



NEWS RELEASE

United States Department of Agriculture
NATIONAL AGRICULTURAL STATISTICS SERVICE
NEW ENGLAND FIELD OFFICE
53 Pleasant St. Room 2100 Concord, NH 03301



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
June, 2009

Contact: Dianne Johnson
(603) 227-3134

MAINE POTATOES DUG TO MEASURE YIELD, SIZE, AND GRADE

Concord, NH – Beginning in July, the New England Field Office of USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS) will be conducting the annual Potato Objective Yield Survey to forecast potato production in Maine. The results of this survey, which has been conducted by NASS in the seven major potato-producing states since 1968, will be used to establish official USDA statistics of fall potato planted acreage by variety and production for the 2009 crop.

"The cooperation of potato farmers is crucial to ensure that the Maine crop is accurately represented in National potato production statistics," explained Gary Keough, director of the NASS New England Field Office. "This information is extremely valuable to the industry in determining how different potato types are performing. Growers and grower organizations alike use these data in marketing negotiations and business planning."

NASS will contact a sample of approximately 140 Maine potato growers to collect preliminary information from 200 potato fields across the state. Local interviewers will request permission to harvest three hills from each of two randomly selected plots per sample field. Within three days of harvest or when potato vines are dead, tubers will be harvested from six hills of potatoes for each sample. The tubers are then sent to a lab to be counted, graded, sized, and weighed. After harvest, one in four sampled fields will be re-visited to measure harvest losses.

In addition to measuring planted acreage by variety, the results of the survey will also summarize counts by type for tubers per hill, hills per acre, and tuber size and grade for the 2009 fall potato crop. As with all NASS surveys, information provided by respondents is held confidential by law. "NASS safeguards the confidentiality of all responses and publishes only state and national level statistics, ensuring that no individual operation or producer can be identified," stated Keough.

All reports are available on the NASS web site: www.nass.usda.gov. For more information on NASS surveys and reports, call the NASS New England Field Office at 1-800-642-9571.