

USDA Seed Regulatory and Testing Division Winter 2025

ITEMS OF INTEREST IN SEED

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RECENT ACTIVITIES

PRESENTATIONS AND TRAININGS HOSTED BY THE SEED REGULATORY AND TESTING DIVISION (SRTD)

This quarter, SRTD organized multiple training sessions and presentations for the seed industry. These trainings promote uniformity in seed quality and standards and contribute to a greater understanding of the importance of the Federal Seed Act (FSA). The trainings included:

- An overview of the FSA at the Home Garden Association webinar.
- A presentation on the FSA and seed labeling requirements for the Montana Seed Grower Association.
- A hands-on training on tetrazolium testing on grass seeds at Washington State seed laboratory.
- Training on the Accredited Seed Laboratory Program and its benefits at the North Carolina State seed laboratory.
- FSA seed inspector training for labs in New Hampshire and Florida.

STATE SEED REGULATORS QUARTERLY MEETING

The Seed Regulatory and Testing Division (SRTD) conducts regional quarterly virtual meetings with State Seed Control Officials (SCO). The goal of the meetings is to promote better communication and working relationships with SCOs and discuss current industry issues. Topics from the most recent meetings included:

- Variety names: Using the word “Common” as a variety name conflicts with FSA regulations section 201.34(d)(3).
- Update on the Trueness-to-Variety program: The new contact for TTV inquiries is Kevin Robinson (kevin.robinson2@usda.gov). Crops that will be planted for field trials this year include garden bean, soybean, tomato, and watermelon.
- Review of obscure seed labels: A correct label format shall include one lot number, noxious-weed seed expressed in number per pound, and the pure seed percentage of each component in a mixture. A complete list of labeling requirements can be found in FSA regulations section 201.8. - 201.36.

For more information regarding this article, contact Regulatory Supervisor Lan Chi Trinh at (704) 810-7272; lan-chin.trinh@usda.gov.

CHARACTERISTICS OF THISTLES

Thistles belong to the Asteraceae family, formerly known as Compositae. 'Aster' means star in Latin and 'composite' refers to the flowers which are arranged in numerous, small florets clustered together. The family includes sunflowers, dandelions, and artichokes, to name a few.

Some species of thistle are medicinally used for calming anxiety and stress. Other species are used to create beautiful gardens or produce colorful dyes for various needs. Thistles are also important ecologically because they attract pollinators.

The seeds of thistles are urn-shaped and roughly 3 mm in length and 1 mm in width. They are rounded with no prominent ridges. Some consist of a 'pappus' which is equivalent to the calyx or sepals of flowers. The pappus can vary in appearance and resemble hairs, scales, spines, or knobs. It consists of a 'collar', which is at the apex of the seed, and usually displays a different color than the seed itself. The seed unit is an 'achene' which is a dry, indehiscent fruit with a single locule and single seed. The seed is attached to the ovary wall at a single point.



Centaurea cyanus – Cornflower. (Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 2012)



Carthamus lanatus – Woolly distaff thistle. (Canadian Food Inspection Agency, 2010)

For more information regarding this article, contact Botanist Anitra Walker at (704) 810-7268; anitra.walker@usda.gov.

SERVICE TESTING SAMPLES

SRTD's laboratory provides voluntary service testing of agricultural and vegetable seeds which is available to anyone for a fee. The [Seed Service Testing Fees](#) chart shows the charges per hour and the minimum size sample per kind of seed needed for testing. The test results are reported on a USDA Seed Analysis Certificate. The following list reflects available tests that may be conducted on the submitted samples:

- Purity
- Germination
- Noxious-weed seeds
- Moisture content
- Tetrazolium
- Seed count

To avoid delays in testing, seed companies should furnish the following information (if applicable) with their sample:

- Company name and address – If this is the first time the company has submitted a sample, SRTD will need the company's Federal Tax ID number and a signed letter indicating who will be responsible for billing.
- Kind and variety.

- Lot number – Please note that the lot number **must** be provided and **must** match the lot number supplied on accompanying paperwork. If the lot number supplied on the accompanying paperwork is correct but does not match the lot number on the supplied sample, this will delay the test until the laboratory receives a sample with the correct lot number.
- Quantity represented by the sample or number of seeds – The amount represented **must** be supplied and cannot be changed once the sample has been submitted for testing.
- Size of shipment, or number of seeds (if not the same as total quantity represented).
- Country for export – This is especially necessary when testing for noxious-weed seeds.
- Testing rules required – International Seed Testing Association (ISTA), Association of Official Seed Analysts (AOSA), or Federal Seed Act (FSA).
- Requested tests such as germination, purity, noxious, moisture, etc. – Please note that the purity test does not automatically include a noxious-weed seed exam. SRTD only performs tests **specifically requested by the customer in writing**. If a moisture test is requested, the seed should be in a moisture-proof container (plastic bag, etc.).
- Seed treatment substances – If the seed is treated, the name of the treatment is needed for the safety of SRTD personnel and so it can be stated on the certificate.
- Contact person's name, phone number, and fax number.
- SRTD also requires how, where, and to whom the certificates should be returned; i.e. by mail or by courier (if FedEx, UPS, etc. – please provide the company's courier account number to be billed).
- For more information, please visit [Seed Testing Program | Agricultural Marketing Service](#).

Send service testing samples to:

Seed Regulatory and Testing Division
801 Summit Crossing Place, Suite C
Gastonia, North Carolina 28054-2193

For more information regarding this article, contact Botanist Anitra Walker at (704) 810-7268; anitra.walker@usda.gov.

FEDERAL SEED ACT CASES SETTLED

The Federal Seed Act (FSA) provides the authority for the regulation of interstate shipments of agricultural and vegetable seeds. The FSA requires that seed shipped in interstate commerce is labeled with certain information necessary for the seed buyer to make an informed choice. The labeling information and any advertisements pertaining to the seed must be truthful.

Between September 1, 2023, and August 31, 2024, a total of 28 seed companies paid \$106,450 to settle alleged violations of the FSA. For specific information regarding these violations, please visit [Federal Seed Act Cases Settled | Agricultural Marketing Service](#).

USDA's Agricultural Marketing Service (AMS) administers the FSA by leveraging its resources with State departments of agriculture. These investigations were a result of joint efforts with seed regulatory officials in California, Idaho, Indiana, Kentucky, Louisiana, Michigan, Minnesota, Mississippi, Missouri, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, Texas, Utah, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. By working collaboratively with State partners, the Seed Regulatory and Testing Division promotes uniformity among State seed laws and fair competition within the seed trade through the enforcement of the FSA.

For more information regarding this article, contact Seed Marketing Specialist Kevin Robinson at (704) 810-7264; kevin.robinson2@usda.gov.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

- Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies
Southern Regional Meeting
Savannah, GA; March 24-26, 2025
- Association of Official Seed Certifying Agencies
Western Regional Meeting
Hood River, OR; April 16-18, 2025
- ISTA Congress
Christchurch, New Zealand; May 4-8, 2025
- AOSA/SCST Annual Meeting
Missoula, MT; June 6-12, 2025
- ASTA Leadership Summit
Washington, DC; June 8-11, 2025
- OECD Seed Schemes Annual Meeting
Hyderabad, India; June 16-20, 2025
- USDA SRTD Seed Testing Workshop
Gastonia, NC; August 4-6, 2025
- Forage, Turf and Conservation Seed Conference
Kansas City, MO; October 29, 2025

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