to the dinner plate spanning the entire produce industry. The Association's members include major growers, shippers, packers and marketers; importers and exporters; transportation and logistics firms; brokers, distributors and wholesalers; retailers and foodservice distributors; and fresh cut operators and processors. Founded in 1925, CPMA is proud to represent over 830 domestic and international members who are responsible for 90% of fresh fruit and vegetable sales in Canada.

General comments

To begin, CPMA would like to emphasize our support for the submissions made to this consultation by the Fruit and Vegetable Growers of Canada (FVGC) and Ontario Greenhouse Vegetable Growers (OGVG) and urge the U.S. government to consider these in its next steps towards regulatory development.

Comments

CPMA's membership includes Canadian greenhouse growers and marketers of tomatoes and peppers who produce in all three jurisdictions in North America. Given the highly integrated nature of the North American produce industry, and the high volumes of product moving across all North American borders, our best hope for effectively addressing ToBRFV is through consistent, collaborative, and science-based risk management that effectively mitigates risk to the greenhouse industry while also facilitating the free flow of trade. Therefore, it is imperative that the Canadian Food Inspection Agency (CFIA), Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada (AAFC), the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA), and Animal & Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) adopt and implement a similar approach in their risk assessment process.

CPMA echoes FVGC and OGVG in our support for *Proposal 2: Categorize Tomato brown rugose fruit virus as a non-quarantine pest and rescind the import Federal Order*, which would remove all import restrictions for this virus for fruit for consumption and for propagative materials.

As noted by OGVG, since the implementation of the original Federal Order in November 2019, U.S. Customs and Border Protection (CBP) inspected more than 475,000 shipments of tomatoes detecting ToBRFV in only 0.8% of shipments. CPMA strongly agrees with the results of USDA's APHIS Pathway to Risk Assessments (PRA), indicating that "tomato and pepper fruit are not a significant entry route for ToBRFV into commercial tomato and pepper production".

This analysis has demonstrated that an overwhelming portion of imported fruit is consumed, processed, or destroyed in ways that prevent the spread of ToBRFV. Indeed, growers across Canada and the United States have implemented rigorous sanitation measures and biosecurity practices to mitigate the spread of ToBRFV. Growers can now manage tomatoes from seedling to harvest with the use of ToBRFV-resistant seeds, detection technologies, and biosecurity programs.

The APHIS PRA also found that ToBRFV has rarely been reported to impact commercial field tomato or pepper production. This further demonstrates that ToBRFV has a low probability of negatively impacting trade between Canada and the United States if the import restrictions on tomato and pepper fruit are removed.

CPMA also shares the perspective of OGVG and FVGC that ToBRFV is already endemic in the U.S., and that since the November 2019 order, ToBRFV has not been prevented nor eradicated in either Canada or the United States. We share the concerns raised regarding the significant cost impacts to Canadian growers incurred as a result of the ongoing restrictions. In addition, CPMA members have indicated that the ongoing restrictions and related inspections have led to shipment delays at the border, which has caused tomato shipments to spoil, incurring additional costs and unnecessary food waste.

Conclusion,

CPMA believes in a risk-based approach to regulation, and APHIS' own analysis has demonstrated that the risk of ToBRFV transmission via imports of Canadian tomato or pepper fruit is low due to Canada's effective management practices. Therefore, CPMA strongly recommends the adoption of Proposal 2 and the removal of import restrictions on these products.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be the name 'Ron Lemaire', followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

Ron Lemaire
President