ISU Seed Testing Lab Receives Seed Health System Accreditation

(Iowa State University Seed Testing Lab News, Fall 2004)

In the summer of 2004, the Iowa State University Seed Testing Laboratory became accredited by the National Seed Health System (NSHS) to perform laboratory testing for phytosanitary certification. The NSHS is a USDA-Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (USDA/APHIS) program that provides certification for phytosanitary export from the United States.

Before the NSHS, there were international programs guiding methodology and techniques for seedborne diseases such as the International Seed Health Initiative (ISHI) and the International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), but no programs were specific to the United States or to the exportation of seed.

The NSHS focuses on three main goals: (1) standardizing methods used in phytosanitary matters (such as seed testing and field inspection), (2) accrediting private companies to conduct their own field inspections; to take their own seed samples for testing; to perform their own visual inspections for phytosanitary export; or to test for phytosanitary regulated diseases, and (3) helping with phytosanitary reform and fostering equitable trade of seed.

Accredited laboratories have the ability to collect and report data that the USDA/APHIS needs in order to process phytosanitary certificates required by most countries importing seed. According to the USDA/APHIS, “accreditation is official recognition of proficiency resulting in the approval and authority to perform specific tasks or to provide specific services in full or partial support of official obligations. Accrediting personnel, organizations, facilities, and processes associated with phytosanitary testing enhances the USDA/APHIS’s ability to protect plant resources and facilitate trade. Accreditation recognizes consistent levels of competency and confers specific authority.”
Since the ISU Seed Testing Laboratory is an official state laboratory for testing seed diseases, we have always been approved to run phytosanitary testing services. In fact, the ISU was the first state laboratory to be accredited under this program. Here at the ISU Seed Laboratory, we are excited to be a part of a new national system of accreditation that provides standardized seed health testing methods and third-party audits approved by the federal government to ensure uniform, consistent, reliable, and repeatable data.

As a part of this nationally and internationally accepted program, we have the ability to offer our customers even greater assurance of quality testing results and services. Our voluntary participation in this program shows our continuing commitment to providing all of our customers with the best in seed health testing for phytosanitary and quality assurance needs.

For more information about the ISU Seed Testing Laboratory, visit our website at http://www.seeds.iastate.edu/seedtest/. For more information about the National Seed Health System, visit http://www.seedhealth.org.