

News Release
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**WEST VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ANNOUNCES
POTATO-TESTING PROJECT AT HUTTONSVILLE, LAKIN**

West Virginia Agriculture Commissioner Walt Helmick announced today that a potato-testing project is being conducted during the 2014 growing season on tracts of WVDA property located adjacent to the Huttonsville Correctional Center in Randolph County and the Lakin Correctional Center in Mason County.

Helmick said that up to 14 different varieties have been planted at both sites and the results generated from the two projects will be utilized to determine which types of potatoes will provide the most productive yields in those two regions of the state.

The testing will also help to detail a framework for future potato planting on both state-owned and private farmland to help meet the growing demand for this crop both inside and outside of West Virginia.

“As I’ve been saying since taking office last year, we have a \$6 billion opportunity here in West Virginia and what it really amounts to is being able to grow fresh products in West Virginia for West Virginians to consume,” Commissioner Helmick said. “This potato project at Lakin and Huttonsville will establish a solid baseline for which varieties will perform the best in those regions of the state and we will use that to begin boosting potato production in West Virginia so that we don’t have to import them from other states.

“It will also help us to continue in our efforts to attract large scale potato buyers to do business with us,” Commissioner Helmick added. “We’ve been working diligently to establish some aggregation sites in various locations across the state so we can assist farmers in establishing a reliable market and distribution network for our West Virginia grown products.

“This testing project is the next step in the process.”

The West Virginia Department of Agriculture protects plant, animal and human health through a variety of scientific, regulatory and consumer protection programs, as mandated by state law. The Commissioner of Agriculture is one of six statewide elected officials in West Virginia. For more information, visit www.wvagriculture.org.