



The Place To Be

# Media release

From the Minister for Agriculture

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Wednesday, 17 December, 2008

## **THORPDALE POTATOES SET TO BE EXPORTED INTERSTATE**

Complex negotiations aimed at getting approval for the export of potatoes from the Thorpdale district would bear fruit by the end of the year, Agriculture Minister Joe Helper said today.

The export of potatoes to interstate destinations was disrupted by the discovery of Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN) at a property in Thorpdale in October 2008, as interstate plant health regulations prevent importation of potatoes from within 20km of a known PCN infestation.

Mr Helper said the Department of Primary Industries (DPI) was steadily building agreement with interstate trading partners on risk mitigation and import requirements for potatoes grown in the region.

“This is a complex process involving development of science-based proposals, negotiations with interstate potato industry sectors and with government regulators,” Mr Helper said.

“A revised National PCN Management Plan has been distributed nationally to industry and government stakeholders.

“In the meantime, however, negotiations with New South Wales, Queensland and South Australia quarantine authorities have led to agreement to allow potatoes from the Thorpdale area to commence movement to interstate under conditions to reduce the risk of spreading PCN.

“The good news is that the Thorpdale region will be able to continue sending potatoes to interstate markets if they meet the appropriate risk reduction treatments.

“Thorpdale potatoes will commence moving early in January under government certification.”

DPI Principal Plants Standards Policy Officer David Beardsell said work was also continuing on an extensive program of soil testing in the region, and no further detections of PCN have been made since the initial discovery.

“DPI staff have taken more than 286,000 soil core samples and by mid-December 2008, around 2000 hectares of land had been sampled,” Dr Beardsell said.

“This represents around 80 per cent of the estimated total area that needs to be surveyed. It is important to stress PCN is not a human health issue – it is a microscopic, worm-like organism which feeds on the roots of potato plants and can reduce crop yields.”