British
POTATO
REVIEW
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NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2025

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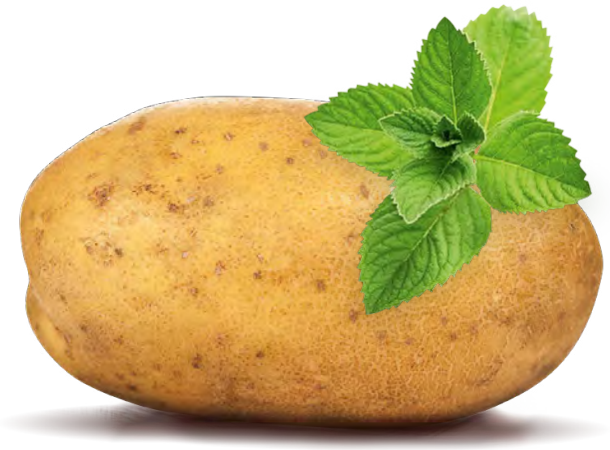

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Editor's letter

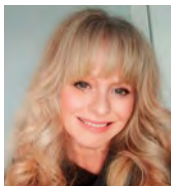
I WAS honoured to be on the judging panel for the 2025 British Potato Industry Awards recently, alongside Antonia Walker, Mark Taylor, Adrian Cunnington, David Nelson and Alex Godfrey – all industry stalwarts with a wealth of knowledge between them on different sectors within the potato industry.

There were some great discussions surrounding the entries and this is one of those occasions where I realise why I love my job so much. All nominations were submitted by companies and individuals, rather than being highlighted from our own news coverage, often creating an opportunity for us all to learn more about those activities and collaborations which haven't always been publicised. Every company that was nominated, as well as individuals put forward for the British Potato Industry Award and Young Achiever's Award, deserve recognition for their entries regardless of whether or not they won, so I'm looking forward to sharing all their details and two-year achievements with you in our Awards Supplement which we'll publish in the next issue of the magazine, as well as on our website. Those who'd like a printed version can either email me for a PDF they can print themselves, or order printed versions from Warners Group Publications (fee to cover printing, postage and packaging).

Of course, it was a difficult choice deciding who the ultimate winners would be, and there were some lively discussions before that choice was made, with some categories being so close in points that more than one 'Highly Commended' was chosen.

Storage will be a hot discussion point when we all converge in Harrogate for the awards and the British Potato Industry event later this month, and we're looking forward to unveiling the Storage Handbook which we've produced in association with storage consultant Adrian Cunnington, of Potato Storage Insights. Anyone wanting more details of this, or companies interested in exploring promotional opportunities, should get in touch with myself or Victoria, using the contact details on Page 4 of this issue.

In the meantime, catch up with our seasonal strategy, pests, disease, fertilisation, legislation, machinery, legislation and news sections and we look forward to seeing you in person at Harrogate!



Stephanie Cornwall

Editor

British POTATO

INDUSTRY AWARDS | REVIEW | INDUSTRY EVENT

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Supplier's apprentice accomplishments

POTATO supplier Branston is celebrating the career progression of one of its team members as he moves into a new apprenticeship role in engineering, returning to the sector after university.

Sebastian Oles joined Branston in 2023 after graduating from Nottingham Trent University with a degree in civil engineering. Although he began his career in the production team at Branston's Lincolnshire headquarters, Seb always had a clear ambition to work in engineering. His degree knowledge, combined with two years of practical experience, prepared him for his next step as he starts his Level 3 Maintenance and Operations Engineering apprenticeship.

Sebastian said: "Joining Branston as a graduate was the best decision I could have made. I have been consistently supported throughout my years here and thanks to my managers and wider team, I will continue to expand my skillset and take steps toward my dream job.

"In this new role I'll be tackling more complex production challenges, which will really develop my problem-solving skills. I'll also have the chance each week to shadow a senior engineer, which is a huge advantage for me as I learn best through hands-on experience.

"Alongside this, I will be helping to train new technicians which means I can improve my management skills - that is the highlight for me and something I don't take lightly."

Branston has also supported another apprentice, Leanne Brown, who joined the business in HR without prior experience but has progressed quickly. After completing a Level 3 apprenticeship, she is now working towards a Level 5 People Professional apprenticeship.

Leanne said: "At first, I wasn't sure what to expect but two years on, I couldn't recommend an apprenticeship more, especially for those unsure about their career path. During my time at Branston, my confidence has increased dramatically. I am so supported and know that if I work hard, I can continue learning and really progress within the business."

Sebastian and Leanne will be two out of 14 apprentices currently working at Branston, the business continues to nurture upcoming talent and encourages those who wish to take on-the-job training.

HR Partner at Branston, Michelle Tremble, said: "Sebastian and Leanne are great examples of how apprenticeships can help people shape their careers. Whether it's building on a degree, like Seb, or discovering a new path, like Leanne, we're committed to supporting our people to develop and grow."

Branston offers schemes across all of its sites in operations, technical and engineering from Level 2 through to degree level apprenticeships.

For more information about apprenticeships at Branston visit **www.branston.com**. or to discover the variety of apprenticeships available across the UK, visit **https://www.gov.uk/apply-apprenticeship.**

Meal milestone for potato product manufacturer

FROZEN potato product manufacturer, McCain, has reached a major milestone in its partnership with food redistribution charity FareShare, having donated the equivalent of three million meals across the UK.

FareShare aims to tackle food insecurity and reduce food waste across the country and since 2013, McCain has provided FareShare with regular donations of surplus food, including frozen potato products and raw potatoes.

FareShare supports a network of more than 8,000 frontline organisations including school breakfast clubs, domestic violence refuges, and mental health support groups, helping to provide not only meals but essential support for vulnerable individuals and families.

Regional President at McCain Foods GB, Jillian Moffatt, said: "Through a partnership that has spanned more than a decade, we are incredibly proud to have donated over three million meals to FareShare. As a family-owned company, we are committed to supporting local communities across the UK and are honoured to work with FareShare, who help nearly 8,000 frontline charities and community groups."

Head of Food Partnerships at FareShare, Nicole Sanchez-Castillo, said: "We're thrilled to have reached this incredible 3 million meal milestone with McCain. Their support has enabled us to ensure more of this good-to-eat food goes to the people who need it most instead of it going to waste. Without partners like McCain we wouldn't be able to support our brilliant network of over 8, 000 charities; from afterschool clubs and breakfast clubs, to homelessness shelters and older people's lunch clubs. These wonderful charities then transform this surplus food into meals, supporting many communities across the UK. We're incredibly grateful for McCain's support, helping us harness the power of surplus food, strengthening communities and changing lives."

McCain GB supports local communities through food donations, volunteering, and fundraising, including partnerships with FareShare, Community Shop and FamilyFund.

Younger crisps buyer trend revealed

ONE in three UK crisps consumers considers packaging credentials before buying, according to a new survey.

In the study commissioned by packaging company Amcor, more than 2,000 people were questioned in a bid to understand what drives crisp-buying decisions.

Around 30% said they'd consider the environmental impact of the packaging when buying crisps. This proved to be particularly important for younger consumers, with 43% of 18-44 year-olds agreeing they are more likely to consider the environmental impact, compared to 20% of those aged 45 and above.

Sally Liggins, Key Account Manager, Snacks & Confectionery, EMEA at Amcor, said: "These insights show just how important it is for brands to invest in recycled materials for their packaging. It's important not to underestimate how impactful and easy switching to recycled content can be.

Amcor recently collaborated with British crisps brand, Burts, to launch new crisp packaging made with 55% post-consumer recycled materials in the UK.

Developed using Amcor's AmFiniti™ solution, the packaging is made from advanced recycled materials and follows the ISCC-certified mass balance approach. Sally said the material offers the same quality and performance as virgin resin, making it suitable and safe for food-grade applications without compromising product integrity.

"Together with Burts, we proved that it's not only possible, but also a smart, future-ready move that resonates with eco-conscious consumers and supports real sustainability progress."

The research was completed in August 2025.

Seed and breeder intended acquisition

POTATO breeder and seed supplier Royal HZPC Group has announced its intention to acquire the Ireland-based potato breeder and exporter, IPM Potato Group.

The Dutch group says it is a strategic move which will strengthen its position in the global seed potato sector.

Since its founding in 1950, IPM Potato Group has grown into Ireland's market leader in seed potato breeding, production, and export. The company is also the largest exporter of protected and exclusive varieties in the United Kingdom. Through a strong grower network in Ireland, Scotland, France, the Netherlands, and England, IPM Potato Group exports to 40 countries, with a strong focus on the Mediterranean region.

In the field of research and development, IPM Potato Group has been collaborating with Teagasc, Ireland's national institute for research, advisory, and education in the agri-food sector, for more than 50 years. This ongoing partnership continues to drive innovation and has resulted in a portfolio of resilient varieties.

Director of IPM Potato Group Marcel de Sousa said the collaboration opens up new opportunities for growth, but that IPM will retain its name and continue to work with its existing customers and growers.

"Our conversations show that our visions for the future of our sector are closely aligned. At the same time, we maintain our own identity and direction. We see this as a valuable opportunity and look forward to building a strong future together."

CEO of Royal HZPC Group, Hans Huistra, said the acquisition was keen to work with a leading brand in potato breeding and export from the British Isles.

"It's a company that fits seamlessly with our way of working. They have strong customer relationships, collaborate closely with their growers, and place a high value on innovation. These qualities have led to seed potatoes that are recognised worldwide as high-quality starting material."

With the acquisition, HZPC's total acreage will be expanded by 1,800 hectares, primarily from Scotland, a leading seed potato region. Hans said it also opens doors to new markets and export opportunities, especially in key growth regions such as North Africa.

The acquisition of IPM Potato Group by Royal HZPC Group is subject to approval by the competition authorities.

Global shifts as domestic growers increase production

A MAJOR shift in the global potato industry is imminent as developing countries expand their market share in production and processing, according to RaboResearch, the knowledge and insights centre of global financial institution Rabobank.

The research centre is forecasting significant growth in the light potato market, particularly in processed products, with frozen chips gaining worldwide popularity.

International trade in frozen potato products grew sharply between 2019 and 2024, with exports rising from USD 7.7 billion to USD 13.2 billion. Local production of table and processing potatoes grew significantly as export costs increased. For example, China and India have shifted from being pure importers to exporters, thanks to significant expansion of their domestic processing capacities.

The rate of processed potato products per capita is still relatively low outside of America, Europe and Oceania, but it is increasing rapidly in Asia, the Middle East and Latin America and RaboResearch envisage they will continue to increase their potato cultivation and processing activites, thereby impacting on crop competitiveness and market growth.

Chippy prices double

BRITAIN'S chippy staples have more than doubled in price over the past decade, new figures have revealed – with soaring energy bills driving the surge.

Analysis of data obtained by Business Comparison shows the average cost of sausage and chips has increased by around 120% since 2014, while scampi and chips and other menu favourites have also seen sharp hikes.

Cod and chips – the nation's favourite order – has more than doubled in price, jumping from around £4.50 in 2014 to over £9.50 in 2025.

With fryers, freezers and lighting among the highest overheads, Philip Brennan, MD of BusinessComparison said fish and chip shops are among the businesses hit hardest by soaring energy bills – and customers are seeing the impact on every item of the menu.

BusinessComparison's own energy consumption analysis, which assesses appliance energy costs and usage, shows fish and chip shops could be spending around £17,000 a year on energy costs alone. That comes as insolvency rates in the hospitality sector remain at historic highs.

Separate research by equipment supplier KFE has also highlighted the uneven impact across the UK, with the latest data suggesting a 'regular' fish and chips costing as little as £6.70 in West Yorkshire compared with £22.50 in London.

Philip Brennan said: "Fish and chips are more than just a meal – they're part of our national identity.

"But behind every portion lies spiralling costs, driven particularly by energy bills, which are pushing prices higher and making it harder for small operators to survive."

The research adds to growing evidence that energy remains one of the biggest challenges for hospitality operators, with a recent study revealing 77% of businesses have increased their prices because of it.

Andrew Crook, President of the National Federation of Fish Friers (NFFF) supported the findings but encouraged people to continue supporting their local chippy.

He said: "Whilst we have seen increases in the sale price of fish and chips, with energy costs playing a big part, it still represents great value for money compared with other food on the go options.

"Our members work hard to offer a range of portion size and alternative species to give consumers more options to suit every pocket."

BusinessComparison, which provides free comparison tools to help SMEs cut costs and reduce overheads, is now urging small businesses to review their energy contracts to ensure they are not paying over the odds – and potentially consider switching providers.

The firm has launched a new calculator to help SMEs understand what they're spending - and where they could be saving.

Philip Brennan added: "Energy bills shouldn't be the difference between survival and closure for small businesses. There are good deals available for those who take the time to look.

"By taking control of their contracts and shopping around, operators can ease the pressure and focus on what they do best – serving great food and keeping a Great British tradition alive."

CUPGRA's conference and banquet

CUPGRA 36th Annual Cambridge Potato Conference will take place on December 9th and 10th.

The two-day event will be held at Robinson College, Grange Rd, with the Christmas Banquet taking place on the first night at St John's College dining hall.

Some of the highlights of this year's event will be what is happening in the potato industry across the Atlantic and what the UK can learn from it, how crop stress can be dealt with before it becomes yield limiting, and the role growers can play in tuber formation factors.

PhD student work will be shared and there will be discussions on information sharing, identifying new innovations and precision breeding. Workshops and an agronomic session will also take place on the second day.

The event is organised by Cambridge University Potato Growers Research Association (CUPGRA). Further details about the event, and a full programme, can be found on the *British Potato Review* website industry diary.

Reassurance on storage products

RESTRAIN, a provider of potato storage products, has confirmed that its systems remain fully authorised and unaffected by the UK Health and Safety Executive (HSE) decision to withdraw certain ethylene-based plant protection products.

The UK HSE recently published a notice regarding the withdrawal of plant protection products for ethylene supplied via gas cylinders under Regulation (EC) No. 1107/2009. The two affected products are Biofresh Safestore (MAPP number M15729) and Banarg (MAPP number M18190).

Restrain Fuel (MAPP number 14520), which drives Restrain's unique ethanol-to-ethylene conversion technology, is not affected by this withdrawal.

Managing Director Dan Hewitt said: "We want to reassure all of our customers and partners that Restrain's solutions remain fully approved and operational. Growers can continue to rely on Restrain for safe, sustainable, and residue-free potato storage solutions in the UK and worldwide. In fact, as cylinder-supplied ethylene is phased out, this creates new opportunities for growers to adopt Restrain's Precision Ethylene Treatment technology."

The HSE's decision applies only to ethylene sourced from gas cylinders.

SpudBros Express launched

SOCIAL media potato sensations, Spud Bros, have just launched a SpudBros Express shop in Liverpool.

Jacob Nelson, one half of the business duo, recently spoke of his pride at the latest business move in social media posts.

"Our whole adventure started with a love for good food and a passion for the humble jacket potato, turning it into something spudtacular with top notch ingredients and delicious fillings everyone can love," he said.

"Social media these days is like the perfect seasoning on top of our journey, so crucial in today's society and really a game changer for sharing what we do. But at the end of the day, it's always been about the food, the spuds, the vibes and using the best ingredients to make something everyone falls in love with."

Finalists and nominees announced for industry awards

Nominations for recognition from all sectors of the potato industry now judged by panel, with winners to be announced on awards night.

The panel of judges for the *British Potato Industry Awards* got together for judging day recently and also enjoyed having a tour of the Warners Publications printworks in Bourne, HQ of the organiser and venue for this year's judging.

The ultimate winners will be announced at the awards celebration dinner on the first night of the *British Potato Industry Event* later this month.

The entries were made up of companies who put themselves forward as contenders for eight different categories, or were nominated by others, while contenders for the two individual awards – the British Potato Industry Award and the Young Achiever Award – were also by nomination.

All those in the judging panel said it was refreshing to hear from companies whose contributions aren't always highly publicised, but whose products, services and overall activities are making their own impacts within the potato supply chain. The agtech, environmental and machinery awards were particularly well responded to, leading to a longer, and more varied, list of finalists in those categories.

"We'd like to see more contenders being put forward for the storage and science awards, as people seem more shy to enter those categories, but those who did take the time to enter had put together some interesting material, and it was a pleasure to read about their activities and achievements over the past two years," the panel announced.

"We'd also like more companies to put forward young apprentices and employees for the Young Achiever Awards, as we know there are a lot of young people out there who also deserved to be nominated. It cost nothing to put them forward and fill in a questionnaire. We're genuinely interested to hear about the next generation of people who are helping to shape different areas of the potato industry in the future."

The list of finalists and nominees, as well as details of the judging panel, is now available to view on the British Potato website and will also be detailed in the British Potato Industry Awards 2025 special supplement will be published on the website, included in the January issue of *British Potato Review* (following the winners' announcements at the awards dinner), and can be provided as a separate PDF to anyone wishing to print out and keep their own copy (contact Editor Stephanie Cornwall at **stephanie.cornwall@warnersgroup.co.uk** for this option).

Show prepares to welcome more visitors

THE British Potato Industry Event, which takes place on November 19th and 20th at the Yorkshire Event Centre in Harrogate, is set to attract thousands of visitors as all those supplying to and working in the industry gather for the event which takes place every two years.

Organisers say virtually all stands have now been taken for the event and they are expecting even more visitors than in 2023, as the industry has evolved and more new products and machinery have become available. With changes in legislation, handling, climate trends and market conditions, there are a number of seminars taking place at the event, which attendants can claim BASIS points for. BPR

For our special show focus, with a full floorplan, turn to page 23.

Argos fogging can be delayed until sprouts begin to appear.

Beware a rude awakening

Hot, dry summer raises risk of early potato dormancy break.

AN earlier-than-usual break in potato dormancy is likely to be the legacy of the hot, dry summer, potato agronomists agree.

The unknown factor, currently, is how well maleic hydrazide (MH) applications were taken up in those conditions, with good uptake helping to delay dormancy break. In contrast, poor uptake would exacerbate the challenge.

Simon Alexander, an independent agronomist based in Norfolk, said: "I haven't yet seen any data on MH uptake, but I don't see why it should have been horrendous – it was dry last year and we saw some quite good uptake.

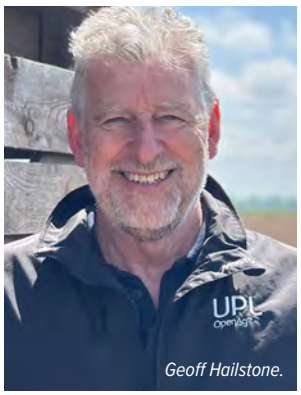
"But with how hot it has been, in theory, we should see dormancy break earlier than normal, so careful monitoring of stores is going to be essential."

Fellow independent potato agronomist Simon Faulkner of SDF Agriculture agreed, saying the accumulation of day degrees has been much higher than in a 'normal' year.

"I suspect dormancy break will be sooner rather than later, which we are already seeing a little bit," he said. "That's mostly tubers which have become green, so are ones closer to the surface and have accumulated more day degrees."


Simon Alexander.

Simon Faulkner.



Geoff Hailstone.

He, too, has not seen any results of MH uptake, although he stresses that testing is a valuable management tool, especially in this type of season. "If the tuber hasn't taken up sufficient MH, it will be a candidate for earlier dormancy break, so there is some benefit of doing one or two samples."

Both agronomists expect the dormancy break to occur around two to four weeks earlier than in a typical year. "It's difficult to give a concrete answer," Simon Faulkner said. "It will depend on varieties, on MH uptake, on whether they are cold stored or processing, warmer stored potatoes.

"Clearly, processing potatoes are at higher risk because you're storing them at higher temperatures, whereas you will have more time with cold stores. Pulling temperatures down to 3°C clearly slows the process."

Early lifted potatoes going into storage could also be at higher risk, Simon Alexander suggests. "Most growers start worrying about stores once they finish lifting, but it's crucial those earlier lifted crops get due attention, particularly where lifted into ambient stores, as in that earlier part of the season we weren't getting cooler nights, which will exacerbate the risk."

"The market is tough at the moment, and every little gain helps improve profitability."


Argos-treated potatoes.

Simon is less concerned about crops that appear to be sprouting in the field. "On some varieties, such as Agria, you can dig up plants and they're hairy and have chits. I don't believe that is conventional dormancy break, and I've never seen it have an impact on sprouting in store – so don't panic if you do see it."

"Monitor, monitor, monitor" is the advice from both agronomists. "Be vigilant," Simon Faulkner stresses. "Look around the stores, especially in areas where there could be slight variations in temperature where dormancy could break sooner and treat accordingly.

"You might end up needing one or two more applications than usual," he notes. "When it comes to application, make sure stores are in a fit state in terms of dryness – no wet patches or condensation on the roof, for example.

"It's standard practice in any year, but follow best practice and you get good application efficacy."

Considering the potential for dormancy to break earlier than usual, Geoff Hailstone, Potato Technical Specialist for UPL, advises growers to consider starting their in-store programmes with a product that uses a physical mode of action.

"This approach maximises the crop's natural dormancy," he said. "Unlike products which need to be applied ahead of sprouting, a product like Argos (orange oil) can be delayed until sprouts begin to appear, pushing back in-store treatments until it's clear that crop dormancy is broken.

"Growers have multiple in-store sprout suppressant products to choose from, with each having notable benefits. I'd encourage them to build a programme around these based on the merits of the available products to reduce storage costs and maximise potato quality.

"The market is tough at the moment, and every little gain helps improve profitability." BPR

Contingencies and rollercoasters

We share insights from the marketing team at SPC about the co-operative's shared vision and how it is helping Scottish growers get the best from their spuds.

THE grower-owned Scottish Potato Cooperative (SPC) supplies throughout the year, thanks to its geographical spread which covers 5,000 acres over an 80-mile radius from its Dundee base.

Looking to improve long-term profitability for its members, it manages risk and uncertainty on their behalf, supports them in their endeavours to improve their performance and provides a marketing service as well as exploring new commercial opportunities.

One of Scotland's largest producer groups, its members collectively grow 1,650 ha of potatoes, producing more than 100,000t of potatoes, and the co-operative is still happy to take on new members.

Fraser Malcolm, part of the marketing team at SPC, has been involved in the potato industry for more than 40 years, and we caught up with him on the recent Perfecting Potatoes Together tour, organised by BASF, to learn a little more about how the cooperative operates, its growth, and the way it supports its members.

The cooperative, now in its seventh year, was formed out of a feeling that a collective approach could give Scottish growers a better way of making a living, he said during our catch-up at Hatton of Ogilvy.

At that time, many packers wanted to deal directly with growers but it was a 'divide and conquer' scenario, where growers, no matter how large, were still of small significance in the grander scheme of things, he said. Prices were getting lower, and growers were "fighting among themselves".

With 100% commitment then required from every grower, many ended up with surpluses that no-one was interested in selling, resulting in potatoes being dumped every year.

"We got together about seven years ago and began talking about this. Ultimately, we formed the Scottish Potato Cooperative with 17 growers who between them had 75,000t of potatoes," said Fraser.

"If you were a good grower, you were cooperatively-minded. It didn't matter if you grew on 40-50 acres or 600 acres, size wasn't a bar to entry. It was one mind, one vote."

There is a lot of contingency built in to SPC membership to the benefit of all, he said.

"Many were contracting at around 65% and that surplus 30-35% was value-less really, so it was becoming really difficult to grow potatoes. We were able to contract at 90% on the basis that most of us get it right most of the time. There are an odd few anomalies here and there but out of the big collective, we were able to cope with that."

Getting off the rollercoaster

Removing the "roller-coasting pricing" has been a big driving point for the co-operative, said Fraser.

"We forecast 23 boxes an acre, so if we've harvested 21 boxes an acre, ie below average yield, we figured we would sell that 1t for £500. If we harvested 26 boxes an acre – a massive yield - we would probably sell that 5t of surplus for £80. In other words, the free buyer limit is almost static, it's just the price per ton you're getting. We have to contract at a high level because we want to take this rollercoaster pricing out."

"Our biggest customer says their average yield through the factory has gone up by 3% since the co-operative became a major part of their supplying, and that is because we're marketing the potatoes for them."

Now SPC tracks a contract with as many people as possible, he said.

"When one buyer won't accept, we can move them to another buyer. There is quite a lot of this moving about. We do tend to find a round hole for most of our round borers."

The organisation also has "pretty substantial" processing contracts which, again, had previously been a stumbling block for small growers.

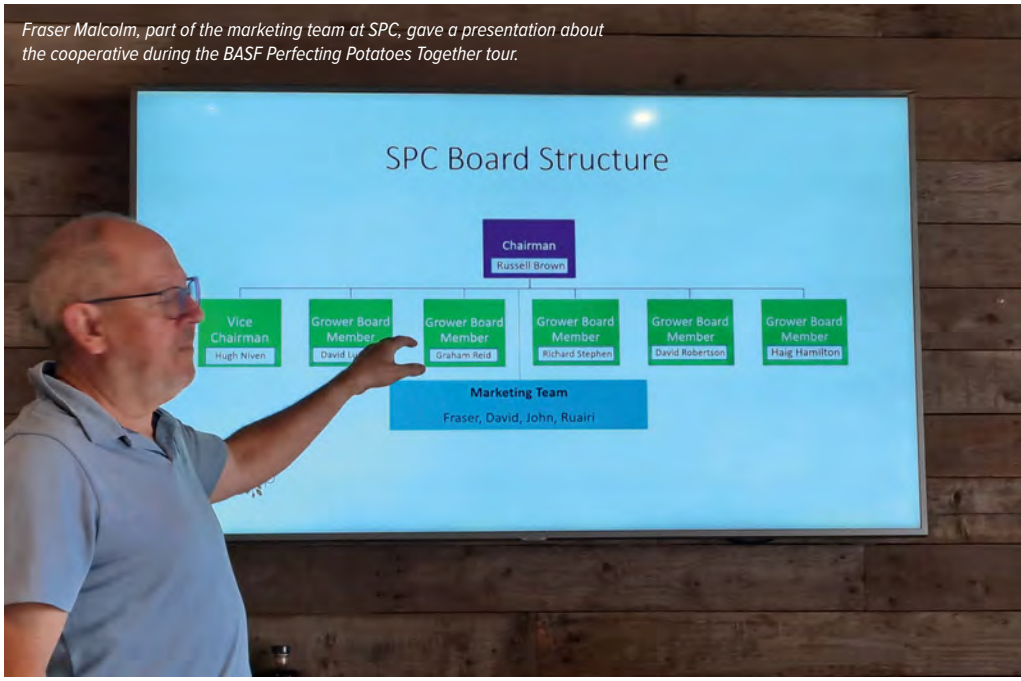
"A lot of our guys would grow on around 200 acres because that's what one machine could harvest, so you'd only be harvesting 5,000t of potatoes. If you go to a processor and say you want a 400t contract, they are not going to be that interested. Whereas now, we have 25 growers, with 125,000t of potatoes, and we are taking 10,000t contracts across the group," said Fraser.

Pricing structure

Weekly pricing is now the norm for the co-operative so, no matter where potatoes go, growers get the same price and everyone gets the same price in any given week.

"We went to weekly pricing from monthly pricing which a lot of people think is complex but we didn't want growers pulling us up in October saying 'I've got a contract, I'm moving them now'. If they know they are going to get a pound if they keep them for a week, or by £2 or £3 in another week, they're not worried if it goes during the first week of the month or the last week of the month."

Fraser Malcolm, part of the marketing team at SPC, gave a presentation about the cooperative during the BASF Perfecting Potatoes Together tour.



Growers are kept informed about where their potatoes fall in terms of collective quality, with individual catch-ups held with each grower. "They can see straightaway where their quality lies amongst the group. We used to have everybody in together, but that didn't work so well. When they are on their own, they are more comfortable. For example, we can tell those whose quality is better that they can be kept until near the end because we underwrite collectively," said Fraser.

Troubleshooting

The collective approach also provides a crutch whenever stumbling blocks are encountered so that no-one is out-of-pocket, Fraser stressed.

"This year for example, one of our customers just hadn't used all the potatoes. They still had 6,000t of whole crop to take from us. We could see that coming and had been mitigating the problem over two or three months. We knew we were going to have to dump maybe 600-700t of potatoes which would cost us over £200,000, but collectively the whole cooperative would share that burden. The best potatoes we grow amongst us, that we've stored the longest, have cost us the most to get to this point, so we obviously can't have them being penalised for something that's not their fault.

"The free-buy potatoes that we have, the surplus goes into the collective kitty and at the end of the year there's a dividend pro rata. Last year it was £700 per ton."

If anyone has a problem, stocks can also be liquidated very quickly, he said.

'A zero cost'

In addition to the yearly dividends, growers are ultimately seeing factory growth.

"Our biggest customer says their average yield through the factory has gone up by 3% since the cooperative became a major part of their supplying, and that is because we're marketing the potatoes for them.

"Nobody has individual contracts, everybody is prepared to move their potatoes whenever we ask them to because we know we are doing it on a quality basis. If our customer's yield has gone up by 3%, so have the growers' yields gone up by 3%. That is more than it cost in marketing. In other words, it is zero cost for a grower to be a member." BPR

scottish potato coop

The Scottish Potato Co-op Limited is a grower-owned co-op formed in 2019. It involves 24 progressive potato growers largely based in Angus and Fife, growing more than 5,000 acres (100,000t) of ware potatoes. It supplies to most of the UK's leading supermarket chains and processors. More information is available at **www.scotpot.coop**

Mapping out upgrades for coming year

Toby van Asch of Wyma Solutions Europe shares some review tips for suppliers and packers based on this year's harvest.

AS the potato season moves from harvest into storage, it's the ideal time to take stock of your operation and plan for the year ahead.

Once the pressure of harvest has eased and before the next planting season begins, growers and processors alike have a valuable window to review performance, identify bottlenecks, and plan upgrades that will deliver the biggest impact next season.

For many, annual planning has shifted from being a maintenance checklist to a strategic process, one that can reduce risk, control costs, and strengthen competitiveness in an increasingly demanding market.

With rising labour and energy costs, stricter environmental requirements, and higher retailer expectations, the margin for inefficiency has never been smaller. Structured annual planning helps ensure equipment, processes, and resources are optimised to meet these challenges.

For potato packers and processors, this means taking a holistic view of the full operation, from intake and washing through to polishing, grading, storage, and packing. Planning upgrades early allows you to:

- Reduce unplanned downtime during the next harvest season
- Spread capital investment over the year, avoiding last-minute costs
- Improve product quality and yield through better line performance
- Align improvements with sustainability and compliance goals

Step 1: Review the past season

Start by looking back at the harvest and packing season just completed. Where did downtime occur? Did soil conditions or crop quality create new handling challenges? Were there quality issues linked to damage, grading accuracy, or water use?

Operator feedback and service records are your best starting points. Recording what worked - and what didn't - provides a factual foundation for prioritising next year's investments.

For instance, several UK and European processors have used post-season reviews to identify bottlenecks in intake and washing, leading to major gains in throughput and energy efficiency simply by upgrading water recycling systems or automating bin tipping and hopper feeding.

Step 2: Align upgrades with business goals

Every upgrade should directly support a wider business objective. That could mean reducing labour reliance through automation, improving efficiency in pre-washing and grading, or meeting new sustainability targets around water use.

This approach ensures investment decisions are driven by return on investment, not by urgency. In recent years, more operators have integrated optical grading and automated handling to help manage variable crop quality coming out of storage, protecting pack-out rates and consistency throughout the year.

Step 3: Plan around the agricultural calendar

Timing is crucial. For most British growers and processors, the months between December and March are the main window for plant maintenance, retrofits, and line upgrades before intake ramps up again.

Mapping upgrades against your operational calendar avoids lost production time and ensures suppliers have capacity for delivery and installation. Many processors now plan upgrades two to three quarters in advance, securing equipment and engineering resources well before peak demand.

Step 4: Evaluate roi and future flexibility

Potato processors are under constant pressure to adapt, whether it's changing customer specifications, crop variation, or labour availability. When evaluating upgrades, consider not just ROI but flexibility.

For example, modular designs and multi-crop capability allow equipment to handle different varieties and grades more efficiently. Similarly, digital monitoring tools provide visibility of line performance, helping detect early signs of wear or inefficiency before they cause downtime.

Step 5: Build in contingency

Harvest and storage conditions vary year to year, and so do investment priorities. Set aside a contingency budget for unexpected upgrades or service work identified during the season. Having funds available allows you to act quickly on urgent needs without derailing longer-term plans.

Looking Ahead: A smarter approach to upgrades

The most successful potato operations treat annual planning as a continuous improvement process. They capture data throughout the season, evaluate performance post-harvest, and make strategic upgrades during winter downtime.

This approach transforms annual planning from a reactive exercise into a proactive investment strategy - one that improves efficiency, protects quality, and keeps operations resilient year after year. BPR

Summary Framework

Review ▶	Align ▶	Plan ▶	Evaluate ▶	Adapt ▶

By following this framework, potato growers and processors can ensure every upgrade supports a smarter, more efficient future — delivering smoother seasons, stronger margins, and a more sustainable operation.

‘The potato world knows how to connect’

Organiser reflects on record numbers and new features at European potato show.

THE 2025 edition of PotatoEurope, which took place in Lelystad in the Netherlands recently, attracted 17,268 visitors from 107 countries.

Held at Wageningen University & Research (WUR) Field Crops, the event's exhibitors and visitors were drawn from all sectors of the global potato chain, including machinery manufacturers, growers, breeders, buyers and policymakers.

Kuno Jacobs, Managing Director of DLG Benelux, which organised the event, said: "PotatoEurope 2025 clearly showed that the potato world knows how to connect, despite the challenges. The atmosphere was optimistic, and interest in new technologies and innovations was greater than ever."

Harvested under perfect conditions by manufacturers then stored and sorted using modern techniques, the 25-hectare harvest field with the Alegria variety demonstrated how technology and practice go hand in hand. Demonstrations – from harvesting to box filling and optical sorting – attracted thousands of visitors. A new highlight was the live demonstration of optical sorting technology, which drew considerable interest. The trial fields were also in the spotlight, showcasing innovations in varieties, fertilisation and crop protection.

Another highlight was the presentation of the Innovation Award, which took place immediately after the official opening of the exhibition by the Kings Commissioner in Flevoland Arjen Gerritsen, Janine Luten (NAO), and Richard Harrison (WUR).

The first prize was awarded to Croptimal for the development of the Croptiscan 9000. This selection robot, equipped with advanced cameras and artificial intelligence, detects diseases such as Y virus, leafroll, and bacterial infections directly in the field and helps remove infected plants with great precision. Judges said the innovation was practical, immediately applicable, and had a major impact on sustainability and efficiency. Croptimal expects to deliver the first machines in 2026 and is already seeing international interest.

Second prize went to BioScout, which, together with WUR, developed a smart spore trap to detect phytophthora spores in real time. Third prize was awarded to Maxstim Ltd for introducing Maxstim Furrow Treatment, a biostimulant applied during planting.

In addition to the demo fields, international conferences were organised by WUR and other chain partners. The 'Integrated Crop Management – The Future of Potato Farming' featured discussions on crop diversity, variety selection, soil management, and targeted crop protection were discussed in depth. The 'Europe's Position in a Changing Potato World' conference also attracted significant interest.

Case IH, as tractor sponsor, provided transport during the live demonstrations.

The next edition of PotatoEurope will take place on September 9th and 10th, 2026 in Germany.

Mobile carbon tracking platform

A NEW mobile research platform has been designed to track how carbon moves through UK farmland with investment from UKRI Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC).

Developed by researchers at Lancaster University's Lancaster Environment Centre, the platform will combine automated CO_2 flux chambers with real-time isotopic gas analysers to measure how much carbon is taken in or released by crops and soils.

The platform will be housed in the newly-formed Centre for Sustainable Soils at Lancaster University.

It will track how different practices affect carbon storage, soil health, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Professor David Johnson of Lancaster University, who is leading the project, said: "Soil is one of our most important carbon sinks, but understanding how farming affects its ability to store carbon has been incredibly difficult. This platform will give us the data we need to make UK agriculture more climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable."

The platform is designed to be modular and mobile, so it can be used in real-world conditions across the country and will provide insights for researchers, policymakers, growers and industry.

It will also support the UK's research base in plant science, soil biology, and agri-tech, with direct links to multiple projects funded by BBSRC, NERC, and The Wolfson Foundation.

New variant of leafroll virus

RESEARCHERS from The James Hutton Institute and the Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA), have discovered that a new variant of potato leafroll virus (PLRV) is rapidly replacing the historic strain that has circulated in Scotland since at least 1989.

Over the past five years, PLRV incidence has risen sharply in Scottish seed potatoes. Since 2018, the number of seed potato fields reporting PLRV infection has increased nearly tenfold, reaching record levels in 2024.

This year alone, 17.5% of Scottish seed potato crops were downgraded or failed due to PLRV infection. With 78% of the UK's potato crop originating from Scottish seed tubers, the spread of this virus poses a significant threat to production and supply chains.

A team led by the Hutton's Dr Eugene Ryabov carried out a large-scale genetic analysis of PLRV samples collected from across Scotland in 2023 – 2024 to determine whether this increase could be linked to the spread of a novel variant and found that an emerging PLRV variant had become prevalent.

Eugene said: "Results of our recent PLRV project showed that there is a need to regularly monitor the diversity and strain identity of viral pathogens, since emerging virus variants would be more harmful and would require different control strategies to safeguard the UK's potato industry."

He pointed out that while the study does not prove that the new variant is the primary cause of the increase in PLRV, the possibility makes it worth further investigations. BPR

Potential new pest management approach

Slime mold metabolites are a promising, eco-friendly repellent of root-knot nematodes.

Damage resulting from root knot nematode.

JAPANESE researchers have discovered a slimy, eco-friendly way of repelling Root-Knot Nematodes in potato crops.

Studies by the scientists at Sophia University, Japan, revealed that slime mold secretes organic compounds that repel parasitic nematodes from potato plant roots without harming soil fertility.

Root-knot nematodes can cause widespread damage to potato crops. The plant-parasitic worms infect potato roots and tubers, causing yield losses and blemishes. Symptoms include small galls on tubers, which appear as pimple-like bumps, and general plant stress like wilting. Management involves crop rotation with non-host plants and the use of nematicides, but effective control requires identifying the specific nematode species present.

Chemical pesticides that control them also severely harm soil fertility.

Soil-dwelling slime mold secretes compounds that repel these nematodes, but their specific nature was unknown. Using novel culturing techniques, researchers have identified 14 compounds of high potency in repelling nematodes, paving the way for the development of non-toxic control methods.

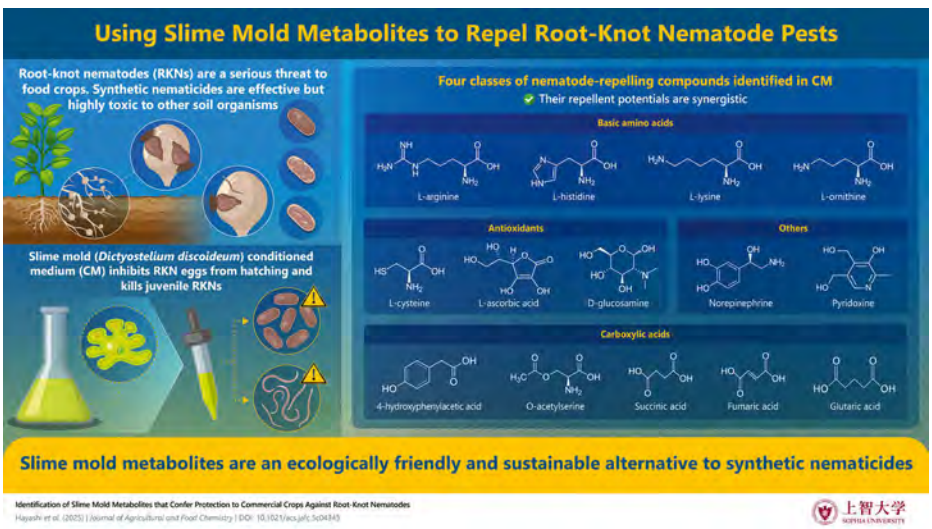
As well as causing the plants to wilt and even die, root-knot nematodes (RKNs), which are of the genus Meloidogyne, kill other microorganisms that are beneficial to potato plants, thereby reducing soil fertility. New, less toxic control methods are needed to prevent the loss of crops and soil fertility to RKNs.

Cellular slime mold (Dictyostelium discoideum) is a soil-dwelling microorganism known for its ability to coordinate the activity of individual cells using chemical signals. Previous studies have shown that D. discoideum secretions can repel RKNs and protect plant roots. Understanding which of the secreted chemicals are most effective at repelling RKNs could lead to the development of new control methods.

The team of researchers led by Professor Tamao Saito from the Faculty of Science and Technology at Sophia University discovered 14 compounds secreted by slime molds that repel RKNs and could be the source of new, non-toxic anti-RKN pesticides. Their research was first made available online in July.

Previous research revealed problems when using cell extracts from slime molds therefore the current study used what Tamao calls a conditioned medium (CM), where slime mold cells are collected from growth medium, suspended in buffered water for three days, then dried and re-dissolved for use as needed.

CM had a very strong repellent effect against RKNs. At a concentration of 30 mg/mL, CM prevented the hatching of 99% of RKN eggs and killed nearly all juvenile RKNs. Even at a 3 mg/mL concentration, 81% of eggs did not hatch, and 71% of the juveniles were killed.



Encouraged by these results, the team then analyzed the chemical composition of the CM. 14 distinct organic compounds were found to repel juvenile RKNs. Of these 14 compounds, four are L-type basic amino acids, five are carboxylic acids, three are antioxidants, along with norepinephrine and pyridoxine. While some compounds were less effective in soil when tested individually, the researchers found that combining them produced a strong synergistic effect. This mixture was far more effective than the compounds alone, showing real potential for use in crop protection.

The team also found that these 14 compounds had synergistic effects. 0.01 mg of the mixture of the 14 compounds was as effective at repelling RKNs as 5 mg of CM, demonstrating the high potency of the mixture. In addition, as these were naturally occurring compounds, they would have very mild effects on soil fertility if used at scale.

"Repellent compounds derived from cellular slime molds can contribute to sustainable food production and improved soil health as part of an integrated pest management approach," Tamao said.

Tamao plans to direct future research towards understanding the mechanisms of RKN repulsion.

"Since synergistic repellent effects were observed when multiple repellent compounds were mixed, these compounds may enhance repellent behavior by utilizing multiple different signaling pathways," she said, adding: "It is important to verify at the genetic level how repellent substances induce repellent responses in RKNs, and this is the next step of our study." BPR

Circling a revolving door

Scott Walker, CEO of GB Potatoes, explains the importance of engaging with DEFRA's new ministers.


Scott Walker, CEO of GB Potatoes

THE pace of change in government has rarely been faster than it is today. With the latest reshuffle at the Department for Environment, Food and Rural Affairs (DEFRA), we once again find ourselves engaging with new ministers - people who are learning their portfolios, defining their priorities, and shaping the policies that will affect agriculture and the food supply chain.

For those of us in the potato industry, these changes are not just political footnotes. Each new appointment brings with it a fresh opportunity, and a challenge: To ensure that our voice is heard and our sector's unique needs are properly understood. Continuity is vital in an industry where long-term confidence underpins every investment. Continuity is precisely what's most at risk when ministerial turnover becomes a recurring feature of public life.

The cost of constant change

The revolving door at DEFRA has been turning quickly. Each time a new minister takes the helm, priorities are reconsidered, teams are restructured, and relationships must be rebuilt. It's not that ministers don't care - far from it. Many bring genuine commitment and enthusiasm to their new briefs. But understanding the potato sector takes time.

The complexities of seed certification, export access, storage infrastructure, plant health regulations, market volatility, and the distinct dynamics of the fresh and processing sectors don't lend themselves to quick briefings. When ministerial changes happen frequently, there's a real danger that long-term strategies lose momentum, and issues that matter deeply to growers and the wider supply chain are put on hold while new leadership gets up to speed.

That's why GB Potatoes places such emphasis on maintaining open and consistent engagement with DEFRA officials. Ministers may change, but the department's civil service provides the thread of continuity that keeps policy work moving forward. Our role is to ensure that officials, and whoever the minister of the day happens to be, have a clear understanding of what's happening in our sector, the pressures we face, and the contribution we make to UK food security and the wider economy.

Why the new food policy matters

The UK Government's forthcoming food policy, alongside the Minette Batters farm profitability review, marks an important moment to influence how government thinks about food production and national resilience. For the potato industry, both documents present an opportunity to press the case for the country's favourite crop.

It's anticipated that Minette Batters' report will highlight many of the structural issues that farmers and growers have been talking about for years: The need for coherent policy that recognises food production as a strategic priority, and the urgent requirement to balance environmental ambition with food security. These are not abstract concerns. They cut to the heart of what potato growers experience every season - unpredictable weather patterns, input costs that fluctuate sharply, and uncertainty about future regulation.

DEFRA's new food policy, expected to build on these themes, could finally provide the framework for a more joined-up approach to agricultural resilience. Potatoes are central to that story. They remain one of the UK's most important crops - nutritious, versatile, and homegrown. Ensuring the future sustainability of our sector aligns perfectly with national ambitions on food security, environmental responsibility, and economic growth.

A seat at the table

At GB Potatoes, we are determined to make sure the potato industry's voice is clearly heard in these discussions. We meet regularly with DEFRA to provide updates on the state of the crop, market trends, prospects for the year, and the challenges faced across the supply chain. These meetings are not just about lobbying. They are about partnership. We share insight, and solutions. We help government understand how policies translate into practice on farms, in packhouses, and throughout the trade.

Looking ahead

The coming months will be critical. As new ministers settle into their roles, GB Potatoes will continue to engage constructively and proactively. We will ensure that they understand not only the economic importance of our industry but also its potential to innovate, to adapt, and to contribute to national goals on nutrition, sustainability, and resilience.

But engagement is a two-way process. It requires consistency from us too. That means all parts of our industry - growers, processors, traders, and retailers - pulling together to present a clear, united message about what matters most.

We have an industry with deep roots and a proud heritage, but also one that is forward-looking and ambitious. By building strong relationships with DEFRA's new ministers and working in step with the evolving food policy agenda, we can help shape a future where potatoes continue to play their rightful role at the centre of British food production.

In times of change, engagement is not optional. It's essential. BPR

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Welcome
to the British Potato Industry Event 2025

AS THE BRITISH Potato Industry Event 2025 quickly approaches, I look forward to welcoming both new and returning faces to Harrogate from the UK and overseas. I'm thrilled to report the event has once again gained superb support from the industry.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank our exhibitors, sponsors and exceptional team of contractors who are all set to orchestrate the premier event within our multi-billion-pound sector.

Your visit to the show is not only ideal for catching up with industry colleagues, but also a chance to keep up to date with the the latest innovations shaping the future. Key companies will be happy to show you their cutting-edge machinery, technology and equipment.

My event team, the Potato Review Magazine and the prestigious National Potato Industry Awards team, will be on hand to ensure you make the most of your visit to this bi-annual event.

In addition to two packed halls and an outdoor display area, we have an impressive line-up of seminars from experts, researchers and industry voices on topics such as 'evolving late-blight pressures', 'seed supply security,' and 'reduced input cultivation.' You don't need to book to attend the seminars, they are available throughout the event. See full line up on page 26- 30. Both BASIS and NROSO points will be available for show attendance and seminar attendance.

Head to www.britishpotato.co.uk to reserve your place at the event and bring your team along, to the much anticipated, British Potato Industry Event 2025. The UK's largest British Potato Event.

See you there!

Sally Dodds
Head of Events

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Location
Yorkshire Event Centre on the Great Yorkshire Showground. Easy to find and masses of free parking!

Opening times
9am – 5.30pm Wednesday 19th November
9am – 4pm Thursday 20th November

Travel
The show will be signposted on all major approach roads. The postcode for Satnavs is: HG2 8QZ. Please follow event-specific signage and traffic marshals' directions as you arrive onsite.
Limited disabled parking is available for Blue Badge holders adjacent to Hall 1. Please contact us in advance for a car pass or speak to a traffic marshal on arrival. The specific entrance gate will be clearly signed.

Tickets
Get in FREE and avoid queues by registering at: www.bp2025.co.uk
See it all – come for both days!
See website for accommodation options.
Visitor website: www.britishpotato.co.uk

BRITISH POTATO EVENT CONTACTS

Warners Shows, The Maltings, West Street, Bourne, Lincolnshire PE10 9PH

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(Mon-Fri; 9am-4.30pm)
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British POTATO SEMINARS

Topics presented by experts, researchers and industry voices

ENGAGE DIRECTLY WITH leading experts, researchers and industry voices presenting on the most pressing challenges and innovations in the potato sector—topics like evolving late-blight pressures, seed supply security, reduced-input cultivation, and the future of classic varieties like Maris Piper. You don't need to book to attend the seminars, they will all be held in the seminar room in Hall 1. All seminars will be 45 minutes long, and will have a Q and A session at the end for any questions you may have.

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Claim up to a maximum of 6 CPD points for **1 day only**.

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Please collect your KT card from the **BASIS Stand 199,** when you register for your attendance.

SEMINAR TIMETABLE

WEDNESDAY

10:30 - MANAGING THE THREAT FROM A CHANGING LATE BLIGHT LANDSCAPE

11:15 - COMMERCIAL SEMINAR: CYAZYPYR® ACTIVE INGREDIENT, FMC'S ANTHRANILIC DIAMIDE INSECTICIDE (MORE INFO AT STAND 125)

11:45 - SECURING THE POTATO'S PLACE ON THE PLATE

13:00 - OFFICIAL RELEASE OF PCN ACTION SCOTLAND'S DECISION SUPPORT SYSTEM FOR PCN MANAGEMENT

14:00 - FUTURE CHANGES TO UK'S SUPPLY OF SEED POTATOES

THURSDAY

10:30 - TRANSFORMATIVE REDUCED INPUT POTATOES

13:00 - MARIS PIPER HAS HAD ITS DAY, OR HAS IT?

WHY YOU CAN'T AFFORD TO MISS British POTATO 2025

The whole industry, in the same place, at the same time, ready to discuss the issues that matter to you!

BP2025 covers every aspect of the industry. Unique among shows, it's as relevant to those who process and retail the crop as it is to those who produce it. So it's an unmissable chance to gauge the mood, update on trade changes, take stock of competitors and learn more about innovations at every level of this progressive, fast moving industry. With so much change in the air can you afford to miss this vital update?

Where would we have been without emails, texts, phone and internet to keep potato business moving? But there comes a point when new developments need examining first hand and better deals are sealed in person.

In short, it's time for a British Potato event!

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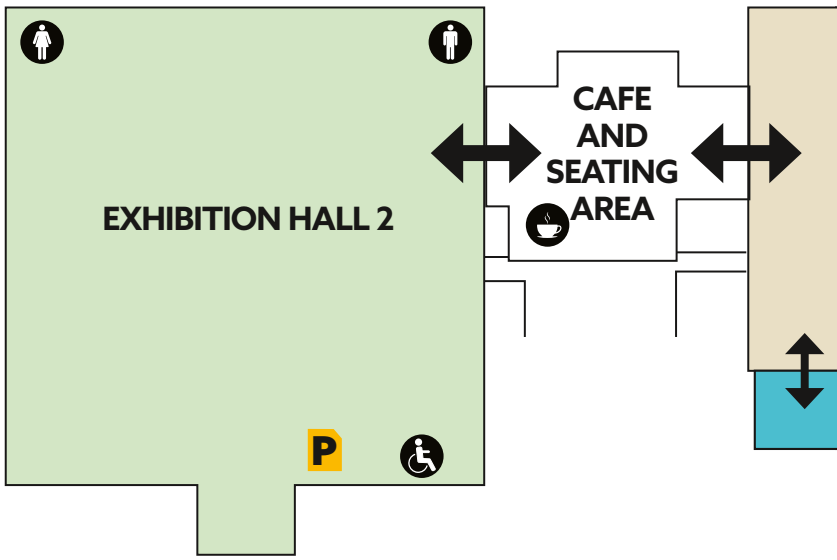

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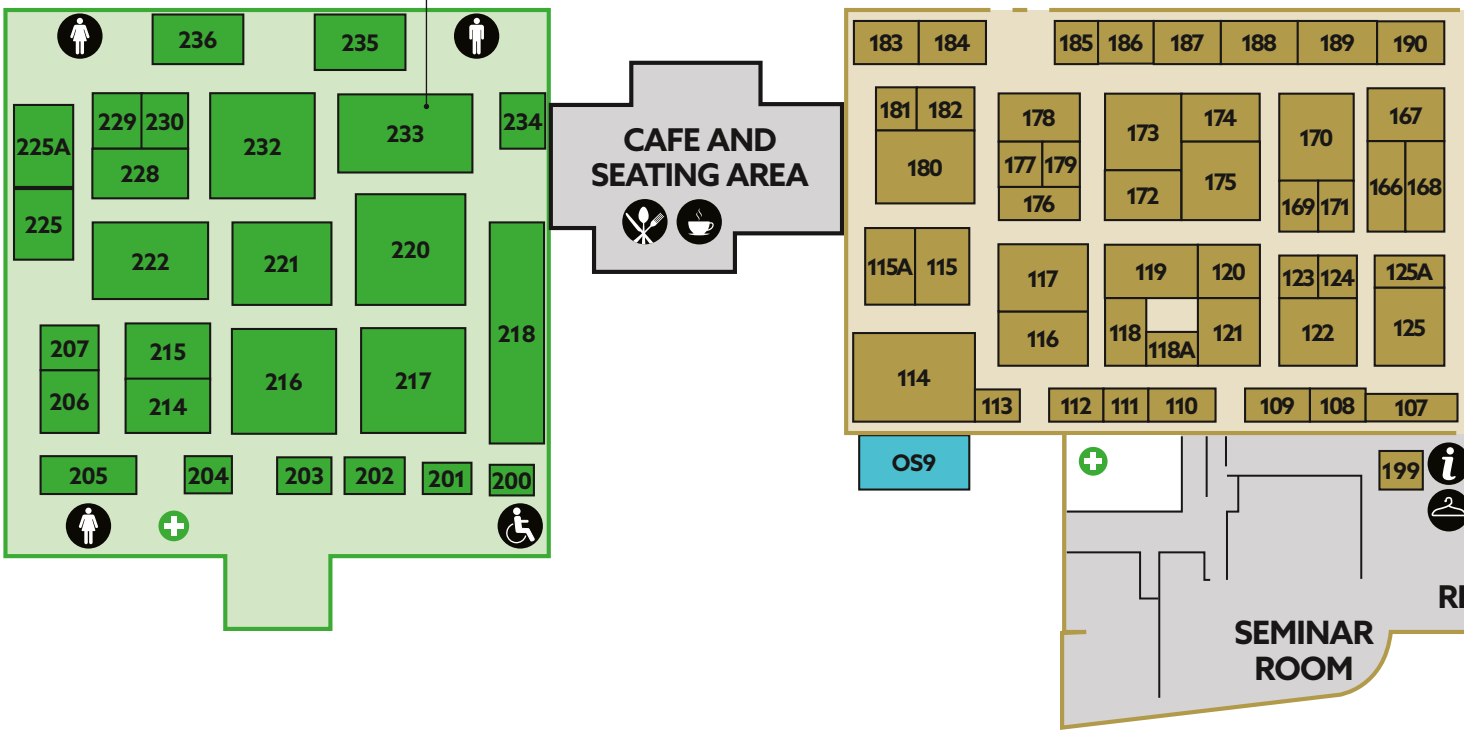

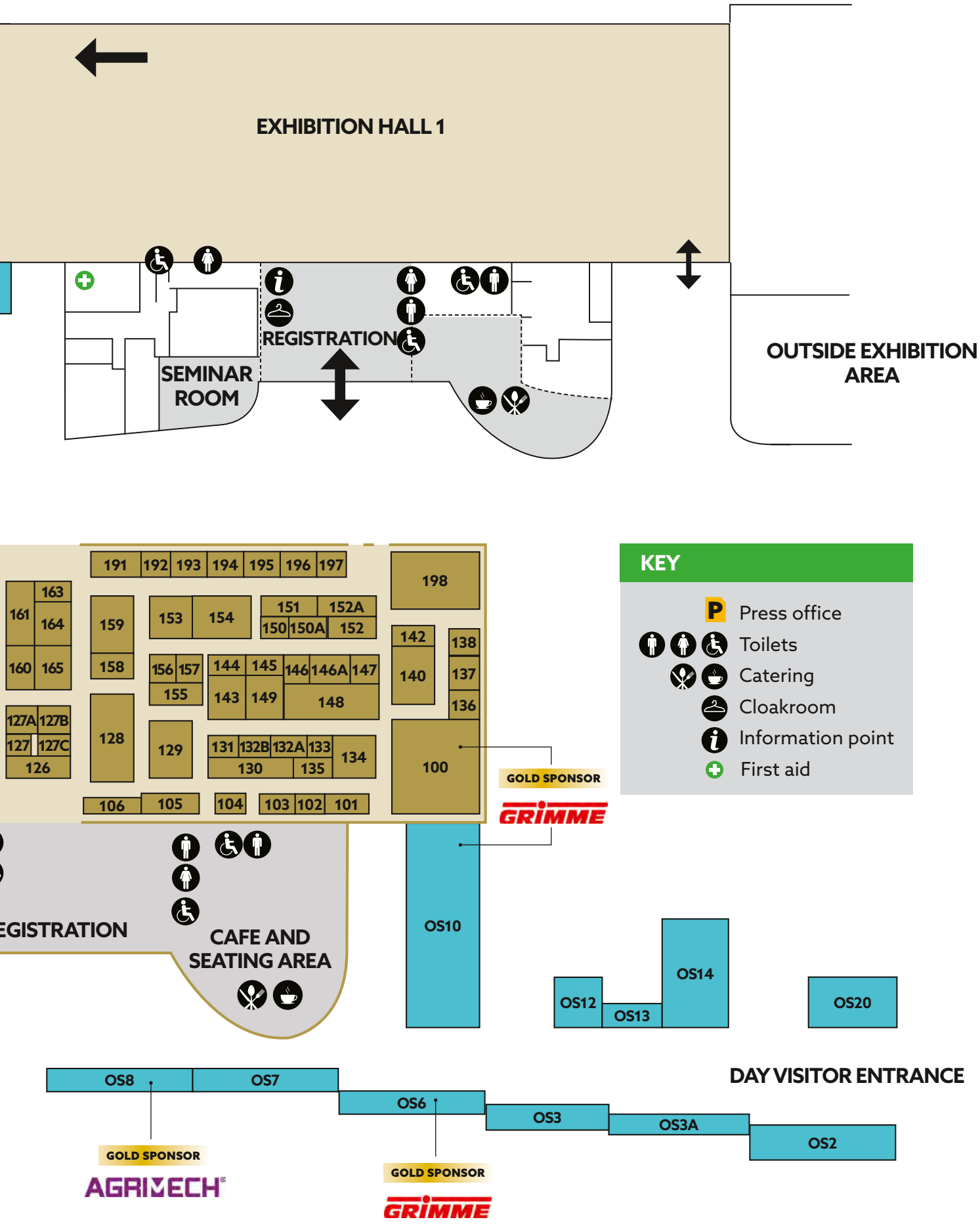
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SHAPING THE FUTURE OF FRESH POTATOES: WHY VARIETY MATTERS

Britain's potato supply chain must look beyond tradition and embrace new varieties to strengthen sustainability, reduce risk, and keep the nation's favourite crop thriving for generations to come.

WRITTEN BY ALEX GODFREY, CHAIR OF GB POTATOES

THE BRITISH POTATO industry has always been proud of its ability to deliver a product that consumers trust and enjoy. From roasties and mash to jackets and chips, potatoes are deeply embedded in our food culture and play an essential role in our diets. Yet, while our industry has adapted to meet countless challenges over the years, one area where we have perhaps been slower to change is in the varieties grown for the fresh market.

At present, the fresh sector remains heavily reliant on a relatively small number of long-established varieties. Many of them are popular with consumers because they are familiar and consistent. However, familiarity comes at a cost. Some of our most common fresh potato varieties are resource-intensive, often requiring higher crop protection inputs, or lacking in the resistance to or tolerance of pest, disease and climate-related stress that can be found in some more modern varieties. Against the backdrop of increasing pressure to reduce environmental impact and improve sustainability, this is an issue we cannot afford to ignore.

Lessons from the processing sector

By contrast, the processing market has been nimbler in adopting new varieties. Here, what matters most is the quality and consistency of the end product – be it a crisp, a frozen chip, or another potato-based food – rather than the variety name. Processors and manufacturers are constantly looking for potatoes that deliver the right technical performance, and this has created more space to trial, adopt, and roll out new varieties.

As a result, the processing sector has built up valuable experience in integrating new varieties into supply chains. This has helped address some of the very challenges we face in the fresh market today: better resistance to pests and diseases, improved storability, lower input requirements, and varieties that cope more effectively with increasingly variable weather conditions.

The success of this approach in processing shows what can be achieved when is the sector is flexible and open to change. It also highlights the gap we must bridge in the fresh market, where limited acceptance of new varieties can act as a barrier to innovation and adoption.

Why change is needed

Change is never easy, but it's the very thing that could present a big opportunity. Climate change is already having a visible impact on potato production. More erratic rainfall, warmer winters, and new pest pressures all threaten to make production of traditional varieties more challenging and costly. At the same time, the industry is under pressure to

Above: Alex Godfrey, Chair of GB Potatoes

Below: Different varieties of potatoes.

reduce its environmental footprint, cut input use, and deliver on sustainability goals.

The good news is that plant breeders have already done much of the hard work. There is a pipeline of fresh potato varieties with stronger agronomic and environmental credentials – varieties that require less crop protection, deliver more consistent yields, and reduce waste in store and through the supply chain. Adopting these varieties more widely would help growers manage risk, improve the industry's sustainability profile, and provide consumers with a product that is every bit as tasty and versatile as the potatoes they know today.

The role of retailers and consumers

The challenge lies not in growing these varieties, but in getting them onto supermarket shelves and into buyers' baskets. When consumers look for potatoes, many seek comfort in familiar variety names; others simply choose generic "White Potatoes," often labelled as suitable for roasting, mashing, baking, or boiling.

With so much of what we grow being sold without the variety stated on packs, it gives retailers the flexibility to switch varieties without confusing consumers. More importantly, it opens the door to prioritising agronomic and sustainability factors when selecting which potatoes to put on variety lists. By choosing varieties that are more resilient, require fewer inputs, and perform better under variable weather conditions, retailers can support growers, strengthen the supply chain, and help reduce the industry's environmental footprint. All while still delivering the taste and versatility consumers expect.

There are examples of success stories where retailers have backed new branded varieties where clear information about flavour and cooking qualities are displayed on pack. Shoppers have been willing to try something different – and in many cases have come back for more. These examples prove that change is possible when the supply chain works together and should give us confidence to be bolder in bringing forward the next generation of fresh potato varieties.

Retailers therefore have a critical role to play. By working with growers and the supply chain to introduce new varieties into stores, and by giving consumers the information and reassurance they need, retailers can help shift buying habits in a way that benefits everyone. Clear messaging on flavour, cooking performance, and environmental benefits will be key. This is not about removing consumer choice but about expanding it, giving shoppers the chance to support a more sustainable potato industry while still enjoying great food.

Building a clearer picture of our industry

One of the challenges we face as a sector is that we lack accurate, up-to-date information on how many hectares of potatoes are being grown across the UK. Without reliable data, it is difficult to plan effectively, make the case for investment, or engage government with the scale of our industry.

GB Potatoes intends to tackle this head-on by launching a confidence survey of those involved in the potato industry. This will ask growers about their confidence to invest, their main concerns, and, crucially, how many hectares of potatoes they are growing. The survey will also capture the wider mood of the industry at this important moment.

We cannot stress enough how vital it is for all growers to take part. The information gathered will not just be useful for our industry's own planning – it will be essential for presenting a united and evidence-based case to government. Strong data will help ensure policymakers understand the realities of potato production today, and the support required to secure its future.

A call to action

As chair of GB Potatoes, my message is simple: let's not waste the progress plant breeders have already made, nor the lessons we can learn from the processing sector. The fresh potato market must become more open to new varieties – not as a threat to tradition, but as an essential step toward a sustainable future.

Retailers, growers, and industry bodies all have a role in making this happen. Together, we can ensure that the potato remains not only a staple of the British diet, but also a shining example of how agriculture can adapt and thrive in the face of change.

And finally, I urge every grower to take part in the State of the Nation Survey when it launches. Your voice and your data are critical to shaping the industry's future and making sure potatoes remain at the heart of our food system for generations to come.

The time to start this conversation is now.

Above: Potatoes for sale in a supermarket.

Below: A field planted with potatoes.

Left: Roast potatoes.

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Haith are renowned for their market leading innovative machinery and systems for root crop handling, designed with ease of maintenance, gentle handling, and efficiency in mind. From single machines to turnkey facilities to suit growers, processors, and packers of all sizes.

In 2022, Haith received their second Queen's Award for Enterprise in the Innovation Category, this time for the Rota-Tip TE Box Tippler which is used to transfer crops onto washing, sizing, and packing lines.

The Haith - GRIMME collaboration has recently launched the ProSort, designed to automate the removal of stone, clod and foreign debris from root crops on farm.

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McCain is the nation's biggest manufacturer of frozen potato products. With a household retail brand, foodservice business and 'quick service restaurant' range McCain continues to invest to maintain brand leadership and continued growth. As the largest purchaser of British potatoes, McCain has been building strong relationships with potato growers for over 50 years, many of which span three generations of farming families. McCain contracts with over 250 growers from the Highlands down to Cornwall. The company has a dedicated seed business in Montrose, Scotland, and five processing factories across the UK.

SILVER

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At Luonnosta UK Ltd, we specialise in trading and marketing potatoes with precision and purpose. Led by Phil Rayner and backed by over 20 years of experience, we connect growers with the right markets at the right time to maximise returns. Our trusted network spans the UK, Europe, and beyond, supported by the wider Luonnosta teams in Finland and Holland.

We're proud to be exhibiting at BP2025 and warmly invite growers, customers, and partners to drop by for a chat. Let's explore how we can help your crop reach its full potential.

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Potatoes fuel the nation. BASF's Perfecting Potatoes Together initiative unites growers with expertise and passion. Through collaboration, culture, and chemistry, we unlock crop potential and profits. Join us now: agricentre.basf.co.uk/potatoes.

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UPL is on a mission to change the game, to make every single food product more sustainable. UPL have introduced ARGOS – a bio control sprout suppressant for stored potatoes, containing orange oil as a natural active ingredient with excellent control and zero residue. As the UK's leading supplier of FAZOR, a field applied maleic hydrazide, UPL now offer a complete sprout suppression programme from field to fork. Visit us to learn more about our integrated solutions

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GB Potatoes is a not-for-profit organization established in May 2022 to provide a cohesive and impactful voice for the potato sector in Great Britain. It brings together the entire supply chain—including growers, packers, processors, seed growers, research organizations, independent advisors, and ancillary businesses—to collaboratively address industry challenges and ensure a robust and sustainable future for potato production. By fostering innovation, sustainability, and prosperity, GB Potatoes aims to lead the transformation of the potato industry, elevating its profile and performance for generations to come.

EXHIBITOR LISTINGS
BY A-Z

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Building strategies for next year

In this month's seasonal feature, Andrew Goodinson highlights trends seen in recent years that should be a factor in 2026 growing, while highlighting the effects of heat and drier conditions on pests, weeds and conditions going into storage.

WITH wildly varying weather seen between seasons in recent years, potato growers need to take into account the trends of the past five years as well as this season's when they're planning next year's growth strategies, Andrew has advised.

"For example, in the past three years we have had two wet springs and one dry, and two wet summers and one dry. Each has provided pitfalls and benefits, so it is important to look over a longer term to gain a better understanding of strengths and weaknesses, which in turn will help to manage risks," he said.

Reflecting on this year's growing season, he observed that growers who had applied organic matter (OM) as composts and/or farmyard manure, really benefitted.

"This was not just because of the nutrients, but also because the OM improves water holding capacity."

In 2025, not only had there been an east:west split, but also different microclimates at national level.

"In Herefordshire we had some slightly contrary patterns from much of the surrounding area. In autumn 2024, more rain than the rest of the country, we had the same rainfall over winter but an even drier spring and so any rain that fell this summer was nowhere near enough."

Nevertheless, the warm, dry early spring resulted in good seedbeds and potato crops were planted much earlier than normal, with some of them going in up to three weeks before they would normally do so. "This was a big advantage compared with previous years, and gave the crops a good start and should have given them a longer growing season."

After the wet winter, many soils went from plasticine to brick quickly in the warm, dry spring, so secondary cultivations needed to be timely before the soil became too hard after primary cultivation.

"When this happens, there is just a short window to catch the soil at the right time to create seedbeds with optimum tilth. Some growers may have over cultivated the soils because they have a pre-defined strategy, and sometimes there wasn't sufficient flexibility to adjust cultivations. As a result, some soils were overworked for what was needed this year, and each cultivation also reduces carbon and OM in the soil."

Nutrition

Emergence was early, but by tuber initiation (TI), many crops started to show symptoms of a lack of moisture and Andrew highlights the importance of readily-available nutrition and water, pointing out that because early-stage nutrition is so important, it is needed close to the rooting zone of the tubers, ie placement fertilisers.

"The first month after planting is the most important, and with the warm, dry conditions, tuber numbers were high, but as it then remained dry, a lot of them were aborted when they did not have access to sufficient moisture and nutrients."

The warm and sunny spring bestowed the perfect environment for aphids to develop and migrate, with some arriving earlier than forecast.

"This year, because of the continued dry weather, anything affecting establishment showed up more than it would under more typical conditions."

The crops that suffered the most were those in dry seedbeds and in close rotation cropping.

He adds that when placing fertilisers close to tubers at planting, growers should be aware that diammonium phosphate (DAP) contains salt, which can hinder root development.

"Growers using liquid fertilisers or microgranules tend to find them more effective. This year, because of the continued dry weather, anything affecting establishment showed up more than it would under more typical conditions."

The end result has been a fall in yield for many growers, particularly those crops which were not irrigated.

Tissue testing reveals unexpected results

Andrew had expected tissue tests to show low levels of magnesium (Mg) and potash (K), which are critical to plant development, especially in dry weather. However, tests revealed low levels of phosphate and boron. This was because the plants had not developed enough root mass to enable them to uptake these nutrients.

When tissue testing, Andrew prefers to do several farms on the same day so he can monitor what is happening and assess whether there is a local trend.

If a potential problem is identified, a follow-up sap test is done field by field.

"Different foliar sprays are chosen to ameliorate different problems, and this year the main challenge was stress. The return on their use was considerable," he said.

Because of the dry soil conditions this year, Andrew recommended the use of methylated urea in place of solid top dressings with N.

Another element which was often detected as being low this year was calcium (Ca).

"This was observed more often on lighter soils, and indicates that when growing on such soils we should use less N and more CaN because Ca can only be ingested through the roots."

Andrew also saw good results from micronutrition, biostimulants and seaweed.

"These can help reduce plant stress, but to work they need to be used preventatively, which means applying them before the plant becomes stressed."

Lack of moisture impact on herbicide efficacy

The efficacy of some plant protection products was also affected by the dry weather. Nematicides did not work so well as there was insufficient soil moisture to aid fumigation. Because of the dry soil surface, pre-emergence herbicide efficiency was also restricted.

"In Herefordshire we saw late flushes of redshank and fat hen which appeared after the cut-off date for herbicide applications. The spread was not consistent, and, for example, out of four fields, three could be clear and the fourth full of fat hen, which pulled down yields."

Andrew suggests that more use could be made of stacking – or at least sequencing – herbicide actives.

"This would reduce reliance on one active, and if you stack them, there will be at least one which is more effective than the others in that year's conditions, as well as reducing any risk of resistance developing."

Other weeds he observed in higher numbers than usual were annual meadow grass (AMG) and volunteer cereals.

"Not all the pre-emergence herbicides are effective against cereals, so when devising strategies, you may wish to use a post-emergence graminicide or a post-planting application of glyphosate within two weeks of planting."

Devising strategies for 2026 growing season

Now is the time for getting on with soil sampling, emphasises Andrew, adding that all analyses should be studied so that the correct fertilisers can be purchased.

"Moreover, if we tailor our fertiliser use accordingly, we can reduce costs per hectare and also lower our carbon footprint."

At the time of writing, soils were still hard and dry, making it difficult to insert the sample corer to the correct depth.

"Getting the corer down to 15cm is crucial to getting relevant results because nutrient levels in the upper part of the soil profile are quite different to those in the root zone," Andrew said.

Pests and disease

The warm and sunny spring bestowed the perfect environment for aphids to develop and migrate, with some arriving earlier than forecast. In June, populations exploded, coming into crops quickly and overwhelming their predators, including ladybirds, reports Andrew.

"This resulted in visible feeding damage, so an insecticide was applied, after which aphid numbers dropped. The crops were already under environmental pressure, so they were unable to recover as well as they normally would.

"Spraying drastically reduced aphid populations, and ladybird numbers appeared to bounce back quite quickly."

Red spider mites, which thrive in dry, warm conditions, affected some crops in the east. These are pests which affect both protected and outdoor crops. They suck sap which can cause leaves to go yellow, and then fall, affecting the crop's ability to photosynthesise, and therefore impacting on yield.

This year they tended to be found on headlands of potato fields however late-applied insecticides aimed at controlling cut-worms or aphids, appeared to have an additional activity that suppressed their numbers.

Andrew had expected to see more slugs after the wet winter, but as the ground dried, the slugs went deeper underground and fewer slug pellets were used than normal.

Because of the weather, he expected to see more cutworm damage, but was relieved when only isolated damage was reported, which may have been due to higher use of irrigation, he notes.

In addition, leaf hoppers, which had been prevalent last year, were not so visible.

"They are seen more frequently in the eastern counties, but as they may not be correctly identified in other areas, so may be more common than we think."

Leaf hoppers insert their piercing-sucking mouthparts into the underside of potato leaves and feed on phloem and xylem, sucking out plant juices, which causes the leaves to appear mottled with 'hopper burn' scorch on top of the leaf. Leafhopper injury reduces production and translocation of photosynthate, and may increase sugar content in the tubers.

Soil-borne rhizoctonia was also a problem for a number of growers, as were Alternaria-type symptoms on leaves, Andrew said.

"These symptoms may have been more of an expression of stress than an infection. Additionally, if the root is underdeveloped and the crop is already stressed, it makes the plants so much more vulnerable to pests and diseases."

In general, there were not many reports of late blight (Phytophthora infestans), because thanks to the dry spring, inoculum levels were relatively low (despite the warm, wet winter). As a result, the spend on blight sprays was lower than the three-year average, he observed.

However, he warns against complacency as outbreaks of EU_46 have been identified. Information from Dr David Cooke of the James Hutton Institute, who monitors blight populations has identified that most outbreaks have been in Wales and that the strain has established itself in that region. He has also found these samples to have the mutation that confers resistance to oxathiapiprolin (OXTP).

"Going forward we need to be much more focused on the resistance strains in terms of products, timings and sequences," said Andrew.

Bruising warning

Andrew is also concerned that early August lifting took place when soil and tuber temperatures were very high. As it was so dry, there wasn't any soil on the harvester webs, increasing the risk of bruising.

"This year tuber high dry matter (DM) is higher than in previous seasons, which makes them more susceptible to bruising. These early-harvested potatoes were loaded into lorries, where they were left for up to 24 hours, before being unloaded – and the trailer was acting like a hotbox."

"Additionally, a lot of bruising was occurring because the haulm was not detaching from the tuber," he said, adding that this may be because the crops died rather than senescing naturally.

From the beginning of September, when growers started to load their stores, many tubers were still very warm, taking a long time to cool down and thereby creating a threat of early sprouting.

"At the end of September, conditions were very dry and warm, and some growers had to stop harvesting because of bruising," said Andrew.

▲ *Red spider mites, which thrive in dry, warm conditions, affected some crops in the east.*

◀ *Despite more cutworm damage being envisaged, there were only isolated reports.*

Top tips for an effective 2026 nutrition strategy

1. Tailor N rates according to field and variety
2. Choose fields for potato growing that are not in a tight rotation
3. Along with your agronomist, identify and analyse the nutrition status prior to purchasing fertiliser
4. Placement of fertilisers should be discussed with your agronomist
5. Be prepared to apply biostimulants to reduce stress
6. Undertake tissue tests to identify any nutrient deficiencies before they impact on yield and quality
7. Tailor the use of foliar fertilisers according to crop need

From a wannabe chef to an industry stalwart

David Nelson, Agronomy Director at Branston Ltd, has spent many years working in the potato industry and sits on the British Potato Industry Awards judging panel looking at company collaborations. We learn where his journey began and what his key takeaways have been.

Q: What did you aspire to be when you were growing up?

A: As a child, I first aspired to be a sailor, but then a chef because I loved food and cooking. I was always a country lad at heart with shooting and fishing close to my heart but as a teenager I started helping on a local farm at weekends, which is where my interest in growing and potatoes started.

Q: How did you embark on your career path and go about achieving your goals – tell me a little about how you came to be in your current position?

A: At the age of 16, I rented a small field and began growing my own crops, including potatoes. After my A levels, I originally had intended to take a Higher National Diploma (HND) at agricultural college but instead took the opportunity to study Agricultural Science went to Aberystwyth University. While at university, lectures in crop production were given by Eric Allen who was already becoming renowned as a leading potato scientist. In my last year at college, Eric left to head up a small potato research team at Cambridge University Farms (CUF), I was lucky enough to be able to spend half of my year-out working with the CUF team. The second half of my industrial year was spent working on a farm in Holland as part of an agricultural students exchange scheme.

In my last year at university, I was keen to take any opportunity to work with potatoes so wrote a letter to the Internal Potato Centre in Lima, Peru where I was able to obtain the offer of an internship. I also obtained some financial support for this wrote letters to the big potato companies of the day to try and get some sponsorship from the likes of Smith's (now Walkers), McCains and the Clan trust to cover my travel costs. It was initially a six-month placement in the Physiology department but I ended up staying in this role Peru for 18 months. Much of the field experiments and trials were investigating heat and drought adaption and the use of true potato seed. I was able to travel much of Peru during this time as the Potato Centre had trial sites at a number of locations from desert, mountains to the jungle. The wide range of growing environments provided a unique opportunity to study the response of different potato types. It really opened my eyes to the diversity growth patterns within potato germ plasm in conditions which are far more extreme than the UK.

After returning to the UK, I was able to write up the trials from Peru to submit for a Master of Science (MSc.). Having completed this thesis, opportunities for progressing commercial agronomy work in the private sector were still few and far between so I took up the position of a PhD research assistant at Aberystwyth University. In a role funded by the Potato Marketing Board, the project focused on advancing the processing quality of early harvested Record crisping potatoes. It involved field experiments investigating the impact of physiological age, nitrogen rate and irrigation management on primarily yield and tuber dry-matter content. The PhD was successfully submitted in 1987 and at the point I obtained the position of potato development advisor for BEP, based in Hampshire. I was in this role for two years before moving north to join Branston taking up the role of potato agronomist in 1990.

Q: What experiences have helped to shape your career and inspire you?

A: The Peruvian experience really opened my mind to the diversity of potatoes including the range of growth habits, colours, shapes and tuber properties. I was fascinated by how differing potato varieties perform across a range different growing environments. It's these interactions between how you grow the potato crop with the variety and the season which makes every year interesting.

Q: What are your main goals currently?
I want to continue to understand how to improve quality and output of potato crops. Not just with current varieties, but how we can breed the next generation of potatoes. We have ongoing trials that are helping to develop new varieties in partnership with the James Hutton Institute. One of the previous successes of the breeding programme was a new variety called Inca Bella which is a Solanum phureja potato species, similar to many of the native varieties found in Peru. Inca Bella has since been used as a parent for other varieties, including the 'ultimate roaster' Nemo. The satisfaction of working with the team to develop a new product and seeing it on the shelves gives me a huge sense of achievement.

I am also heavily involved with B-Hive Innovations on a number of exciting R&D projects and I hope to be able to use my expertise to advance these for the future benefit of the potato industry.

For example, we are developing drone mounted camera systems and machine learning techniques to aid plant disease detection as well as ground-penetrating radar (GPR) to identify potatoes underground. The investment in technology and innovation is ongoing and there is still plenty of work to be done.

Over the years, I have also been involved with a large number of potato research projects ranging from reducing bruising, water management and nutrition, potato cyst nematodes, blight and potato storage. I also spent several years as a member of the research and knowledge exchange advisory board for the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board (AHDB) which gave a me a wide insight into current research priorities.

Q: Tell me a little about your business successes and failures and what you have learned from them.
A: Despite my belief that nothing is a true success, there have been many moments in my career that I am very proud of. When I first started at Branston back in 1990 it was quite a small company, but I could see that they had aspirations to innovate and grow. Branston was one of 12 potato suppliers to Tesco and now we are the sole supplier. The volume of crop we handle and our position in the industry have changed dramatically. At Branston, we continue to work closely with our potato growers and drive best practice to help our growers produce the best possible crops. Over the years, potato production has evolved, and we continue to explore better and more environmentally friendly ways of farming as well as further steps to increase yield and crop quality.

We've explored many innovative technologies over the years. Some have worked better than others. Seeking a safe replacement for CIPC as a sprout suppressant was a challenge for many years. The active was always under scrutiny by HSE and retailers so we always sought to investigate other options. One new active, was trialled with good results for 2-3 years only to fail just prior to commercial release due to high levels of crop scorch. Fortunately, some other sprout suppressant products came along and Branston were a leading early adopters of mint oil which soon became widely adopted after the withdrawal of CIPC in 2018.

Other big changes, were the replacement of sulphuric acid, widely used as a desiccant for many decades, with less hazardous materials and greater use of flailing and nitrogen management.

I have always taken the approach of seeking alternatives (both agronomic and chemical), well in advance of losing important crop protection chemistry. Our suppliers need the best advice to deal with losses of crop protection products if yield and quality are to not be restricted.

Q: How has your own career outlook changed over the years?
A: Despite having been at Branston for a long time, I would say I am still very passionate about potatoes. I still enjoy getting hands-on in the field, particularly with trials of novel varieties or experimental equipment. The industry is always evolving with something new to learn and get excited about. I have been able to use my experience to benefit the growth of the company and watching Branston continually stand at the forefront of the industry is a great achievement.

Q: What challenges is the industry facing at the moment and what more could be done to meet and overcome these?
A: One of the biggest challenges we face today is simply maintaining enough land to grow potatoes, especially with the wider range of demands placed upon it. The way we farm is also having an impact on soil health, soil structure and water availability, while disease and pest threats continue to be a major concern.

Funding of research to meet future challenges is also a major issue. There's no central pot of AHDB money available for research and it's difficult to know where to turn for financial support to meet the big challenges faced by the industry. We also risk losing a lot of the knowledge and experience generated by previous research over the past 50 years as we no longer have continuity of many of the potato research establishments which supported the industry. All too often, I hear industry technical representatives asking for investigations into problems which I know have already been widely studied, yet results have often been forgotten or are difficult to find.

With science-based high-quality independent advice and support, many larger potato producers are now seeking to develop their own in-house expertise, rather than relying on the end user agronomists like they may have done in the past.

Q: What tips do you have for the future generation?
A: I would advise future potato agronomists to follow their interests and build on the knowledge of others. Science based agronomy and advice is being challenged by many unproven novel nutritional or biostimulant type products which detract from solving the real problems and challenges facing potato growers. If you don't the basics such as soil health and absence of compaction correct, then no other management tool whether nutrition or irrigation will achieve a high yielding potato crop. Training, research and keen observation of how the potato crop grows are a key to success in this potentially rewarding career. BPR

Time to tell your tale...

In this issue, Alexander Preston discusses how growers can extend their business base by incorporating direct-to-consumer campaigns alongside their existing contracts.

ANYONE who regularly scrolls through Instagram, will have seen Jeremy Clarkson shouting from the rooftops about his potatoes recently.

Many believe it's impossible to grow potatoes in the Cotswolds, but, helped by the persistence and determination of Lisa, Diddly Squat bucked the trend.

Despite being a celebrity, with many not taking him seriously as 'a real grower', Clarkson has helped to raise public perception of the reality of UK potato growing - how hard it is, how much risk is involved, and how crucial diversification has become. His willingness to adapt, to find new income streams when crops fail or produce doesn't meet supermarket standards, is something worth admiring and learning from.

Potato growers across the UK are facing a storm of challenges. Wetter springs, flooding, and increasingly-irregular seasons have reduced both the area planted and the quality of produce, leading to lower yields and greater price volatility.

At the same time, rising input and energy costs, combined with ongoing labour shortages, continue to drive up the cost per tonne of production further squeezing already thin margins. This is where diversification comes into its own. It's no longer just an option. It's a vital contingency plan, a way to generate new income streams, reduce waste, and strengthen the long-term security of potato production.

Growers who take the traditional route of selling into wholesale markets and long-term contracts find it's reliable when it works. But it also means growers are often price takers, not price makers. The true value of their hard work is decided further down the chain, leaving little room to capture the premium that comes with quality, provenance, and passion.

Today's consumers are changing that. They want to know where their food comes from, who grew it, and how it got to their plate. They're willing to pay more for traceable, sustainable produce with a genuine story behind it. So why not reach out to them AS WELL as your regular customer base?

Direct-to-consumer (DTC) growing gives growers the chance to take back control. From subscription vegetable boxes to specialist potato products, there are now more ways than ever to connect directly with the people who eat and enjoy what you grow. Selling your produce online allows you to build stronger customer relationships, capture higher margins, and tell your story in your own words.

Hailing from a farming background, **Alexander Preston** is the founder of Preston Waldon, a Hampshire-based consultancy dedicated to agricultural public affairs and reputation management that partners with organisations from the fresh produce, growing, surveying, building/development, technology and estate management sectors. Having worked with FTSE 100 companies, trade organisations, MPs, and industry leaders, he advises on policies to boost revenue and reduce costs

For example, one of the organisations we partner with is Sutherby & Brown, a new kind of rural e-commerce and marketing partner, which aims to help growers and rural brands diversify their income and build lasting businesses for the next generation. It does this through authentic branding, digital engagement, and seamless e-commerce for farmers.

By building farm websites, online shops, and subscription models, growers can transform a harvest into direct-to-consumer revenue streams, quickly and sustainably, reaching customers far beyond the farm gate. It's a way of communicating directly with customers who value quality and provenance.

Every field, every potato crop and every grower has a story worth telling. Consumers want to see the people behind the produce, the early mornings, the muddy boots, the pride in a perfect harvest.

Through thoughtful branding, photography, and social media campaigns, you can help bring your story to life - not with sales pitches, but with honesty. A strong brand doesn't need to shout. It simply needs to show what makes it real. From Instagram reels and recipe videos to email newsletters and digital farm shops, this kind of partner can create bridges between growers and customers that last long after the first purchase.

Growers should also be able to think beyond bulk. A tonne of potatoes sold into the supply chain might fetch a few hundred pounds. But that same tonne, turned into crisps, vodka, or harvest boxes can earn several times that amount. It's not just about making more money, it's about resilience. Diversifying income gives potato-growing businesses breathing space to weather tough seasons and build more stable futures. By offering premium, small-batch products online, growers can reach urban consumers who value local, traceable food and are willing to pay a premium for it.

Food provenance matters more than ever, especially among today's increasingly quality-conscious consumers. So why not expand your reach and sell to them too, alongside your loyal locals who will always support you because they understand the value of what you do?

The world is changing and so is potato growing. While the challenges are real, so are the opportunities. BPR

FAQs document for Welsh growers

THE Welsh Government has published a new 'Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)' document alongside the Sustainable Farming Scheme (SFS) 2026: Scheme description.

This guide provides growers in Wales with an overview of scheme requirements and answers technical questions they may have.

Pembrokeshire and the Gower peninsula are known for producing early and premium potato crops, with large-scale commercial operations like Puffin Produce based in Pembrokeshire. The Seed Potato Classification Scheme operates in Wales to ensure quality standards for growers.

The Government has confirmed that operational requirements and technical notes will follow later this year, ahead of the scheme launch on January 1st, 2026.

Many growers are unsure whether it's financially better to remain with the Basic Payment Scheme (BPS) for as long as possible, or to join the SFS straight away, according to Compliance and Health & Safety Specialist, CXCS.

From 2026, BPS payments will taper each year until they are completely phased out in 2029: 2026: 60% of 2025 value; 2027: 40% of 2025 value; 2028: 20% of 2025 value; 2029: No BPS claims.

The organisation has stressed that SFS is the future of grower support in Wales, but says the best time to switch will depend on individual businesses.

"The scheme year runs from January 1st to December 31st. This means that if you intend to claim under the SFS, you must be meeting Universal Action requirements (including habitat and woodland maintenance) from January 1st 2026," the company states, reminding growers that they have until May 15th to decide whether to submit a claim for SFS or BPS.

Welsh growers can estimate their indicative SFS Universal Payment or BPS taper using the Welsh Government's Ready Reckoner tool. It uses your 2025 SAF summary and SFS Data Confirmation form to give an estimate of your 2026 payment.

While the SFS data confirmation form was only available until October 31st, there will be another opportunity to do this via the SAF form in 2026.

Inheritance tax actions reminder

WITH inheritance tax changes due to come into effect in April, potato growers who own their own farms and assets are being reminded to take control of their finances now and consider utilising trust funds amongst other options.

Inheritance tax is charged on the estate of someone who has died. It is charged at a 40% rate if the estate of a deceased person exceeds a threshold, known as the nil-rate band, which is set at £325,000.

In the 2024 Autumn Budget, the Labour government announced that, from April 2026, the availability of 100% relief for agricultural and business property would be capped. Assets eligible for 100% APR and assets eligible for 100% BPR would qualify for full relief up to a sum of £1 million, with 50% relief applying thereafter. The government is proposing to make assets eligible for BPR and APR (added together) count towards the £1 million cap.

The government has said that the majority of estates claiming APR and BPR will not be affected by these changes, which it says will only target a wealthy minority of estates.

Thorne Widgery, Herefordshire's largest independent agricultural accountancy firm, has encouraged any growers that may be affected to take steps now to protect their legacy.

As farms rarely have assets that are not essential to their basic operations, some potato growers expecting to inherit farms might look to find the IHT money either by selling land to developers, consoldating to become part of bigger enterprises or selling off equipment.

"Smart, long-term planning is vital to ensure that you have the best chance of reducing your IHT bill to a reasonable amount. Conducting regular evaluations of your assets will allow you to know what is likely to push you over the edge when the time comes for your IHT to be calculated," the company states.

The best way to circumvent IHT is by gifting assets to loved ones while you are still alive. Gifts to spouses are entirely exempt from IHT considerations, but might only be a short-term fix, it says.

There is an annual IHT gift allowance of £3,000, which will protect gifts of that size from being considered for IHT. Although it will take time to transfer all assets if only gifted £3,000 at a time, this exemption is worth exploring, the accountant states.

Only gifts given in the seven years preceding death will be considered for IHT.

"As your family becomes more invested in the farm, gifting them vital assets could be a rite of passage that gives them a greater sense of responsibility and you a smaller IHT bill. Prioritising which assets you gift and in which order will mitigate the overall IHT bill," said the accountant.

Growers should consider how best to divide their assets and what steps can be taken to ensure they retain as much control over finances as possible, and it's also worth considering utilising trust funds or other financial structures, the company states.

"As your family becomes more invested in the farm, gifting them vital assets could be a rite of passage that gives them a greater sense of responsibility and you a smaller IHT bill."

New blending plant brings custom solutions to German growers.

GROWERS in northern Germany will benefit from faster, more tailored access to controlled-release fertilisers, thanks to a new collaboration between ICL and Landhandel Peters.

The new plant enables Landhandel Peters to produce crop-specific fertiliser mixtures on site, on demand. Potato growers can now receive customised solutions fine-tuned to their crop and soil requirements, without the wait.

At the heart of this innovation is Agromaster - ICL's coated fertiliser with controlled-release technology. Unlike traditional fertilisers, Agromaster delivers nutrients gradually over time, matching the uptake needs of the plant throughout its growth cycle. This means growers need to fertilise less frequently and can reduce treatments while confidently meeting the crop's nutritional requirements for the entire season. It also helps to protect against nutrient losses through leaching, volatilisation and denitrification, making it a more efficient and environmentally responsible choice.

The blendable Agromaster formulations used at the Winsen/Luhe plant contain 35-60% coated nitrogen, depending on the crop's demands. This slow, steady release supports consistent crop growth even under unpredictable weather conditions. By improving nitrogen use efficiency, growers can often achieve equal or higher yields using fewer nutrients, a win for both productivity and sustainability. In lighter soils, Agromaster also helps to reduce potassium losses and avoid phosphorus fixation, which are common challenges in the region.

Special spud meaning for school break

DENMARK's annual school break on October 13th was historically known as "Potato Week" or kartoffelferie, according to local news source the Copenhagen Post.

In the 1800s, Denmark was largely agriculture-based, and families, including children, worked together during harvest. Potatoes and other crops were lifted in October, and schools suspended classes to allow children to assist. In 1899, the government formalised the break to ensure children across the country were free at the same time.

Though the demands of agriculture diminished as Denmark industrialised in the 20th century, the week-long break persisted. Today, official school calendars list it as efterårsferie, but the name kartoffelferie remains widely recognised as a link to its farming origins.

Lifting progress on table varieties

LIFTING progress for consumption potatoes in France has advanced more quickly than that of processing varieties, with reports stating that around 70% completed by early October. Markets remain almost entirely reliant on contracts.

PEF technology demonstrated to potato industry

GERMAN company Elea Technology GmbH opened its doors to potato industry professionals from around the world to demonstrate how Pulsed Electric Field (PEF) technology can be used in the production of crisps.

Taking place at Quakenbrück, Lower Saxony, Germany on October 9th, its open day featured live demonstrations and expert talks from industry professionals, while showing how Elea's latest PEF treatment and control systems have been designed to make crisps crunchier, tastier, and more efficient to produce.

Elea Technology supplies PEF systems to the food, beverage and scientific sectors.

Oversubscribed seed round

A CALGARY-based agtech company helping potato growers prevent storage losses, has announced the close of an oversubscribed seed round.

Cellar Insights combines specialised sensors with AI models to detect trace gases emitted by decomposing potatoes before visible signs of spoilage. Its platform has analysed more thann 1.5 million storage data sets and is monitoring more than 150 million pounds of potatoes across North America.

Expanding portfolio

PLANT Grow Harvest is expanding its potato portfolio = through the launch of two dynamic consumer brands and the advancement of its proprietary seed breeding program.

Earlier this year, the company introduced Tasty Little Digs, a collection of small potatoes including Creamers, Fingerlings, and Organics, which made their retail debut in March. Tasty Little Digs delivers quick, nutritious meal options.

Building on that success, the company is launching Big! Digs. Developed to address the overwhelming label clutter which it says has long complicated the potato aisle, Big! Digs introduces a brand identity that simplifies the shopping experience and enables consumers to easily identify the potatoes they love.

Production up and interest high

POLISH potato production is around 17% higher than in recent years, latest estimates suggest.

Poor harvests were seen in the past two seasons, but this year's production is well above the five-year average, with favourable rainfall and mild summer temperatures supporting yield quality.

There has also been an increase in interest from buyers for Polish potatoes, despite a slower start, according to one board member of the Polish potato packer Bugaj.

On the cusp of resilience

NEW resilient potato varieties are close to approval and release in Kenya.

"3R" potatoes have been developed by the International Potato Center (CIP) through research in Lima, Peru, and Nairobi, Kenya.

Late blight is a persistent threat to potato production in the country, but CIP scientists have found resistance receptors can be introduced into domestic potato varieties preferred by the country's growers, retaining good yield, flavour and other characteristics.

The final stages of 3R's release are now in the hands of the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO).

GMO potato could be cultivated in next three years

GROWERS in Kenya may begin cultivating genetically-modified potatoes resistant to late blight within the next three years, according to projections by the National Biosafety Authority (NBA).

Biosafety Assessment Director at NBA, Josphat Muchiri, said the five-month assessment of the 3R-gene Shangi potato variety developed by the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Organization (KALRO) is nearing completion. Public participation is expected to start before December.

NBA estimates that growers could begin planting the crop by 2028. Current potato production in Kenya is around 2.1 million tons annually.

According to The Cost of Delay report by the African Agricultural Technology Foundation (AATF), the release and commercialisation of the genetically-modified potato could generate an additional KSh 31.9 billion (US$211 million) for Kenya over the next three decades.

Kenya had previously placed a 10-year ban on GMO trade. This was lifted in 2022.

Processing facility opens

LAMB Weston has opened a 40,000 square metre potato processing facility in Mar del Plata, Buenos Aires province, Argentina.

The project, which has been under development for several years, is intended to supply frozen potato products to markets across Latin America.

The plant has the capacity to process around 200 million pounds of potatoes annually, producing more than 100 frozen potato product varieties. The company confirmed that its first shipments have already been sent to Brazil, with an estimated 80% of output expected to be exported to Brazil and other Latin American markets.

The facility employs 250 people and the company is working with more than 100 local potato producers.

Buyers explore industry in Colorado

MEXICAN importers, wholesalers, and retail professionals visited the US fresh potato industry during the 2025 Mexico Fresh Potato Reverse Trade Mission (RTM), hosted by Potatoes USA in Colorado recently.

The delegation included buyers, category managers, wholesalers, and importers from across Mexico, representing the largest export market for US fresh potatoes.

A reverse trade mission allows international buyers to travel to the United States to experience the production chain directly and build commercial relationships. Over the week, participants visited farms, storage facilities, and packing sheds in the San Luis Valley. The program also included research centres and retail merchandising tours in Denver.

In addition to field and facility visits, the program featured a grower panel and seminars on consumer research, nutrition, and flavor trends. Networking sessions were organized to strengthen trade links between US suppliers and the Mexican retail sector.

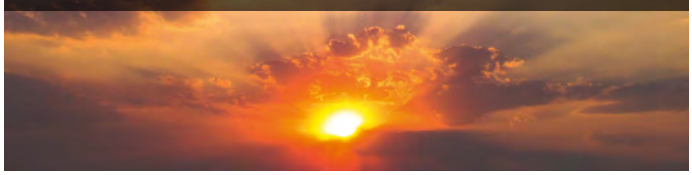
Mexico remains the leading export destination for US potatoes for the July 2024 to June 2025 period. The full Mexican market opened to US fresh potato exports in May 2022.

Temperatures delay harvests

HIGHER than usual temperatures delayed potato harvests in Michigan.

Around one third of the crop was in storage by the second week of October, while digging continued at a slower pace. The state received little rainfall and forecasts predicted continued sunny, warm conditions and growers were concerned about storability following the hot, dry harvest.

Reports suggested yields were slightly below average and processors indicated they might reduce contract volumes in early southern growing regions, citing concerns about finished product demand.



Early harvest and higher yields

FRESH potato yields in central Minnesota, where harvesting has just finished, are slightly higher than last year, according to one supplier.

Kevin R. Olson of Ben Holmes Potato Co said growing conditions had been good in the region during the summer, with the right amount of rain and sun, and cooler temperatures, meaning harvest began ahead of schedule.

However, demand had reduced this year, he added. Prices were below average for most of the harvest.

Japan market talks

A DELEGATION of US potato industry representatives recently met with USDA officials and staff in Tokyo to highlight the importance of securing fresh market access for US potatoes in Japan.

The delegation included Kam Quarles, CEO of the National Potato Council (NPC); Jared Balcom, past NPC president and current member of the USDA Agricultural Policy Advisory Committee; Blair Richardson, President and CEO of Potatoes USA; and Matt Lantz of Bryant Christie, Inc.

According to The National Potato Council (NPC), gaining access to Japan for U.S. fresh potatoes could represent around US$150 million in additional exports annually.

Strike action following company acquisition

STAFF from four of Clarebout Potatoes' production sites have been on strike during its acquisition by US-based JR Simplot.

Three Belgian and one French site have been affected by the industrial action which began at the start of October in response to a dispute over bonuses linked to the acquisition.

Talks between union representatives and Clarebout started at the end of September, when the ACV union requested a bonus payment for all staff following reports that Clarebout's CEO, Jan Clarebout, would receive "a substantial amount" from the sale.

The deal was announced in July and is expected to be finalised by the end of the year. Financial terms have not been disclosed, although Belgian media sources estimate this to be between €1–4 billion (US$1.1–4.4 billion).

Lars Decock, secretary for ACV, said Clarebout initially rejected the request but later offered €500 (US$584) for each of its 3,000 employees.

Raphael Tassart, spokesperson for Clarebout, confirmed the €500 proposal and noted there would be no impact on staff numbers from the sale.

Clarebout is a private-label supplier to the retail, catering, and food-processing sectors. It employs around 3,000 staff: 500 in Nieuwkerke, 1,500 at the Waasten facility, 500 at the Mydibell factory in Mouscron, and 500 at the Dunkirk site in France.

High-ground advantage

How a Cotswold seed grower keeps disease at bay.

"You must stop crops early if you want the right seed size. After desiccation, tubers continue swelling for a few tonnes per hectare, so timing is everything."

SPECIALIST seed potato producers are rare outside the main Scottish and Yorkshire heartlands, but that's what gives Jason Brain's Cotswold-based business, A D Brain & Son, its distinctive edge.

From the farm's base, high on the North Cotswold escarpment, the business benefits from an altitude that stays above 800 ft across all 610 ha of owned and rented land.

The cooler conditions and natural isolation are perfect for seed potato crops that make up about 25% of the arable area each year.

"It's generally two or three degrees cooler here than down in the Vale," Jason said. "That helps with aphid control and means our early spring movement ambient stores hold the right temperature. There are no other potato growers nearby, which also helps keep our seed clean."

The Brain family has farmed in the Cotswolds for four generations. Jason's great-grandfather began as a market gardener, growing ware potatoes and brassicas, but soon realised that the area's thin limestone soils were far better suited to seed.

Seed grown further south develops a slightly older physiological age, helping ware crops grown from it to emerge and mature faster.

"That advantage still holds today," said Jason. "With varieties like Markies, our seed can bring harvest forward by as much as 10 days, which can make all the difference in a wet autumn."

Dedicated to seed

Most of A D Brain & Son's seed crops are grown on virgin land, free from potato cyst nematode and groundkeepers, which dramatically reduces disease and pest risks.

"About 95% of our potato area hasn't seen a crop before," Jason explains. "That's a big part of maintaining clean seed."

Input seed is sourced mainly from the Black Isle in Scotland as pre-basic 2 and multiplied to commercial grade over two seasons. By selling direct to ware growers, Jason can give complete traceability and accountability to his customers.

"Many customers come to see the crops growing between APHA (Animal Plant Heath Agency) inspections. They want to know the origin, age and health of the seed. They expect that level of detail."

Every seed lot is test-graded before final grading so customers can plan accurately for size fractions and tonnages. Around two-thirds of the farm's stocks are also virus-indexed, going beyond certification requirements.

"Virus levels in UK seed have been creeping up," Jason said. "We sample 120 tubers per stock and send them to Fera for testing, so buyers can see our results before delivery. It's all about giving them confidence."

Careful management

Crop protection is managed carefully, with support from Agrii adviser Kathryn Styan and independent specialist Denis Buckley.

Jason's motto – "control the controllables" – guides everything from virus management to blight prevention.

Aphid populations are monitored with six yellow water traps across the potato area. Sprays are only applied when necessary, using targeted products such as Tepekki (flonicamid), InSyst (acetamiprid) and mineral oils to reduce virus spread.

"We haven't used pyrethroids for several years. This season we only needed one Tepekki spray, and our virus tests came back clean."

For late blight, he sticks to a robust preventative approach.

"You can't take risks with seed crops, so we build in tuber protection from the start with products like Ranman Top (cyazofamid) and Infinto (fluopicolide + propamocarb). Once a seed crop is infected, its value is lost."

Crop nutrition

Soil testing informs all fertiliser decisions. Liquid placement at planting has boosted yields and helped maintain tuber size consistency, even in dry seasons.

Nitrogen rates are kept modest – typically 50–60 kg N/ha for vigorous varieties like Markies – to encourage tuber numbers rather than excessive haulm.

"We're aiming for seed size between 30 mm and 60 mm. Too much nitrogen drives haulm growth and delays maturity. We want crops to wind down naturally without stress."

Flailing and desiccation are timed using regular test digs.

"You must stop crops early if you want the right seed size. After desiccation, tubers continue swelling for a few tonnes per hectare, so timing is everything."

Post harvest, tubers are handled as little as possible to avoid damage and the disease problems that can follow. To prevent storage diseases such as Fusarium dry rot and gangrene, all seed is treated with Gavel (imazalil) fungicide before going into store. The decision to use the product across all varieties came after a particularly difficult season, Jason said.

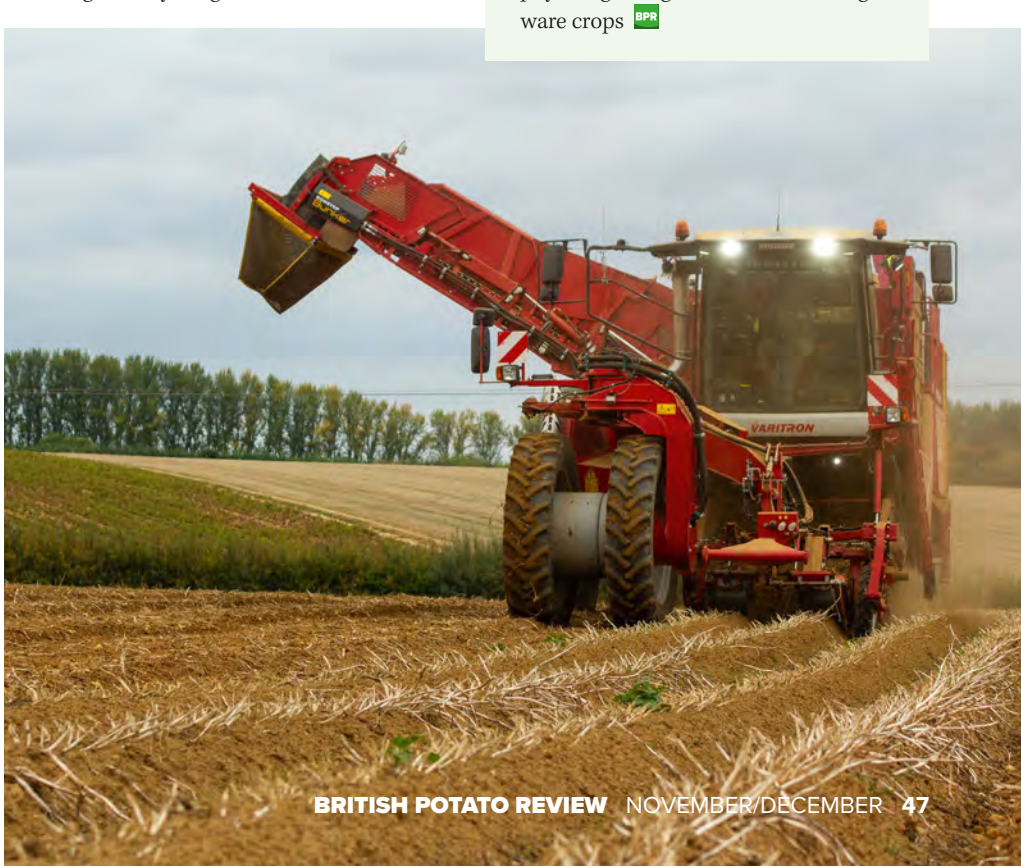
"A few years ago, we had dry rot appear after a dry harvest, and the loss from a rejected load was huge. Now every crop is treated. It's a small cost for complete peace of mind, and we haven't had an issue since."

After treatment, boxed seed is dried and cured for up to 72 hours on a drying wall before settling into the farm's ambient and cold stores for winter. Final grading takes place just before delivery in spring.

"At the end of the day, our reputation depends on every load that leaves the yard," Jason says. "Attention to detail at every stage is key."

Farm Facts – A D Brain & Son, Broadway, Worcestershire

- Area farmed: 610 ha (one-thirds owned, two-third rented)
- Main crops: Certified seed potatoes, winter/spring barley (for seed), tenderstem broccoli, salad onions, pumpkins, peas, Brussels sprouts
- Annual seed output: ~5,500 t
- Varieties: Markies, Sagitta, Babylon, Lady Anna, Melody, Mozart, Maris Piper, Estima, Cardyma, Invictus
- Sales model: 95% direct retail sales
- Cotswold advantage: High-altitude isolation, low aphid pressure, and older physiological age for faster-maturing ware crops BPR



AI advancements: The potato awakening

The onset of AI in different sectors of the potato supply chain is already making its presence felt. So what does this mean for the industry's future?


Ashleigh Patterson said the future looks bright for the potato industry as a whole.

EARLIER this year, the UK government revealed its AI Action Plan – a road map that promises a sovereign AI drive by 2030, AI-embedding in the public sector and growth encouragement in the private sector.

The more accustomed we become to AI – and the more familiar we are with its capabilities – the more possibilities are arising for AI to generate growth in less "obvious" industries.

The potato industry is amongst those industries whose future will be affected by AI, and it is already seeing changes on a local and national level according to specialists, who say its capacity to adapt, and business leaders' willingness to embrace the changes, mean it is well placed to thrive over the next decade.

Recent industry advancements

Ashleigh Patterson, a funding consultant with specialist knowledge in the fields of AI and potato growing, discussed how recent advances in AI are beginning to make a real impact across the British potato industry – from how the potato crops are grown in the field to how they're stored, processed, and delivered.

"One particularly exciting development is the use of AI-powered platforms, like FIRST Potato, which help farmers make smarter decisions about irrigation, fertilisers, and disease control. By analysing data from satellites, weather forecasts and soil sensors, these systems give growers tailored advice for each field," Ashleigh said.

"Early results show not only better yields, but also reduced use of water and chemicals. This is great news for both farmers and the environment, representing an important shift toward more sustainable and regenerative practices.

"We're also seeing big changes in how potatoes are planted and harvested owing to AI technologies like ground-penetrating radar and wireless soil sensors (like the Soiltech "electronic potato", which even resembles a potato in appearance) are being used to monitor tuber growth underground. Combined with AI, these tools can help growers decide exactly when to harvest, reducing waste and crop damage.

At the same time, autonomous tractors and robotic equipment are becoming more capable of handling routine tasks like soil prep and planting which helps growers and other businesses in the supply chain to tackle labour shortages and improve overall efficiency, Ashleigh added.

Automation and the labour gap

There is already a growing use of automation in processing and packing and, with the industry facing continued labour shortages, investment in advanced machinery is going to be something most businesses will need to take on board to keep up with customer demand and to maintain quality of product, she said.

We're seeing big changes in how potatoes are planted, harvested and handled owing to AI technologies.

"Modern processing lines can now use high-speed optical sorters that can spot blemishes, rot or irregularly-sized potatoes in real time – something that previously required manual sorting. Not only does this reduce the time and labour required, but it also improves product consistency across large volumes.

"Automated washers, peelers and robotic palletisers are also helping to speed up processes, while maintaining hygiene and safety. For many companies, this shift to automation isn't just about reducing costs, it's about being able to adapt quickly to retailer needs and handle bigger volumes, without compromising on quality."

Newer harvesters and self-propelled machines are faster, more precise and designed to be lighter on the soil to avoid soil compaction, a major concern in potato farming, while some machines come with built-in self-cleaning or grading features, cutting down on the number of times potatoes need to be handled and preserving tuber quality straight from the field.

Ashleigh said: "We're also seeing more electric and hybrid machines being introduced, which not only help reduce fuel costs but also lower emissions, supporting wider sustainability goals. Ultimately, these improvements are helping the whole potato supply chain become more efficient, resilient, and better prepared for any challenges ahead."

AI in the supply chain

AI is already impacting the potato farming lifecycle, from initial planting, right through to post-harvest processes, as well as post-harvesting processes such as storage and distribution. Smart storage systems are also being developed to keep track of conditions like temperature, CO_2 levels and sprouting risk, helping to reduce spoilage and maintain quality for longer.

Its impact doesn't stop there, Ashleigh said.

"AI tools are even beginning to coordinate logistics by combining crop readiness data with market demand and weather patterns, ultimately reducing waste and making supply chains more responsive and cost-effective," she said.

"Looking ahead, AI is making it easier to identify and manage potato crop diseases. New tools using drones and advanced image recognition can scan entire fields and pick up early signs of problems like blight or viruses, often before they're even visible to the human eye. This means farmers can act quickly and target treatments more precisely, saving time and reducing chemical use.

"At the same time, researchers are combining AI with microbiome analysis (looking at the microscopic organisms living on and around seed potatoes) to predict how well a crop will perform in different conditions. When this is paired with advances in precision breeding, it opens the door to selecting the most resilient seed stock for each field.

"In other words, growers could soon choose not just the best potato variety, but the best version of that variety for their specific soil and climate," says Ashleigh. "This would ultimately boost yields and reduce the risk of disease from the very beginning of potato production."

Local and national impacts

On a national scale, the British potato industry is going through a period of significant transformation, with new technologies and sustainability demands pushing it in new directions. Those who don't embrace the change risk getting left behind, Ashleigh said.

"Across the country, potato farmers are increasingly using tools like GPS-guided tractors, drones, and soil sensors to better understand what's happening in their fields and make smarter decisions.

"This kind of precision farming means crops get exactly what they need, which helps improve yields while cutting down on waste, cost, and environmental impact," Ashleigh said. "At the same time, big processors like McCain are modernising their factories with smart automation and energy-efficient frying/freezing systems, helping them keep up with demand while using fewer resources.

"All of this means the industry is becoming more efficient, more resilient to challenges like climate change or rising input costs, and better prepared for the future."

On a local level, the impact is equally promising, particularly in Lincolnshire and East Anglia where growers are experimenting with disease-resistant potato varieties and investing in new storage systems that keep crops fresh for longer without relying on chemicals, she added.

"Small and medium-sized local processors are starting to use smarter machines and digital tracking tools to help improve quality and reduce waste. With more support from Agri-tech hubs and rural innovation centres, even smaller farms are finding ways to bring in new tech that fits their needs and budgets. ➜

"Additionally, rural growers and processors are teaming up via shared transport systems to cut costs, reduce food miles, and make the whole supply chain run more smoothly and efficiently at a local level.

"It's an exciting time for the potato sector when it comes to AI developments," Ashleigh said. "In short, the future of the British potato industry looks a lot smarter and more connected. Not just in terms of technology, but also in terms of how different parts of the supply chain work together.

Ashleigh said that if the potato industry continues to embrace innovation and sustainability, it's well-placed to thrive in the years ahead.

"Ultimately, AI is helping to create a smarter future for the British potato industry – one where data and technology can work hand in hand at every stage of production. This will lead to improved yields, lower input use, and a more resilient, sustainable supply chain from field to fork." BPR

What to be aware of in AI development

BUSINESSES looking at AI's rapid development need to keep several critical considerations in mind, according to funding consultant Ashleigh Patterson.

"First and foremost, companies must be aware of tsheir ethical and legal responsibilities. AI systems can inadvertently embed biases or make unfair decisions, so firms must have a framework in place to guard against 'algorithmic bias' and discrimination," she said.

"Data privacy is anotsher paramount concern. Companies must comply with data protection laws and use data ethically while being aware of tshe reputational and cybersecurity risks tshe technology poses. Misuse of AI, like generating deepfake content or violating IP rights, can harm a company's brand.

"Anotsher key point is tshe need for coshesion over AI governance and strategy," she added. "Business leaders must develop a cosherent AI strategy aligned with business goals, invest in tshe right tools and infrastructure and measure AI's impact on KPIs, like productivity or customer satisfaction. Businesses also need to prepare tsheir workforce by upskilling employees and addressing fears around job displacement.

"Finally, firms should stay aware of tshe regulatory landscape. AI regulations are evolving, and issues like AI accountability and transparency are drawing scrutiny. Future-facing businesses in any sector must be aware that, in 2025 and beyond, AI governance will be a critical business imperative."

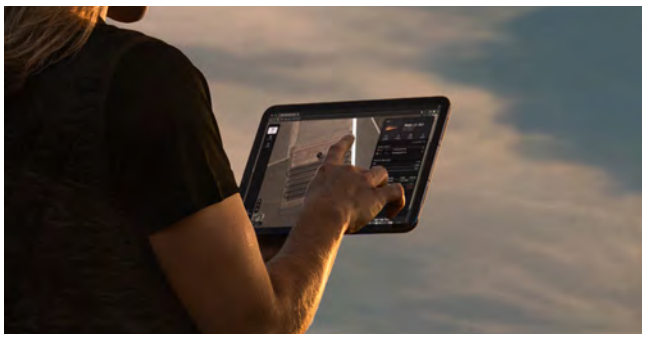
Weed-spotter in AI form

A CZECH company has launched an AI model that growers can use to identify weeds within potato fields.

Zoneye, created by start-up Skymaps, pinpoints weeds' exact location in the field using drone images and is integrated into the company's CultiWise prescription-map platform.

Its creators say it can identify troublesome weeds such as mayweed and ragweed within potato crops within minutes, after growers have uploaded their own drone images to the cloud-based software.

Zoneye is available worldwide to CultiWise subscribers. CultiWise generates prescription maps detailing the location, density, and species of weeds, enabling the grower to decide the exact amount of herbicide required for each area. These maps are exported directly to machinery terminals, guiding sprayers to apply herbicides only to weed-infested areas.



New telematics tool launched

VÄDERSTAD has launched E-Connect, a digital telematics tool designed to help growers monitor and manage their machinery operations more efficiently in real time.

E-Connect allows operators to track field work progress, analyse operational efficiency, and make informed decisions based on accurate, up-to-date data. It can connect with major Farm Management Systems (FMS).

UK Managing Director Andy Gamble said E-Connect turns machine data into decisions which can help growers optimise performance, reduce downtime, and maximise field efficiency.

"We have designed E-Connect with an intuitive and easy-to-use interface, allowing quick access to, and interpretation of data. It features an intuitive interface, giving growers the flexibility to manage their operations on the go," he said.

E-Connect will be available for planters and tillage equipment fitted with a connected gateway and will start to roll-out early in 2026. Väderstad E-Connect will premiere at Agritechnica 2025.

More enhanced cleaning facility on latest model

A PATENTED Varioweb cleaning system, which enables flexible cleaning during challenging harvest conditions, is a new feature which manufacturer AVR has introduced to its latest trailed harvester, recently showcased at PotatoEurope 2025.

The Spirit 9200i VW, which follows on from the Spirit 9200i which was introduced to the market last year, has been tweaked to offer the improved cleaning module, while maintaining its predecessor's upgrades in control, traction, haulm web, and the Clean & Go-bunker.

The machine can be configured via the ISOBUS-compatible display screen and AVR offers a Müller Touch800 or Smart570 screen. An ergonomic joystick is included as standard, with the ability to control various functions via tractors' joysticks.

There are two or three sieving webs, with different attachment options and drop height has been minimised.

The sieving and haulm webs combine to provide the primary haulm separation system, with the ability to adjust retainers' heights and fold the frames of rows should there be an accumulation of haulm.

Equipped with an 8.5-ton bunker, the machine can also benefit from a hydraulic collapsible shock absorber or crate-filling funnel.

The machine's traction system is more powerful than last year's model and can be operated by the supplementary keypad. Hydrostatic wheel drive is also available as an option.

New horizontal debris remover

A NEW horizontal debris remover has been developed by Haith, introducing a new level of cleaning efficiency to the company's range.

Designed to remove loose soil, stones and haulm before washing or grading, the machine features a heavy-duty rubber belt with soft pintle fingers that carry the potatoes along to a powered counter-rotating roller which gently transfers the crop off the side via an integral discharge chute.

Debris falls through the pintles to the base of the belt and is carried under the roller to the waste chute at the end of the machine. The gap between the roller and the belt is adjustable to control the size of debris removed.

The machine will make its debut at British Potato 2025 later this month.

New tractor series

FENDT'S new 800 Vario Gen5 series is available from this autumn, with three models offering 260 to 343 horsepower.

For the first time, the models in the range will feature a self-cleaning engine air filter, as well as VarioDrive, which has been paired with an 8.0 litre, six-cylinder CORE80 engine.

The fifth generation 800 Vario includes three models: The 826, 829 and 832 with Power+, Profi and Profi+ specifications available. The range features Fendt's DynamicPerformance (DP) added power concept which offers a boost of 23 horsepower (17 kW).

The single-stage Fendt VarioDrive drivetrain with permanent, independent four-wheel drive is also now available in the 800 Vario series, enabling maximum tractive power without manual shifting when switching between field and road.

The tractors can reach a maximum of 17.5 tonnes with the ability to travel at 40 and 50 km/h with payload of 7.6 tonnes.

Profi and Profi+ models provide up to six hydraulic control units at the rear with the option of up to two control units at the front. Power+ models offer a maximum of four control units in the rear and one at the front, or five control units at the rear. Customers can also choose between three hydraulic pumps.

The 800 Vario has a top speed of 60 km/h, and features chassis and safety features which help to prevent jack-knifing or drifting, especially on undulating land, while using sprayers and trailers.

A new cab with LED spotlights is available in two equipment variants: Vision and UltraVision.

Manufacturer invests in facilities

MANUFACTURER JCB which marked its 80th birthday in October, is investing in ¬£100 million manufacturing facilities at its global headquarters in Rocester, Staffordshire.

JCB's machines are used for potato planting, harvesting and handling. The latest project will see the installation of a fully-automated powder paint plant costing ¬£60 million, as well as a full modernisation of the shop floor, with new machining centres, friction welders and cylinder boring machines, at the manufacturing facility where its backhoe-loaders and Loadall telescopic handlers are produced.

50% more tools in the ground

VÄDERSTAD has launched a new front tool option for the disc cultivators Carrier XT 425–625 and Carrier XL 425–725 for ultra-shallow tillage and mechanical weed control.

The Väderstad Carrier XT is used in potato growing for primary tillage and seedbed preparation, as it is a versatile disc cultivator designed for high-speed soil work and can handle both shallow and deep cultivation tasks. Its ability to adapt to various field conditions and its capacity to improve soil structure and incorporate residues makes it a good tool for preparing fields for potato planting.

The new third disc axle configuration increases disc density from two rows to three, reducing the disc spacing to 8.3cm. This results in 50% more tools in the ground, delivering highly intensive mixing, crumbling, and residue management, according to the manufacturer.

Väderstad UK managing director Andy Gamble said: "With three rows of CrossCutter Discs, we can improve cultivation performance and significantly improve the versatility of shallow tillage systems. Key benefits include high weed-killing rates, preserving soil moisture, and reduced fuel consumption, making them a good option for both conventional and organic systems."

Field tests have shown that the new front tool is able to create a stronger stale seedbed, promote weed germination and more effective weed knockdown in a second pass.

"We have designed the third disc axle front tool to deliver higher intensity and better mixing, which in turn encourages stronger emergence of weeds and leftover seeds," Andy said.

The third disc axle holds the standard Carrier disc arms, and can be fitted with either the CrossCutter Disc, CrossCutter Disc Aggressive, 450mm disc or 470 TrueCut discs. This significantly improves cultivation versatility and to operate in a wide range of farming conditions.

The new third disc axle will be available as a front tool for Carrier XT 425-625 and Carrier XL 425-725 from October 2025, with deliveries starting in the spring 2026. The machines will premiere at Agritechnica 2025.

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- Our paper comes from sustainable European forests that have been growing in size by over 150 football pitches each day.
- We are certified ISO 14001, an internationally recognised level of environmental quality.
- Our second biggest raw material is aluminium printing plates which are 100% recyclable after use.
- LED Lighting has been installed throughout the factory as part of a major investment which started in Jan 2023.We have three solar panel arrays on the roofs of our factory generating electricity throughout the year. Gas consumption is also down by over 500,000 kilowatt hours per year due to the installation of new energy-efficient technology.

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New optical sorter for chips

Key Technology (Key), a member of Duravant's Food Sorting and Handling Group has introduced its COMPASS® optical sorter for chips.

Powered by Key's advanced NEXT sort engine, COMPASS detects and rejects product defects such as, dark spots, green discoloration and white knot bruises, along with FM like fryer debris. Equipped with customizable camera options and up to 8 channels of multispectral sensor data, the sorter can detect the color, size, shape and structural properties of every object to identify more, smaller defects than systems with conventional 3-channel cameras.

Designed for maximum sanitation, COMPASS features open architecture, sloped surfaces and minimal moving parts. Sensors and light windows are positioned away from product splatter, and stain-resistant belt technology helps sustain accurate inspection throughout long production runs. Specialized collection systems, including counter-rotating brushes or scrapers, direct oil and chip debris into easily removable bins for safe, efficient disposal. The belt can be quickly removed for thorough cleaning, while the open design allows easy access for workers and reduces cleaning and maintenance requirements. Washdowns can be completed in as little as 15 minutes.

Every COMPASS is equipped with Key Discovery™, a powerful data analytics and reporting software that turns the sorter into an IIoT-connected device and information centre. By delivering detailed product quality and sorting process data, Key Discovery gives processors valuable insights into line operations, quality trends and opportunities to optimize upstream processes like fryer settings.

COMPASS is available in multiple configurations to meet individual application and capacity requirements, including the ability to integrate Key's high-performance infeed and discharge conveyors for complete system solutions. Beyond traditional chip applications, this belt-fed COMPASS can handle other snack products including extruded snacks, pellets and specialty items like sesame sticks.

www.key.net

Kramp to provide ongoing availability of Vapormatic range

Kramp, one of Europe's leading suppliers of agricultural parts and accessories, is now stocking the Vapormatic product range on kramp.com.

With a history spanning over 75 years, Vapormatic is a highly-respected name among UK growers and dealers for its reliable, high-quality parts. The announcement by Kramp follows the decision to close Vapormatic's operations.

"We're incredibly proud to bring the Vapormatic brand into the Kramp family," says Des Boyd, UK Country Director at Kramp. "It's a name that carries real weight in British agriculture and has been trusted by farmers and dealers for generations.

"By combining Vapormatic's strong legacy with Kramp's scale, service and technical know-how, we feel we can have a really positive impact on the industry, and it supports our mission to keep farmers farming."

The vast Vapormatic portfolio of over 11,000 products will be integrated into Kramp's already extensive range, something Des says has been made possible by the company's investment in the UK over the last few years.

"Kramp is ready to go. We have received the initial shipments in our warehouse, the products have been loaded onto our database and will be visible on kramp.com from 1st September. Additional stock will follow," he adds.

Vapormatic customers in the UK can continue to order through their local Kramp dealer. Alternatively, for next-day home delivery, they can apply for a Kramp online account on the Kramp website, which will be linked to their preferred online dealer.

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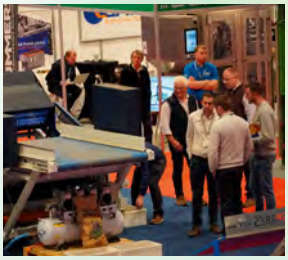

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