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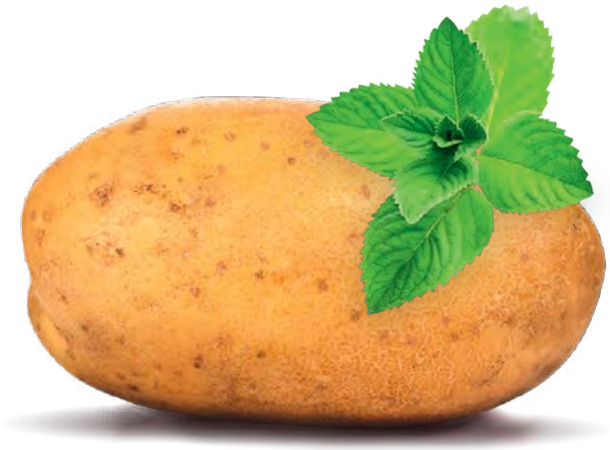

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Editor's letter

THIS summer has been full of road trips for me, with some great learning experiences along the way.

I was honoured to be invited along on the Perfecting Potatoes Together tour, which brought together a group of growers, agronomists, and industry experts and provided an opportunity for us to see first-hand some of the potato practices being undertaken in eastern Scotland, including tasting some of the specialist mashed potato flavours and potato vodkas being produced by Dysart and Ogilvy.

Organised by the potato team at BASF, the ongoing collaboration is a wonderful example of industry working in harmony for the greater good, and shows just how far-reaching the potato industry is.

My first visit to the Hutton's Advanced Plant Growth Centre (APGC) was also a real eye-opener. While we've all heard (and in many cases scoffed!) at the vertical farming concept, seeing it up close and witnessing some of the research and work put into this was quite awe-inspiring.

Then of course there was Potatoes In Practice, the UK's biggest potato field event held annually at Balruddery Farm. It was 'a bit of a windy one' this year, with a pesky storm almost putting paid to the event, but the exhibitors held fast, the trial plots were in full flourish and we spent a great day there talking to those on stands, examining the exhibits, admiring the wonderful coastline in the distance and, um, make a dismal attempt to film a drone display …

We also got to visit one of the most recent British Potato Industry Award winners, Mark Mander and get a demonstration on how DIG (Data Intelligence for Growers) data management software is helping seed and ware potato growers and merchants across the UK.

Then there was a day spent visiting a number of potato stores in Lincolnshire, gathering photos and knowledge for a new product we'll be launching at the British Potato Industry Event – you can learn more about this in our storage section.

So all in all, it's been a busy couple of months and this issue is packed with some of the insights we've gleaned along the way.

Stephanie Cornwall

Editor

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Crisps producer supports Air Ambulances UK

CRISPS producer Fairfields Farm has announced a new charity partnership with Air Ambulances UK.

The packaging on limited edition packs of its Lightly Sea Salted flavour crisps will feature Air Ambulances UK's artwork and messaging, with a percentage of profits from each sale donated to support the network of 21 air ambulance charities across the UK. A minimum annual donation of £10,000 has been pledged to help fund the life-saving services, which rely almost entirely on public support to operate.

It is hoped the collaboration will raise awareness of this life-saving charity.

The packaging features an illustration of an air ambulance helicopter on the Fairfields Farm landscape, along with key information to help drive consumer awareness and engagement in-store and online.

Co-founder of Fairfields Farm, Robert Strathern, said: "Our team, together with the team at Air Ambulances UK, has worked incredibly hard on this new launch. It's personal for us, too. Farmers often work long distances from serviceable roads, and so the Air Ambulance charities are a literal lifeline to more remote rural communities like ours. Our Lightly Sea Salted pack usually has a tractor front and centre, but that space now proudly shows an Air Ambulance.

"The services provided by air ambulance charities across the UK are absolutely crucial, and we're pleased we can support them with a product that not only tells a powerful story but also gives back."

National Corporate Fundraising Manager at Air Ambulances UK, Rachel Breen, added: "We're really excited to have this support from Fairfields Farm. Partnerships like this are incredibly powerful, allowing us to reach new audiences and build awareness while also generating funding for the vital work of air ambulance charities across the UK. We look forward to seeing the response and for Fairfields Farm to showcase the fantastic new packaging."

The new Fairfields Farm x Air Ambulances UK Lightly Sea Salted flavour packs will be available through the Fairfields Farm website, East of England Co-op stores, wholesalers, and a range of independent farm shops and delis across the UK.

To support Air Ambulances UK with a donation, please visit: **https://www.airambulancesuk.org/support-us/donate-now/**.

Higher payout prices from potato breeder

DUTCH potato breeding company Agrico will pay its members an average price of €59.84 per 100kg for seed potatoes of 28mm upwards (including oversized tubers) from the 2024 harvest.

This latest higher payout price, announced during countrywide meetings in early July, reflects a strong demand for potatoes from both export markets and the processing industry, the company announced.

The figure represents the average price for loose seed potatoes harvested in the autumn, size 28 mm upwards, directly from the farm.

Agrico's payout price has been steadily rising for several years. For the 2023 harvest, Agrico paid € 44.65 per 100 kg. In previous years, the price level increased by an average of 18% per year.

CEO Mark Zuidhof said: "We've had a fantastic year. All previous records have been broken – both at Agrico and across most of our subsidiaries."

He highlighted the performance of subsidiary Agrico España which has firmly re-established itself in the market, saying: "Agrico now has a market share there of over 35%."

Other subsidiaries also reported exceptional results. "We're seeing strong growth with Agrico Nordic in Denmark, Agrico Polska and Agrico UK sold out completely and Desmazières (France) almost fully sold out. Even Interseme (Slovenia), our smallest subsidiary, saw record-breaking turnover," said Mark.

Potato industry development programme

GB Potatoes, in association with the British Potato Trade Association (BPTA), has launched a new initiative to support the skills and knowledge development of future growers, leaders and industry experts.

Supporting individuals from seed production to the end of the supply chain, the Potato Industry Development Programme is designed for new entrants to gain a comprehensive understanding of the sector, while building valuable networks and collaborations.

Taking place throughout 2026, the programme will be delivered in three phases, incorporating research and development, growing, processing and production, policy and communications.

Participants will get the chance to visit leading brands within the industry including McCains, Branston and Pipers Crisps as part of the first session, hosted in February 2026.

The second phase in June 2026, will include visits to the Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA), mini tuber facility with Cygnet, grower Robert Doig, machinery manufacturer Scanstone and the James Hutton Institute, where the European Potato collective is housed.

A final session in London, in November 2026, will provide insight into how and why lobbying bodies engage with government, and the role that the next generation can play in supporting and influencing future decision making.

Commenting on the programme, GB Potatoes Chair Alex Godfrey said: "Since the Next Generation Programme, run by AHDB, came to an end, there has been no specific, industry wide training for new entrants and those developing their careers within the potato sector. With a current lack of training for new entrants within the potato industry, GB Potatoes has recognised the need to develop an initiative that supports the growth of our future leaders, building connections, knowledge and optimism within our industry.

"With continuous change impacting our sector, from new technological advancements to extreme weather events, it is more important than ever that we create opportunities for the next generation to develop their understanding of how we can be resilient when it comes to growing our crops, efficient in processing and packaging, and developing strong messages that resonate with the consumer."

"I am, therefore, delighted that alongside the British Potato Trade Association we can offer this incredible opportunity, and I would encourage anyone at the start of their career to apply - you never know where it might lead."

The cost for the programme, which includes all accommodation, meals and minibus travel during the trips, is £1000 for GB Potatoes members, or £1500 for non-members. Places are limited and those interested in applying should visit the GB Potatoes website to complete the short application form at **https://www.gb-potatoes.co.uk/news/**

Applications close on September 12th.

For any questions about the programme, please contact Graham Bannister, via **gb@grahambannister.co.uk**

CIPC monitoring: Sample appeal renewed

POTATO store operators in Britain are again being asked to provide samples to help with the CIPC monitoring and the retention of the maximum residue level (tMRL).

The CIPC Residues Monitoring Group, which has made the call to store operators, has reiterated that it is crucial that those operating in the British potato industry continue to supply monitoring data to retain the temporary Maximum Residue Level (tMRL) which is annually reviewed.

The Chemicals Regulation Division (CRD) set the tMRL) for chlorpropham (CIPC) at 0.35 mg/kg, effective from April 10th 2024 and its continuation depends entirely on whether the British potato industry can provide evidence that it's still needed, the group has stressed.

Group Chairman Adrian Cunnington is calling for new CIPC residue samples to be submitted to ensure the legislation remains in place. "It's important to keep the data flowing," he said.

The CRMG coordinates the anonymised data submission to CRD on behalf of the entire industry submissions can be made by sending residue data to Adrian Cunnington who will anonymise the data before submitting it to CRD.

Those who have potato stores previously treated with CIPC and are holding crops for at least two months this season, should provide at least one of their regular multi-residue test results.

For more details, email Adrian at **adrian@potatostorageinsight.com**.

Adrian Cunnington.

SpudBros team up with car dealer for video campaign

IN an extraordinary new partnership, Isuzu dealer Chorley Group has teamed up with potato-selling social media content creators SpudBros.

The car dealer has provided SpudBros, who have more than four million followers on TikTok, with an Isuzu D-Max to use in their TikTok videos.

The driving force behind 'The Greatest Spuds on Earth', brothers Jacob and Harley Nelson, were propelled to stardom in 2023, after the TikTok channel was launched by their father, Tony. The business has been owned by the Nelsons since 2020, whilst its origins trace back to 1955 in the form of a hot potato cart set up by Ernie Rhodes.

Announcing the partnership in comedic style, the TikTok video features a couple of members of Chorley Group staff who are in desperate need of 300 SpudBros spuds to feed their team, with the only caveat being that both customers forgot their wallets, leading to an extraordinary turn of events culminating in the exchange of a new, top-of-the-range Isuzu D-Max V-Cross for the 300 loaded spuds. The final reveal shows the excited SpudBros team receiving the keys to the pick-up, finished with bespoke SpudBros branding.

Having already amassed more than 1.2 million views on TikTok, the announcement has taken social media by storm, with the SpudBros-branded Isuzu D-Max serving as an ideal accompaniment to the famous 'tater tram'.

Managing Director at Chorley Group, Adam Turner, said: "We are very excited to announce our collaboration with SpudBros. Having already seen a strong level of engagement on their social media platforms, we are delighted to see the positive reception to their new D-Max with its distinctive SpudBros wrap."

Regional Sales Manager at Isuzu UK, Alan Coyle, added: "Isuzu UK is thrilled to see Chorley Group getting stuck into its partnership with SpudBros. With the channel going from strength to strength, its impressive online presence and active follower base, the partnership is fantastic for both parties. Chorley Group have certainly set a great example of showing great initiative through its collaboration with SpudBros, and we hope the D-Max serves the duo well in their upcoming adventures."

Chorley Group is a family-run Lancashire business that has been operting since 1988 with a focus on supporting its local community. In November 2024, the dealer provided Derian House Children's Hospice with logistical support vehicles for a charity Santa Walk.

Growers urged to join awareness campaign

ORGANISERS of British Food Fortnight are calling on potato growers to engage with this year's national campaign to reconnect people with the food that feeds them.

The annual two-week campaign runs from September 26th to October 12th.

Love British Food founder Alexia Robinson said: "At a time when food security and the long-term sustainability of the farming sector are hanging in the balance, this campaign is dedicated to promoting those working day-in, day-out to nourish the nation."

This year's campaign focuses on three key pillars – Grow British, Cook British, and Champion British - with activity targeting consumers, the hospitality sector and public sector catering.

A wide range of events, promotions, and media activities will take place nationwide including a Morrisons community competition, cookery demonstrations, collaborations with schools, universities, care homes and hospitals and a National Harvest Service at Westminster Abbey.

For more information on British Food Fortnight 2025, including events and how farmers can get involved visit **www.britishfoodfortnight.org.uk.**

"At a time when food security and the long-term sustainability of the farming sector are hanging in the balance, this campaign is dedicated to promoting those working day-in, day-out to nourish the nation."

GRIMME's Group Marketing Manager Adam Johnson on the Three Peaks Challenge.

"Our priority is to support farming communities and families facing hardship... this challenge is also about further developing collaboration and teamwork skills."

Patrick Graf-Grote, MD, GRIMME

An uphill task!

Team of 14 takes in three peaks in a day to raise funds for RABI.

THE team at GRIMME are well known to many in the British and European potato sectors for producing and marketing field machinery, as well as collaborating in industry initiatives such as the four-year Potato-LITE project.

But one of the most uphill tasks they've undertaken isn't taking place in the field or factory.

At the time of going to press, 14 employees from GRIMME UK and Deutsche Leasing were about to embark on the National Three Peaks Challenge which involves climbing the UK's three highest mountains in a single challenge, to raise money for a charity that provides financial assistance and mental health support to potato growers, their families, and other types of farmers all over the country.

After three months of intensive training, they were making their way to the top of Scotland's Ben Nevis, England's Scafell Pike, and Snowdon in Wales, and had just under a day to reach their goal.

The team hopes to raise £5,000 in support of RABI (Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution).

Climbing the highest mountains in the UK in just 24 hours is not only a test of endurance but also a race against time, meaning the participants will have to push themselves to their limits, according to Group Marketing Manager Adam Johnson, who is one of the participants, and whom Potato Review caught up with at the recent Potatoes In Practice event near Dundee, Scotland.

The day after the show he set off to climb Ben Nevis, completing the climb in four hours and 30 minutes, as part of his training.

"Preparations for the route demands intensive training, teamwork, and efficiency," said Adam. "The Three Peaks Challenge requires its participants to ascend and descend all three mountains while withstanding the time pressure and harsh weather conditions."

GRIMME Managing Director Patrick Graf-Grote added: "We chose RABI since our priority is to support farming communities and families facing hardship, which closely aligns with GRIMME's family values. This challenge is also about further developing collaboration and teamwork skills. It's an opportunity to strengthen bonds within our team and bring together employees from different sectors and regions across the country."

Starting their route at 8:30am on Ben Nevis in Scotland, the team was then due to complete Scafell Pike and finish at Snowdon early the next morning.

Anyone interested in donating to their cause can do so by visiting the team's JustGiving page at **https://bit.ly/4flJDDB**. The team's final collection for RABI will take place at this year's British Potato Industry Event in Harrogate in November.

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International participants gather to discuss breeding

MORE than 100 international participants, representing 53 organisations and industrial partners, spent two-and-a-half days discussing potato breeding in the era of pan genomes and advanced genetics recently.

The discussion took place at the 20th joint meeting of the European Association for Potato Research (EAPR) and the European Association for Research on Plant Breeding (EUCARPIA), hosted by The James Hutton Institute, in collaboration with the University of Dundee and the University of St Andrews took place in St Andrews.

Data presented and discussed at the meeting demonstrated how genomics and genetics are beginning to shape the accelerated breeding of potato cultivars. The role of AI in evaluating potential new cultivars and their adaptation to various stresses was also highlighted.

Head of Potato Genetics at the Hutton and chair of the local organising committee, Professor Ingo Hein, said: "Potato breeding is especially challenging owing to its complex genome, which makes it difficult to fix beneficial traits. This conference brought together over 100 international experts to explore how genome sequencing (the process of determining the entirety of the DNA sequence of an organism's genome), AI, natural diversity, and potentially gene editing can drive the faster development of more resilient potato varieties.

"It highlighted the kind of collaborative, cutting-edge science that the Hutton's National Potato Innovation Centre (NPIC) aims to support and scale in the UK."

NPIC is one of several crop centres developed by the Hutton. It works in partnership with stakeholders, academics, industry and government in the UK and beyond to carry out scientific research to future proof the potato industry and support economic resilience and growth.

EAPR aims to promote the exchange of scientific and technical information relating to all facets of potato breeding, production, protection, storage and utilisation between various countries, both inside and outside Europe, and to encourage international co-operation.

EUCARPIA aims to foster the development of plant breeding by promoting scientific and technical co-operation throughout Europe. The association arranges and sponsors meetings of members to discuss general or specific problems.

UK food inflation set to rise by 34%

A NEW report by the Autonomy Institute reveals that extreme weather – particularly heatwaves and droughts – will disrupt food production both abroad and at home over the next three decades, driving up costs in the UK which imports nearly half its food.

It warns that, despite mounting warnings from the Climate Change Committee and others, UK government planning to develop resilience in food systems against exogenous shocks such as extreme weather is inadequate.

This research integrates climate data, international and domestic trade analysis, advanced economic modelling, and household level microsimulations to assess the socioeconomic impact of global warming – revealing how rising heatwaves and droughts will imperil staple crops, disrupt supply chains, and intensify inflationary pressures.

Chief Executive at the Autonomy Institute Will Stronge said: "Without proactive intervention, rising heatwaves and droughts could drive food prices up by a third by mid-century. Climateflation is no longer a distant risk. It's a present reality. We need to build real economic resilience and that means rethinking what public service provision can and should provide."

Potato AI initiative to be piloted in UK

A EUROPE-wide project designed to validate and verify the impact of regenerative farming practices in potato production is to be piloted in the UK.

The project is being led by agricultural AI pioneer Cropin, which is based in Bangladore in India, and is being funded by a €700,000 (£605,000) grant from the EU's EIT Food innovation agency.

Real-time field data, computer models and predictive analytics will be used to secure objective data points that can be used to verify the effects of regenerative methods without compromising potato crop yield or quality, including the dry matter content sought by processors.

Cropin's AI-powered initiative, which is called FIRST Potato, is designed to encourage adoption of regenerative practices across Europe. It brings together a consortium of food processors, research institutions and sustainability leaders to accelerate the transition from conventional to regenerative practice.

Cropin's CEO and Founder Krishna Kumar said: "As regenerative agriculture gains momentum, the absence of verifiable, measurable outcomes poses a real challenge to meaningful, scalable impact. Without robust digital systems, farmers struggle to consistently uphold regenerative principles.

"Through AI, data intelligence, and real-time decision-support, we are bridging this critical gap, bringing precision, accountability, and scale to regenerative agriculture. With FIRST Potato, our goal is to help farmers adopt climate-smart practices that are both profitable and scientifically validated."

The project will collate data from sensors, satellite imagery, weather stations and IoT devices to deliver plot-specific daily advisories to growers, tailored to soil profile and microclimatic conditions. By enabling optimised irrigation, input usage and residue management, Cropin's precision and predictive technology will help potato growers manage the three issues of optimal yield, reduced inputs and quality consistency demanded by potato processors producing crisps and chips.

Scientific validation will initially be carried out on farms in Denmark, where Cropin has partnered with Aarhus University, a globally-recognised leader in sustainable agriculture research. However, the first commercial pilots will involve a UK potato processor, with a second to follow in Germany.

"This deployment will deliver collective benefits," said Krishna. "Growers enhance their profitability, brands meet their sustainability targets, and regenerative practices benefit the planet."

Cropin is actively engaging in strategic commercial partnerships and pilot deployments across Europe and the UK. The company is in advanced discussions with several leading UK and Europe-based agri-food brands and expects to close multiple regenerative agriculture pilots in the region before the end of the current financial year.

"Growers enhance their profitability, brands meet their sustainability targets, and regenerative practices benefit the planet."

Potatoes in Practice 2025

Storm Floris fails to dampen enthusiasm for the Hutton's annual field event near Dundee with visitors coming from across the globe, trial plots, drone demonstrations and exhibits of machinery, agtech, treatments and more.

POTATO growers, researchers, sellers and enthusiasts gathered recently for the annual Potatoes in Practice (PiP), event, hosted by the National Potato Innovation Centre (NPIC), in partnership with SRUC and Agrii, at The James Hutton Institute's Baldruddery Farm.

Having been buffeted by Storm Floris, which brought heavy rain and strong winds to the area just days before, with power outages, cancelled trains and 82mph gusts, exhibitors set up their stands with some trepidation.

But the clouds dispersed and the sun shone brightly on the day, enabling visitors to fully appreciate the spectacular views of countryside and coastline available from the venue. There were a few dicey moments when pull-up signs and a gazebo were partially uprooted by stray gusts of wind, but it was also an opportunity for collaboration and networking from all sectors of the potato industry.

Fifty-eight exhibitors demonstrated cutting edge research, products and services, and four enlightening seminar sessions presented knowledge from leading names of the potato industry and research.

Under the theme 'Future-proofing the potato industry', the topics of discussion were the issues facing the potato crop, from the fight against blight, potato leaf roll virus and climate change exacerbated heat and drought stresses. The enormous successes achieved by potato breeders and researchers since PiP 2024 were also celebrated, such as the breeding of virus and nematode resistant potatoes, like Elland and Buster, and their introduction to our supermarket shelves and dinner tables.

Professor Ingo Hein, who heads up the Hutton's potato genetics team, said: "This year's event showcased the importance of crop genomics, demonstrating how a basic understanding of the potato's genomic organisation has become a powerful tool for translating research into practical solutions.

"By linking genomic insights to markers for biotic and abiotic stress tolerance, breeders can now apply state-of-the-art approaches to develop more resilient potato varieties."

Live demonstrations throughout the day showcased exciting new technological advancements in crop spraying and pest management, including an agricultural drone designed for precision spraying. Commercial breeders displayed their latest varieties, agronomists demonstrated what's new in crop protection, researchers discussed their most recent findings and there was much sharing of valuable knowledge.

The event was hailed as a success for growers, researchers and the public alike. Those who attended left with an insight into the value of potatoes as a national and global food source, and the importance of research into sustainable farming and the fight against potato pests and diseases. ➜

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"This year's event showcased the importance of crop genomics, demonstrating how a basic understanding of the potato's genomic organisation has become a powerful tool for translating research into practical solutions."

Professor Ingo Hein, James Hutton Institute

Director of NPIC, Professor Ian Toth, said after the event: "Potatoes in Practice is an important event in our calendar as it brings together those from science and the potato industry in a friendly and informative environment. As well as exchanging information and ideas, perhaps its greatest asset is the space it provides for people to meet, 'chew the fat', and develop new contacts and collaborations. Roll on PiP 2026."

British Potato Review's Editor Stephanie Cornwall and Sales Manager Victoria Liddington were amongst the show's visitors, taking in the trial plots and speaking to exhibitors.

"As one of the show's sponsors, I can honestly say we picked up a lot of new information and had some interesting talks on all the stands," said Stephanie. "The first people to chat to us when we arrived were a couple who were over from New Zealand. They'd left their own potato farm in good hands while they'd come to the UK for a holiday, and thought they'd visit PIP while they were in the area. We had a very interesting chat about their harvest and some of the challenges faced by seed buyers in New Zealand, and it just goes to demonstrate the international interest in PIP.

"We spoke to a lot of people on the exhibition stands about everything ranging from new equipment to trap crops and varieties, as well as being given some key insights from those looking after the trial plots. We'll be following up on all of these and sharing information with readers in our forthcoming features." BPR

"We had a very interesting chat about their harvest and some of the challenges faced by seed buyers in New Zealand, and it just goes to demonstrate the international interest in PIP."

Stephanie Cornwall, Editor, British Potato Review

Perfecting Potatoes Together

Arlary Farm in Kinross was the first stop on the Perfecting Potatoes Together tour.

British Potato Review Editor **Stephanie Cornwall** joined a recent tour which took in Kinross, Montrose, Forfar and Dundee, to learn about some of the innovations, collaborations and business developments taking place within the region's potato industry.

THE Perfecting Potatoes Together Innovation Tour brought together a group of people from different sectors of the industry, providing them with an opportunity to see how science and bold business ideas are shaping up within the Scottish potato industry.

I joined a group of growers, agronomists, and industry experts on the recent tour, organised by BASF.

Our first stop was Arlary Farm in Kinross, the headquarters of Scottish Agronomy Ltd. Grower and group member John Weir, who has been with Scottish Agronomy since 2011 and hosted trial plots for potatoes, showed us around the fields and we also heard updates on current work on potatoes from Agronomist Zack Reilly, BASF's Agronomy Manager Scott Milne and Business Development Manager Paul Goddard, whose insights we'll be sharing in the next issue of *British Potato Review*.

A lesson in mash

We then set off to visit the family-run Upper Dysart Larder in Montrose. The 430-acre farm overlooking Lunan Bay has been home to the Stirling family for four generations and it has farmed there for more than 30 years. Owners Andrew and Anita Stirling and their four children Alexander, Jessica, Hannah and James have been diversifying the business over the past three or four years. It is now best known for its mashed potato dishes, which come in a variety of flavours. ➜

"Some folks say 'Why do you bother?' Well, potatoes are very lucrative when you get it right."

John Weir gave us a field tour at Arlary Farm in Kinross, the headquarters of Scottish Agronomy Ltd

Upper Dysart Larder has become a key supplier to independent retailers as well as Aldi, while also selling its wares from a vending machine at its own farm shop.

Andrew told us he's a strong believer that business should never stand still and says it's possible for traditional and new practices to work in harmony for growing businesses such as his.

"We have a lot of experience preparing vegetables for wholesalers and retailers, and for many years we supplied, washed and peeled these for schools and hospitals," he said. "You get five to 10 days' shelf-life on prepared food, but by vacuum sealing it when it's cooked, it stays fresh for up to four weeks."

Upper Dysart Larder is continuously expanding its offerings, developing a wider range of flavours and farm-to-table dishes, showcasing local flavours and specialties. We got to try these out when Andrew joined us for dinner that same night. Locally-influenced flavours such as neep mash and ready-made haggis were readily devoured after a day walking fields and factories, alongside mustard mash, cheesy mash and chorizo mash. The cauliflower cheese variety vanished almost as soon as it surfaced!

The younger generation of Stirlings have made their mark on different areas of the business. A "Hay & Play" area where children can explore the farm and feed goats, alpacas, Highland cows and other animals, encourages families to visit and makes the farm a regular tourist stop-off. Jessica, who joined her father to show us round the farm and production facility, is looking at bringing in other animals.

Andrew said: "Anita and I are really pleased to see our children take on roles in the business. All too often children in farming families aren't given the chance to take over until they're 50 or 60, but we think it's great to be able to involve the family and give everyone a chance to take on a role," he said.

So is he thinking of hanging up his hat and handing over to his children? Andrew, whose enthusiasm and constant movement would be the envy of many a city businessman, laughed.

"Maybe one day – maybe soon, maybe not," he said. "I think about it, but then I think 'We could do this' and get caught up in something else. I'm sure when I do, though, I'll be leaving it in capable hands."

Vodka breakfast

On the second day of the tour, we prepared for what my fellow tour guests were calling 'a vodka breakfast' at Hatton of Ogilvy Farm, Forfar, where we were given a tour and an exclusive insight into how Scotland's first potato vodka is made, as well as meeting members of the Scottish Potato Co-operative (SPC).

Ogilvy vodka is distributed to independent bottle shops, farm shops and delicatessens throughout the UK. Hatton of Ogilvy Farm launched the vodka in 2015 and three years later opened the farm to visitors in response to demand for tours. Our tour incorporated the farm and distillery, finishing off at the vodka tasting room where more than one of us found a decided liking for a blackberry variety.

The business originally received funding for the project from the Angus LEADER Local Action Group, and has in turn invested into local community groups including the Charlston Playgroup, Glamis Primary School Committee and Royal Highland Educational Trust.

Graeme Jarron, who welcomed us to the farm and led the tour, is a fourth-generation grower whose parents are still actively involved in the farming business.

"My father's going to be his grave before he gives up!" Graeme joked.

Graeme farms on typically grade three soils, 170m above sea level and the land he uses for potato-growing ranges from 20 to 30 hectares. He grows three varieties: Maris Piper, Elland and Cultra. Maris Piper is the only variety used for the distillery.

"We grade all the Maris Piper potatoes, irrespective of the quality of them. We need to do that for the distillery side of things, but with the other varieties, we're quite happy for them to go away as dug," said Graeme.

"With Maris Piper, it's all the secondary potatoes that we want for the distillery - anything that has cuts, greens, damaged internals even, can be something that we can utilise. The only type of potato that we cannot utilise for the distillery is rotten potatoes."

As relatively small potato growers, the family's continued practice has often been questioned.

"Some folks say 'Why do you bother?' Well, potatoes are very lucrative when you get it right," said Graeme.

For the first time in several years, the family has rented land this year.

"The reason we've done that is not to grow more potatoes, it's to give our own land a bit of a break," said Graeme. "We'll plant potatoes in early April. In 2024 it was extremely wet, and it wasn't until the end of April, beginning of May, that we actually got our potatoes planted. We're very fortunate having a small area of potatoes. We can pick our window. Some of the bigger growers have no choice but to get the potatoes in the ground. They can't extend that window any further."

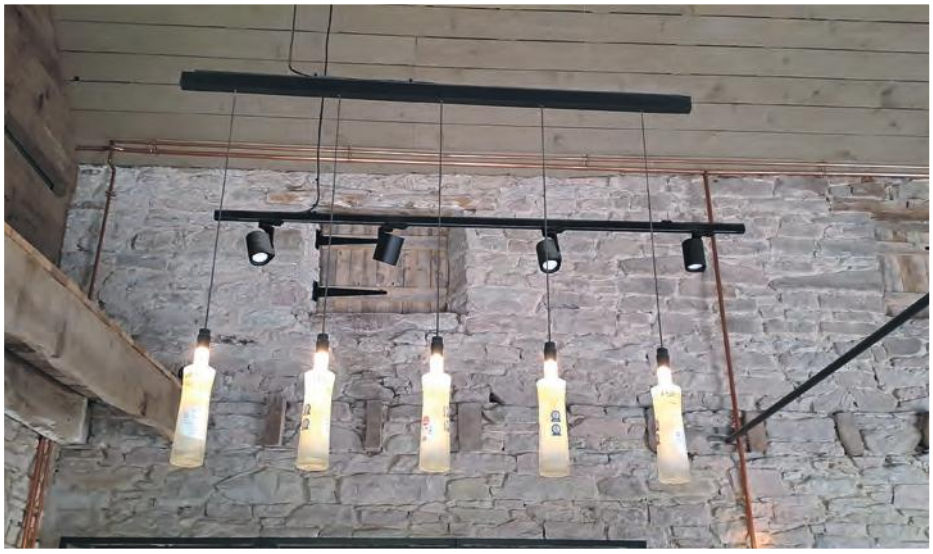
As the soils were so dry at planting this year, he irrigated early rather than the usual early June application.

"We were a bit nervous of emergence. Typically, we wouldn't irrigate until sugar initiation," he said.

Irrigation is done via two reels and two pumps. The farm doesn't currently have a borehole although this option was previously investigated.

Andrew Stirling and daughter Jessica gave us a full tour of their production facility at Upper Dysart and explained how their family growing business has evolved.

Hatton of Ogilvy Farm launched the vodka in 2015 and three years later opened the farm to visitors in response to demand for tours. Our tour incorporated the farm and distillery.



"The reason we haven't put a borehole in, is the rock configuration here. It's just completely wrong. You go down to the Strathmore Valley. It's a lot more challenging," he said.

Everything is handled in-house, without contractors, and this year Graeme actively walked the seed fields himself as virus has been 'a bit of an issue' and he wanted to ensure it was kept at bay.

There is a 500 ton cold store and 1200 ton ambient store on the farm. The aim is to get potatoes from the ambient store out to cooperatives as quickly as possible.

Graeme is a keen advocate of the Cultra variety, which has proved its hardiness under some challenging conditions.

"We haven't had major issues with Cultra. I think Cultra lends itself to some of our soil types whereas I'm a bit nervous of putting Maris Piper into some of our heavier soils."

Cultra particularly proved its worth in 2023 when Storm Babet caused significant flooding and infrastructure damage to Scottish farms.

"I had a field there that was heart-wrenching. It was underwater, and I thought to myself 'Am I going to get this out?' I don't think anybody ever experienced the volume of rain that we had," said Graeme. "We had Cultra in there. It did the test of time. It came out and it didn't rot. It got sold at the end of the day - maybe not to the quality of the quantity I would have hoped, but we chose to put it in there, and it worked.

"We're very conscious of where we put the three varieties. Elland is growing on the field that's non irrigatable. It seems to lend itself to not needing much irrigation."

Pests and vertical farming insights

After leaving Hatton of Ogilvy and calling in at Glamis Castle for a light lunch and bit of sight-seeing, we travelled to the James Hutton Institute in Dundee, where Agri-Tech Business Development Manager Jamie Smith shared some of the institute's history with us and Plant Nematologist John Jones outlined the current research activity on PCN.

Business Development Manager Ramin Ebrahimnejad then gave us an introduction to the institute's Advanced Plant Growth Centre (APGC) and National Alternative Protein Innovation Centre (NAPIC) before we got a first-hand look at the vertical farm growth towers, provided by IPG, and crop storage solutions.

The visit concluded with a talk by Senior Plant Pathologist Dr David Cooke about ongoing work by the Fight Against Blight initiative.

See the November issue of *British Potato Review* for a more in-depth look at some of the insights shared by Scottish Agronomy, the Scottish Potato Co-operative (SPC) and James Hutton Institute (JHI) professionals during the Perfecting Potatoes Together tour.

New store management handbook launch at show

BRITISH Potato Review has teamed up with storage specialist Adrian Cunnington to produce a storage handbook that will be launched at the British Potato Industry Event at Harrogate in November.

The handbook will feature practical advice and up-to-date information on all areas of potato storage, from post-harvest handling, through to disease monitoring, cooling advice, health and safety and more. It will be broken down into comprehensive sections and will also provide details on energy usage, building maintenance, products for different applications and compliancy.

While acting as a user manual for all those involved in store management and monitoring, the guide will also feature details about building products and advice for those looking at creating their own storage solutions on-farm.

A digital version of the handbook will be available to download from both the *British Potato Review* and Potato Storage Insight websites from the end of the year, while printed handbooks can be bought from Warners Group Publications and delivered upon request from the end of the year. For further details, or to reserve a copy, please contact Editor Stephanie Cornwall at **stephanie.cornwall@warnersgroup.co.uk**.

The handbook will be updated every two years, to reflect changing practices, new innovations and updated legislation. If you are interested in advertising your products or services within the handbook, please contact Victoria Liddington at **Victoria.liddington@warnersgroup.co.uk**.

Special show giveaway

We have a limited number of the handbooks to give away at the British Potato Industry Event. These will be given away on a 'first come, first served' basis to those visiting the British Potato Review and Potato Storage Insight exhibition stands.

One-stop manager for all cooling cells

MANY storage managers with multiple cooling cells cannot cool all the cooling cells at the same time during hot weather owing to the lack of cooling capacit and Dutch company Mooij Agro is aiming to address this with a smart system that communicates between cooling cells and units, automatically controlling the temperature for each.

The Smart Cooling Manager is integrated into the Croptimiz-r® storage system and works with cooling units and refrigerators of all brands, meaning growers and store managers do not need to operate the screen of the cooling unit. Each cell's temperature can be monitored and controlled on one display.

The system can gauge the exact temperature per cell and the best storage temperature for the stored potatoes and continuously coordinates this to regulate the ideal temperature and corresponding cooling capacity. In the event of malfunctions and problems, store managers and growers can act immediately.

Golden anniversary for company

MARTIN Lishman Ltd, a provider of storage and quality control solutions, is celebrating its 50th anniversary. Over the decades, Martin Lishman's research and close collaboration with customers have driven continuous advancements in agri-tech such as temperature monitoring systems.

In search of the sweet spot for store efficiency

In this month's seasonal focus, **Andrew Goodinson** discusses how recent storage innovations can provide useful tools for growers, from the field to a QR code when the crop is marketed.

Andrew Goodinson, Agronomist and Potato specialist at Hutchinsons, offers advice and insights to help growers ensure the best results from their potato crops. Based in Herefordshire, Andrew has been working for Hutchinsons for 18 years and looks after 8000 ha of farmland, including farms in the Welsh borders, south Shropshire and Worcester. Most of the potato crops he looks after are destined for the crisping or processing markets.

WHEN it comes to storage, attention to detail is crucial to prevent unwanted crop deterioration and subsequent losses and flexibility of when to move the crop.

"Although most processors are good at moving potatoes if there is a storage problem, this a last resort and to be avoided if possible," said Andrew. "When you think about the amount of time and effort put into creating the best strategies for growing a crop, storage is often something of a poor relation, and many growers are still having to manage with old-fashioned stores."

Whatever the storage regime, he says there are key issues to consider: Packing potatoes need to be stored below 4C to slow disease development and prolong dormancy, whereas processing potatoes need temperatures above 7C to prevent sugar levels developing.

However, this increases the need for sprout suppression. At more ambient temperatures, the tubers continue to respire and age more quickly, losing turgidity.

"Now is also a good time to check that the stores are in good order, and fans and ventilation systems are working properly," said Andrew. "A good place to start is an audit to identify any air leakage resulting in temperature changes, uneven airflow and impact on the efficacy of sprout control. So it is always a good idea to have tests done on stores whilst they are empty and there is still time to make any necessary repairs before the crop is harvested.

"At the same time, it is a good idea to use sensors to check for any light ingress, too."

He also reminds growers that stores should be cleaned, and fans and chiller units serviced and results recorded.

"Contaminated dust and debris is a major source of infection for many diseases, including black dot, dry rot, gangrene and silver scurf.

"Dust removal reduces the chances of crop infection, improves the working environment and demonstrates a holistic approach to store management. Vacuum, rather than sweep, to remove dirt and dust from all horizontal surfaces and follow this with a power hose." ➜

"It is always a good idea to have tests done on stores whilst they are empty and there is still time to make any necessary repairs before the crop is harvested."

Boxes and equipment

If boxes are used for storing potatoes, he recommends using a power hose to remove residues and disease or otherwise leaving them exposed to outside (UV) light.

Harvesters and grading equipment should also be cleaned with a power hose and ideally treated with a disinfectant, particularly if infection was found last season.

He reminds growers that tubers are still respiring in the store, and respiration rates can increase when temperatures are warmer, resulting tubers losing weight. As a result, storage temperature, humidity and airflow need more carefully monitoring than grain or hay stores.

Inverters which adjust fans and 'tune' ventilation to the needs of the store at a particular time are crucial, he adds, noting that box stores are particularly challenging when it comes to ventilation.

"There is a need to ensure optimum airflow and access for crop inspection with the use of air passages between the boxes. Moreover, many stores are still fitted with passive rather than positive ventilation."

Andrew recommends those considering investing in new storage facilities to consult with industry experts, taking into account some of the newer technologies which have emerged.

"Technology is now available to monitor stores, and this can provide the information that we can act on."

For example, carbon dioxide monitors can link to artificial intelligence programmes and connect to the fans, adjusting speed and direction where necessary. Other programmes use hybrid ventilators to assess air pressure throughout the store and create dynamic ventilation according to the need at the time.

"These technologies can really help with drying, curing and ensuring the stored crop remains at the best possible quality for the longest possible time. Subtle changes, thanks to technology, can have a big impact on the quality of the tubers over the storage period.

"Humidity needs to be between 92- 97%, and if stores go below that, tubers can lose turgidity and therefore weight and quality. Moreover, if the store temperature is higher than the temperature of the structure, it can lead to condensation, and excess moisture resulting in crop breakdown."

Rot progression

Rots are one of the biggest causes of crop loss from storage, he said, noting that the ease and speed of which they can move from one potato to another can make control quite challenging.

"Once disease such as soft rot has become established, it can progress very rapidly and, if uncontrolled, can cause significant loss of quality and subsequent rejection of loads.

Usually the first signs of rot are detected by the store manager's nose, says Andrew, adding that a system, which is sufficiently sensitive to detect these odours well below the human level, may provide more opportunities for action to be taken sooner.

These instruments could be deployed anywhere in store to identify the location of the problem, allowing the store manager to alter ventilation, change the environment or even decide to move the crop.

Practical matters such as store size and design remain key too, he adds.

"We often find stores can be too big for today's operations, so if, for example, you supply a number of different customers or markets, the option of having bays separated is very useful.

"Separate bays can also allow you to manage and vary airflow according to the needs of each bay at a particular time. Another potential benefit is that potatoes lifted in difficult conditions can be kept separate from those that may need different management."

Air divider curtains can help improve temperature uniformity in overhead throw (OHT) stores, but these may need further fine-tuning to achieve uniformity under the particular conditions of individual stores.

"Plenum chambers are a realistic alternative to a curtain upgrade. These range from an open-fronted design with a 'shelf' to prevent short-circuits through to more sophisticated options with multiple fans and laser-cut plenum walls.

"Maximising the value of the potato crop through storage and preserving the key characteristics such as quality and dry matter is key for growers."

As the sector is under pressure to reduce its carbon footprint, which for storage can be as high as 38% of the total footprint of the total, optimising store performance is key, Andrew stressed.

Using technology to refine systems and maximise returns

NEW digital farming systems now available to growers are capable of providing a picture of the life cycle of the potato from the field at planting all the way to market, Andrew has highlighted.

"With more consumers becoming interested in how their food is produced, and the need for ever more justification being demanded around the use of fertilisers and crop protection, these tools are a great help when it comes to complete traceability of all the stages of the crop," he said.

Growers considering investing in new technology should think about the features they want and will use, plus the technology must be easy to use as well as linking in with existing farm equipment.

He explains that technology such as Hutchinsons' Omnia use information from GPS, sensors, drones and Terramap, and photographs of drainage maps can be scanned and uploaded alongside data from many other external sources. Information is stored in one place and can be accessed from a smart phone.

Such technology allows fields to be divided into sub-levels with recordings assigned to each block according to user needs, Andrew said.

"This permits both the grower and agronomist to devise, review and track fertiliser plans, planting schedules, and spray programmes. The system can also build yield maps, undertake cost analysis which helps refine operations and ultimately enhance the bottom line."

"Growers can easily record sprays and pesticide applications by crop, field or variety, which is particularly important for potato growers as it helps them achieve the end-to-end traceability which is increasingly demanded by their customers. Moreover, the data can be interrogated for bespoke audit checks."

In addition, the latest status of crop protection products can be obtained through such technology that is linked to a pesticide database, Andrew said, while satellite imagery provides accurate normalised difference vegetation index (NDVI) maps, which can be used to help optimise nitrogen uptake and efficiency.

"The system works in real time and once field operations have been completed, this information immediately becomes available to the grower, creating a diary and a history of the crop," he said.

Those in the field can also upload photos, which is useful for visually assessing crop growth stage and the result of yield digs remotely, creating a pictorial history. This could be showing ladybirds eating aphids in the crop, or to help identify disease outbreaks, such as distinguishing between late blight and Alternaria, for example.

Many growers in the field can use such technology to record harvesting data and later assess operation costs and carbon footprint. For growers with more than one customer, they can send the data of the particular fields of interest, rather than having to share information about the whole-farm, he added. BPR

Upgraded analysis service

OMEX's upgraded SAP analysis service allows growers to make more accurate and better-informed decisions about the level of crop nutrients available in a crop, and what is then required to ensure the best performance of that crop is achieved.

Maintaining a 72-hour service from the time the samples reach OMEX laboratories through to the customer receiving the SAP results, the company has also increased the number of parameters it can test to more than 20 and includes parameters such as NO3 (Nitrate), NH4 (Ammonium), P, K, Mg, S, Ca, Na, Cl, Mn, B, Cu, Fe, Zn, Mo, Si, pH, EC (electrical conductivity) and Brix (content of sugars).

National Agronomy Manager Scott Baker said: "Its accuracy is far superior to conventional tissue testing because it measures what has actually been taken up by a plant, and can thus help diagnose rooting problems and availability issues."

Scott said routinely monitoring crops is vital to understand how a crop is performing nutritionally, and analysing the sap helps guide agronomic decisions on foliar nutrition options.

Collaborations look promising, says fertiliser producer

CAPTURING on-farm data is key to the collaborations between major food brands and growers aiming to meet 2030 carbon reduction targets, and early results look promising, a fertiliser producer has claimed.

PepsiCo and Branston are amongst those who have been collaborating with their growers to identify ways to reduce emissions within their own supply chains, assessing their own costs, energy use and the crops themselves.

For the potato growers, that means capturing and analysing a growing amount of on-farm data, according to Gareth Flockhart, Yara UK's Value Chain Partnership Account Manager. Digital tools like Yara's AtFarm and N-Tester, as well as soil and leaf analysis can help to optimise crop nutrition, improve nitrogen use efficiency, and lower the carbon footprint of production, all while maintaining or even improving yields, he said.

Yara also provides support through low-carbon fertilisers such as its Climate Choice range and is to scale up production of its 'blue nitrogen' products by 2026.

"In all the early initiatives I've been involved with, it's the food companies, along with the supplier in some cases, that have taken on the initial cost," said Gareth, adding that contracts with companies like PepsiCo and Branston are showing promising results. After the first year of Yara's UK partnership with PepsiCo, farmers involved in the programme saw an impressive 52% reduction in carbon footprint compared to previous years where they followed their standard practices.

"With the results we've seen in year one, going forward onto year two with greater hectares and with new products coming on board, I think it's starting to gather a bit of momentum. Hopefully we can keep that momentum going," he said.

Controlled-release fertilisers benefit German growers

GERMAN potato growers are benefiting from a collaboration between global specialty minerals and chemicals company, ICL, and German fertiliser supplier Landhandel Peters which is allowing controlled-release fertilisers to be produced at a new plant.

The new plant enables Landhandel Peters to produce crop-specific fertiliser mixtures on site, on demand for potatoes and other vegetable crops, while growers can receive customised solutions.

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 so growers need to fertilise less frequently and can reduce treatments. It also helps to protect against nutrient losses through leaching, volatilisation and denitrification.

The blendable Agromaster formulations used at the Winsen/Luhe plant contain 35-60% coated nitrogen, depending on the crop's demands and the company says its slow, steady release supports consistent crop growth even under unpredictable weather conditions.

Agrochemical and agronomy business acquired

AGROVISTA, a supplier of agronomy advice, seed, and crop protection products, has completed its acquisition of independently-owned agrochemical supply and agronomy business Zantra Holdings Ltd.

Managing Director of Zantra, Murray Mackay, said both businesses understood the importance of independent in-house trials to support product selection and advice and he believed this could be advanced by working together.

Managing Director of Agrovista UK, Chris Clayton, added: "Zantra is a business we have long admired, and we've witnessed the many years of hard work that have gone into building it into what it is today. It is a perfect fit for Agrovista, with very little overlap with our core business and geography. The agronomy teams are highly complementary."

Microbial product rebranded following improvements

AFTER three years of trials, Emerald Research Ltd (ERL) is relaunching its microbial soil improver Consortium-Plus as **Symposium**, a complementary mixture of many synergistic beneficial microbes and organic biostimulants.

The decision has been taken following significant year-on-year improvements to the original product first created in 2016. The company says the rebrand will prevent confusion with other microbial mixes with similar product names.

Managing Director of ERL, Simon Fox, said: "Following years of successful trial results in the Transformative Reduced Input Potatoes (TRIP) and other research projects, the microbial make-up of our product has constantly evolved and proven itself to be instrumental in delivering increasingly positive results. We have taken the decision to rename it **Symposium** to reflect its collective strength and that it is a fundamentally different product than it was six or even three years ago."

The full results of the TRIP trials in which **Symposium** has been an essential element, will be available on the Emerald Research and TRIP project stand at the British Potato Event on November 19th and 20th in Harrogate, along with the results from other TRIP partners.

‘Growers’ businesses are unique ... they must be allowed to profit from their endeavours’

While he was Standen’s Managing Director, Andy said he had the satisfaction of seeing the company thriving in what were sometimes quite difficult years.

Andy Bone, Chairman of Standen Engineering Ltd, remembers well the day his company moved into potato machinery production following an MBO, citing it as one of its wisest moves. Nowadays, he finds equal pleasure in tending to his award-winning Suffolk garden and reminiscing about the new products he helped bring to market during a career spanning 60-plus years.

Q: Can you tell me a little about yourself. What did you aspire to be when you were growing up?

A: I always wanted to work in the farming sector, particularly with farm machinery. I grew up on a small Hampshire dairy farm in the 1950s and was mainly interested in the machinery that we ran. I remember the day my father said I could drive the E27N Fordson Major when I could start it. I think I was 12 when I finally managed this.

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: In 1959, at the age of 18, I answered an advert placed by the Ford Motor Company seeking commercial trainees, expressing an interest in the tractor division. They would take on 12 a year. I was successful in my application and on February 7th, 1960 I began my now 65-year-long career in the agricultural engineering sector. At 19, I was showing off the mighty Doe Triple-D at various Fordson Farming Fairs.

In 1968 I joined Massey-Ferguson as an instructor at the Stoneleigh training centre, first on combines, and then on sales which was a wonderful experience. Demonstrating the new MF 1200 at various dealer launches was always a crowd-puller, as was showing the newly-introduced NF 625 combine. Up through the MF ranks I went, bringing the concept of direct drilling to fruition in 1974 with the MF 130 drill, launching the 500 tractor series in 1976, which was memorably held at the Stratfield Saye estate in Hampshire, with the Duke of Wellington serving as my right-hand man!

In 1978 I was invited to join Standen Engineering in Ely as Sales and Marketing Director. I had never seen sugar-beet close to and needed to learn quickly on the job.

In 1986 I was involved in a management buy-out of Standen from the plc that owned us, and we then pursued our move into potato machinery. Quite quickly we had bought KeyAg, Dowdeswell (Norfolk), Pearsons, and Deptford, merging their staff with our own in a lot of cases.

When I became Standen’s Managing Director I had the satisfaction of seeing the company thriving in what were sometimes quite difficult years. In 2002 I retired from full-time work, and was pleased to accept the role of chairman, so am still part of the team!

It goes without saying that none of my career success would have been possible without the total support of Jane, my wife of 62 years, who kept the home fires burning whilst I worked long hours and frequently travelled abroad.

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

A: My main inspiration and what I have found the most enjoyment in, has been helping to bring new products to market. It is especially true when these products genuinely help farmers and improve their businesses. Whether that be demonstrating the Doe Triple-D with Ford or working with ICI at Massey Ferguson to help bring direct drilling to life as a concept or at Standen when the company pivoted from focusing solely on sugar beet machinery into the broader world of potatoes and other vegetable crops.

"One of the main learnings that I can take from all of this time is the importance of listening to your customers and fulfilling their requirements."

Andy loves to spend time helping wife Jane who has run Clare Bulbs for many years and spend time in their garden, which is currently the holder of the title of the Best Garden in Suffolk (1 Acres category).

Q: What are your main goals currently?

A: At the age of 83 and with 65 years under my belt, my main goal is to continue to enjoy my (semi) retirement. I am still involved with Standen as their Chairman and I also spend my time helping to run Clare Bulbs, my wife's business of many years. When this isn't keeping me busy, I love to spend time at home with Jane and our Labradors in our garden, which is currently the holder of the title of the Best Garden in Suffolk (1 Acres category).

Q: Tell me a little about your business successes and failures and what you have learned from them.

A: One of the main successes, of which I am very proud to have played a part, is the continued success of Standen Engineering. It has been a company for 177 years and I have spent 47 years there. We were very wise to move into potatoes when we did and we are still producing high quality, British-engineered machinery from our site in Ely today and hopefully long into the future.

One of the main learnings that I can take from all of this time is the importance of listening to your customers and fulfilling their requirements. I love being on farm, listening to farmers and understanding their challenges. From that we can build and develop machinery to help them.

Q: What challenges is the industry facing at the moment and what more could be done to meet and overcome these?

A: Red tape, in its many forms, be that the constantly-changing government policy with respect to agriculture, the legislative burden on businesses in terms of employing people and the punitive capital gains and inheritance tax rules which have the ability to sink a business in one fell swoop.

In terms of overcoming these problems, we need business-savvy people in government who can take a long view and who respect the value of agricultural businesses both as businesses and as custodians of the natural world. Farming businesses are unique, they are first and foremost businesses and they must be allowed to make profit from their endeavours. However, their roots run deep and they span many generations in a way other businesses don't. Occasionally I used to deal with the grand-children of some of my original customers. They have a sense of permanency and continuity that must be respected.

Q: What tips do you have for the future generation?

A: Emigrate!

More seriously, follow the lead of our grandson, who is now working on an Oxfordshire farm, learning the trade at grass-root levels. We will always need food, whatever else happens. BPR

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Helping to build a better planet...

British Potato Review is printed by our sister company Warners Printers who have some excellent eco credentials. We here at British Potato Review, like many of our readers, are concerned about the future of our planet, so we'd like to share a few facts about our printer:

- **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.**

So next time you open your copy of British Potato Review you can be sure that we are working as hard as possible to minimise any environmental impact.

Show's a-go and decision day is nigh!

Registration is now live and judging day approaching as the date for the British Potato Industry Event and Awards draws nearer.

REGISTRATION is now live for the British Potato Industry Event which takes place at Yorkshire Event Centre, Harrogate, on November 19th and 20th.

Growers, packers, processors, agronomists, researchers and retailers can register for a free ticket to the event, which showcases latest innovations, technical insight, and networking opportunities.

Thousands of decision-makers are expected to attend.

This year's seminar programme addresses the most pressing challenges and future opportunities across the sector, including:

- Managing the threat from a changing late blight landscape, presented by Prof Ian Toth, Dr David Cooke, Dan Milbourne and Andy Cunningham
- Securing the potato's place on the plate, presented by James Young, Prof David Hughes and Cedric Porter
- Future changes to UK's Supply of Seed Potatoes, presented by Richard Baker, Phil McCaul and Mike Wilson
- Transformative Reduced Input Potatoes, presented by Simon Fox and Dr Katherine Steele
- Maris Piper has had its day, or has it?, presented by Alex Godfrey, Katy Pook and Gordon Stark

Each seminar has been designed to offer practical takeaways, expert-led discussion, and points for BASIS and NRoSO members.

GB Potatoes is knowledge exchange partner for this year's event.

The expansive indoor and outdoor exhibition areas will feature:

- State-of-the-art machinery and processing technology
- Handling, grading, packaging, and agronomy services
- Expert product demonstrations and technical launches
- More than 150 leading suppliers representing every part of the supply chain
- Networking opportunities with industry leaders from across the UK and Europe

All registered visitors will receive the official show directory in digital form in October, a full seminar schedule, event map, and access to exhibitor offers and networking tools

This year's event sponsors are: Gold Level - Agrimech and Grimme; silver level - McCain, Haith, Bobcat, Tong, FMC; bronze level - BASF, UPL. Registration sponsor is Luonnosta and media partners are British Potato Review and Potato Pro.

Sponsors explain why they support awards

Judging for the British Potato Industry Awards, which takes place on the first night of the show, is due to take place this month.

This year's judging panel, which will be chaired by Warners Publisher Juliet Loiselle, includes Adrian Cunnington (storage expert), Stephanie Cornwall (British Potato Review Editor), Alex Godfrey (grower and GB Potato Chairman), Mark Taylor (fresh potato and supply chain specialist, Antonia Walker (agronomist/technical specialist) and David Nelson (agronomy director – fresh potatoes).

The panel is due to meet on October 9th to look at the entries and decide on the final shortlist, which will be announced on the British Potato Review website and social media platforms shortly after.

The 2025 British Potato Industry Awards have been given a completely new look and entry criteria, and with this in mind, the newly-announced judging panel incorporates people from all sectors of the British potato supply chain, with varying skill sets. There will be different judging combinations for each category to ensure a fair and informed choice of winners.

Awards entries have been submitted from all sectors operating in, or supplying to, the British potato industry, and organisers say it's going to be a difficult decision for the judges to make the final call, but that everyone who's submitted an entry deserves credit for their personal achievement.

Potato field machinery manufacturer GRIMME and Rovensanext, a company providing plant nutrition products for potatoes and other crops, are sponsors of the awards. ➜





British Potato Review Editor Stephanie Cornwall, a co-organiser of the awards, said: "We'd like to thank our sponsors, GRIMME and Rovensanext, who have given their support to the British Potato Industry Awards. Their support is invaluable.

"GRIMME has been a long-term supporter of the awards, and a keen collaborator on forward-thinking potato practices, while it's great to welcome Rovensanext on board. Rovensanext develops, manufactures and distributes its products in more than 70 countries and it's wonderful that they're showing their support for our British potato industry in this way."

Bruce Morton, Country Manager of RovensaNext, owner of the Rovensanext brand, said: "Rovensanext's professional and personalised technical advice is based on the close relationship of trust we have with our clients. In the same way, a British Potato Industry award can garner trust and confidence in the award holder. We were therefore delighted to join the awards scheme as a sponsor and are very much looking forward to the presentation evening."

Adam Johnson, Global Marketing Manager for GRIMME UK, who recently took part in a team effort to scale the Three Peaks, added: "GRIMME is a firm believer in any industry collaboration or support service that can help those operating in the British potato industry, whether that's through new products, practices or more personal support such as that provided by RABI. The British Potato Industry Awards are all about bringing the industry together, supporting each other, and rewarding those who've stood out, so it's an honour to come on board as a sponsor."

Booking for the awards event is still open but places are now limited so any companies wishing to make late bookings will need to check availability with Victoria Liddington by emailing her at **victoria.liddington@warnersgroup.co.uk**.

'Award win was testament to our commitment to excellence'

ONE of last year's winners recently caught up with the *British Potato Review* team during a trip to Dundee, where his business is based.

Mark Mander is a director at Tayfusion Digital, a bespoke data systems company which won a 2023 *British Potato Industry Award* for its DIG product.

DIG (Data Intelligence for Growers), is a data management platform. The award recognised DIG's innovative approach to improving seed and ware potato production, storage, and sales management for growers and merchants across the UK through digital transformation.

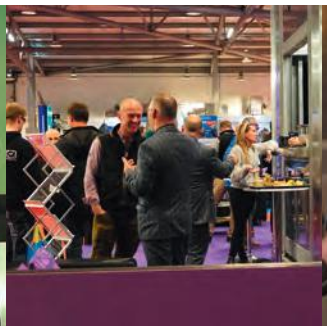
A platform for managing the entire life cycle of seed and ware potatoes, DIG provides tools for seed stock control, sales, purchasing, forecasting, test digging, and store management. It offers detailed field and store planning, allowing users to monitor crop performance and manage inventory.

"We were incredibly proud to win the 2023 Potato Industry Awards Best Innovation Award," said Mark. "We've helped numerous large potato merchants achieve unprecedented levels of efficiency and profitability, and our award-winning status is a testament to our commitment to excellence."

Mark and the rest of the Tayfusion team will be back in Harrogate this year and he's looking forward to welcoming new and existing customers to his stand at BP2025.

"We think the awards is a great way to celebrate your achievements and would urge everyone to submit an entry next year if they're proud of something they've done – whether that's a new business development, a team initiative or their environmental credentials. It cost nothing to enter, but you can be sure that all your customers will be impressed if you make it to the shortlist!" Mark added.





Busy comedy circuit in lead-up to Harrogate

THOSE living or working in the Greater Manchester region have a chance to see this year's awards night host, comedian Jamie Sutherland, in action later this month when he headlines at a new 10-day comedy festival in Rochdale.

The new 10-day comedy festival will be held across 12 venues, with Jamie performing what the organisers are describing as 'high energy hilarity' at the Masonic Ballroom. The set is entitled 'Laughs At The Lodge'.

Hailing from Liverpool, Jamie is a headline act on the comedy circuit, working for some of the country's finest clubs and being the corporate hospitality MC at Everton FC for all home games. He has supported some of the biggest names in comedy and gained a reputation as one of the rising stars of comedy with sell-out crowds. Jamie has also taken his show into Europe and as far as Sydney, Australia.

Organisers of the British Potato Industry Awards are looking forward to welcoming him on stage to announce each of the 10 awards.

"We've seen some of Jamie's sketches and he's had us in fits of laughter," said Publisher and Chairman of the judging panel, Juliet Loiselle. "We think he'll be a great fit for the awards event and are looking forward to watching his set."

Jamie will also be teaming up with footballer turned TV personality, Neil Ruddock, at Buxton next month for a fund-raising event at Blythe House Hospice. BPR

More on spores and forthcoming armoury

Current innovations and insights explored during BASF's Perfecting Potatoes Together webinar, with some timely warnings and announcements of forthcoming products pipeline.

BASF's recent Perfecting Potatoes Together webinar, in partnership with the James Hutton Institute and GB Potatoes, gave an insight into some of the innovation and collaboration that will enable growers to optimise the crop's agronomy and safeguard chemistry and genetics going forward.

During the one-hour session, which welcomed growers from all across the UK, the expert panel discussed some of the challenges the industry faces from new blight resistance, the innovations available now and in the future, and the ongoing investment in research and development for the potato sector.

Senior Plant Pathologist at the James Hutton Institute, Dr David Cooke, co-ordinates both the Fight Against Blight initiative and data collection and analysis of the Euroblight population, which gives British growers a 'heads up' on the traits and clones of the pathogens emerging in continental Europe.

He said: "There are different clones of the potato blight pathogen and over time these change, so the blight that you are fighting in the field changes. This makes knowledge on the evolving populations very important.

"Scouts sign up to monitor fields and collect samples, which we then DNA fingerprint to enable us to identify the pathogen causing blight in that field. We use the Fight Against Blight website to alert growers as to when and which blight is active in the area.

"If blight of any strain gets out of control in the crop, then it has the potential to mutate and either overrun host resistance or become resistant to a fungicide. 1.5 billion spores are produced per week from 1% disease cover. Every one of those spores that has been exposed to a fungicide potentially has a mutation that is going to cause problems to you downstream. That's what we are seeing in the burst of new clones with new problems because of the exposure to products so it is really about following the principles of resistance management. No repetitive or solo use of products, mix actives with partners which have alternative modes of action, avoid eradicant applications and apply close to or at manufacturers' recommended dose."

Last year was a challenging season for many, with fungicide programmes more intense but effective. Privest® (Initium® + potassium phosphonates), BASF's new systemic late blight fungicide, with no resistance issues, was one tool that helped growers to build effective, sustainable programmes in a difficult season last year.

David said: "There are a lot of fungicides available, which is the good news, and a reasonable amount of them are effective against blight. However, some have been affected. We have resistance, and that is the bad news."

Where mandipropamid is concerned, there is resistance in EU43 clonal population but EU43 has not yet been sampled in the UK. Resistance concerns continue in mainland Europe, said David.

Oxathiapiprolin resistance was reported by Corteva in mainland Europe in 2023 and 2024.

"Emergence of EU46 is a concern in the UK. In 2024 it expanded to Wales and Scotland. It has probably come to the UK by airborne spread. Early season sampling is going to be important to understand exactly what we are dealing with in 2025," said David.

Keeping Fluazinam in the armoury had been good news for potato growers and this had been made possible by "being aware and changing its use" David said.

Metalaxyl has good potential, he added. "It is a good product. It is systemic but careful use and monitoring are needed for EU13 and other lineages such as EU43 and EU41, which increased in frequency in 2024 in the UK.

"As we are aware of problems with some products that then focusses more pressure onto the other categories so this is why it is important to be careful about the way you use the products in the future."

Cultivar resistance is needed to complement fungicides, he went on to add.

"Watch out for EU47 and others. Host resistance and fungicides need to work together to support each other to combat blight."

Collaborations and future innovations

BASF Business Development Manager for Potatoes, Paul Goddard, said: "It's been four years since we launched Perfecting Potatoes Together and we are continuing to collaborate with industry experts to support profitable and sustainable potato growing in the UK. In terms of innovation, we have the strongest pipeline within potatoes in the industry, with three recently introduced products and five more coming to market, subject to approvals.

Last year was Privest®'s first season on the market and Paul said it had already proved itself to be an invaluable tool in the fight against late blight.

"Privest is the only true systemic product with activity against all late blight genotypes. It has no resistance issues. Its proven very strong efficacy helps to build a sustainable programme for the current crop in the field and future crops.

"The chemistry in Privest is unique and does not clash with any of the other chemistry out there. This enables growers to simplify their programmes, as it is an ideal partner to alternate with modes of action such as CAAs and QiIs within the programme.

"Both actives in Privest have multiple modes of action, protecting each other and enhancing overall effectiveness as well as lowering the resistance risk. Privest's formulation is key, enabling the actives to get to where they need to be on and in the plant and delivering effective disease control. The formulation also delivers a proven synergy between the actives, where one plus one equals more than two.

"Privest works with the plant as it grows, giving systemically-acquired resistance. Applying it early, at rapid canopy development, gives the best protection of new growth and with up to three applications to a crop, ideally at 7-day intervals, it is an ideal partner going through to stable canopy.

Other recently-introduced products in the BASF pipeline include the new tuber treatment Potato Honesty® Pack and Belanty® (Revysol®)

Paul said Honeysty Pack has the strongest label of any tuber treatment that can be used on all potatoes and is available in partner packs with an application enhancer.

He added that Belanty is a strong option when it comes to Alternaria.

Paul announced a future pipeline of products from BASF, that are subject to approval, which include:

- "A new late blight fungicide, also bringing the non-clashing characteristics we have seen with Privest.
- "A new herbicide with both root and shoot uptake which will be particularly useful in dry conditions.
- "Axalion – new benchmark with regards to managing sucking and piercing pests in potatoes and other crops.
- "Adjuvanted formulation of Laser (cycloxydim)
- "Biological for the management of wireworm."

GB Potatoes

Also joining the webinar was Chair of GB Potatoes Alex Godfrey.

Alex said: "With membership open to all in the potato industry we aim to facilitate collaboration which will help us to tackle the challenges facing the potato industry. In partnership with CUPGRA we established the GB PCN forum which brings together experts to discuss how we manage PCN across the industry creating a strategy. We also chair and administer the National Virus forum."

In order to get the residual AHDB levy monies, GB Potatoes had to spend it specifically on projects.

Alex said GBP is currently involved in the following projects:

1. Potato blight – GB potatoes sponsor Fight Against Blight, to ensure a secure future which in turn takes some of the pressure off other sponsors.
2. Aphid monitoring.
3. Management tools to combat viruses.
4. Reputational management of the industry.
5. Bridging information gaps.
6. CIPC residue monitoring.
7. Update RB209 for potatoes.

New podcast series

The webinar was the first in a suite of activities, relaunching the BASF Perfecting Potatoes Together campaign for 2025.

Later this year, a six-part podcast series will showcase some of the innovations and trials happening on farm, recorded live from the field and in partnership with *British Potato Review* Editor Stephanie Cornwall will co-host the episodes with Rebecca Dawes of Jane Craigie Marketing, building up to the British Potato Event in Harrogate (November 19th -20th), where BASF will exhibit some of its innovations. To find out more or follow the podcast series, search for Perfecting Potatoes Together on your preferred podcast platform. BPR

Traditionally, efforts to detect blight in crops have relied on manual inspection.

"The system we intend to develop will be able to detect early signs of disease before they can be seen with the human eye."

Dr Aiswarya Girija, Aberystwyth University

Early warning system under development

Scientists are seeking to develop an app that could do away with the need to search for blight in fields.

BLIGHT detection and prevention could soon be made easier thanks to a new app being developed by Welsh scientists.

The DeepDetect project, which is being conducted by a research team at Aberystwyth University, aims to develop a mobile phone app that uses artificial intelligence to provide early warnings of diseases in potatoes, caused by pathogens such as fungi, bacteria, viruses and nematodes.

Late potato blight, caused by Phytophthora infestans, can wipe out entire field crops, leading to huge costs and food shortages, and is responsible for 20% of potato crop losses and £3.5 billion in economic losses worldwide.

Traditionally, efforts to detect diseases in crops have relied on manual inspection of the crops which can be time-consuming, expensive, and often subjective but it is hoped that DeepDetect will be able to change that by harnessing the power of machine learning to provide accurate diagnosis directly to growers' smartphones.

Dr Aiswarya Girija from the Institute of Biological, Environmental and Rural Sciences at Aberystwyth University said:

"In addition to threatening the stability of food supplies, potato blight increases production costs and our dependence on fungicides that are harmful to the environment. The system we intend to develop will be able to detect early signs of disease before they can be seen with the human eye, which will enable timely and targeted interventions."

Lecturer in Computer Science at Aberystwyth University, Dr Edore Akpokodje, said the aim was to give growers a resource that is not only scientifically sound but also practical and easy to use, providing disease forecasts in their specific areas, straight to their phones.

"By integrating farmers' feedback from the outset, we will ensure that this technology is based on real-world needs and challenges," he said.

In Wales, more than 17,000 hectares are devoted to potato farming and the university is undertaking the project with a view to helping to reduce the environmental and financial burden of the widespread use of preventive spraying, which currently costs Welsh growers up to £5.27 million each year.

Edore said: "Answering the challenge of detecting diseases in potato plants early would boost productivity and reduce costs for farmers, while complementing more sustainable and targeted approaches to disease control. By reducing our dependence on pesticides, this will benefit the environment and the long-term resilience of the potato industry. The technology also has the potential to be used more widely with other crops." BPR

Dr Aiswarya Girija.

Dr Edore Akpokodje.

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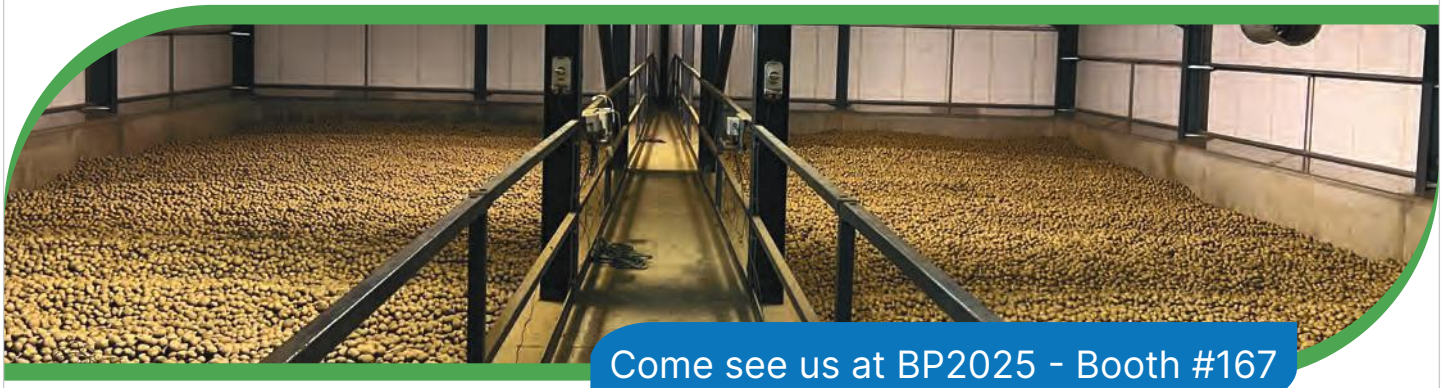

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Elicitors to help battle aggressive late blight

Recent shifts in late blight behaviour have left growers contending with more aggressive, fungicide-resistant genotypes and we find out how stimulating the potato plant's own defences can help fight these.

ELICITORS that activate a potato plant's defence system against late blight have been shown to slow disease progression, eroding the advantage dominant European genotypes have over management programmes.

It's hoped that this effect can play a vital role, alongside cultural and other chemical options, in sustainable control plans as populations and fungicide availability evolve.

How the potato industry will confront the late blight challenges across Europe was a big topic of discussion at Certis Belchim's Field Trials Day near Londerzeel in Belgium this summer.

The 2025 event welcomed around 2,254 visitors from 26 countries who were shown around the firm's 11ha experimental farm, where 87 separate trials showcased a range of solutions.

Certis Belchim's Global Crop Manager for potatoes and sugar beet, Ed Bingham, told UK visitors that the company's extensive work on late blight was taking on ever increasing importance.

CropLife Europe, the organisation that represents the crop protection sector across the continent, declared a late blight emergency in 2024 owing to the loss of fungicide active substances and the rise of insensitive strains.

The most problematic genotypes are EU_43 and EU_46, which are resistant to one or more actives and have spread throughout Europe, while EU_36 is another concern. Although the majority of EU_36 isolates are still sensitive to current fungicides, some isolates tested in Europe have shown insensitivity to oxathiapiprolin.

"We've also lost multisite mancozeb from the European market and fluazinam is under threat within the EU too, which is unfortunate, as it was helping to balance programmes following mancozeb's withdrawal," said Ed.

Aggressiveness monitoring

Lawrence Veryser, a laboratory trialist at Certis Belchim, gave an insight into how problematic the current Phytophthora infestans genotypes are from his extensive testing, including aggressiveness monitoring.

It involves infecting a susceptible potato leaf with spores, then measuring how quickly a lesion appears, how fast it expands on the leaf, then how many spores each lesion produces.

Lawrence explained EU_43 (the genotype resistant to CAA-inhibitor fungicides like mandipropamid) and EU_36 (some of this genotype are resistant to oxathiapiprolin) are the most aggressive.

Euroblight monitoring has shown that about 40% of isolates in Belgium are now the EU_36 genotype and it's becoming more dominant in other European countries, while EU_43 has also spread rapidly from its origin in Denmark and is now endemic in most European potato producing regions.

"This makes resistance management one of the most pressing issues facing the potato industry, because we don't want to completely lose efficacy of oxathiapiprolin, or any fungicide. They are all useful tools in the box," said Lawrence.

He stressed that the best way of managing resistance is mixing and alternating different modes of action and there is also the potential to exploit weaknesses in resistant strains.

For example, EU_43 is hypersensitive to fluazinam and because it is a widely used active substance across the European potato area, it has helped prevent the genotype becoming more dominant.

He explains that the move away from blocking – previously a common practice in the Netherlands where the same product is used in three or more consecutive treatments – has also helped, as evidenced in Euroblight data.

"By diversifying treatments, spraying on time, and using full doses, we have managed to reduce EU_43 dominance already, showing how important these principles are."

Elicitor potential

Along with responsible use of existing chemistry, another area showing real potential to help control blight is plant elicitors. Lawrence has been studying late blight for many years and more recently in his role at Certis Belchim, he's been investigating how elicitors might help control the disease.

Elicitors, which essentially activate the plant's own defence system, are grouped into three different categories.

The first are biotic elicitors, derived from biological sources such as microbial organisms (bacteria, fungi, or viruses). These work by mimicking the presence of a pathogen, thereby triggering the plant to defend itself against potential infection.

Second are abiotic elicitors, non-biological substances or environmental factors such as heavy metals, UV radiation, or chemical compounds. Abiotic elicitors can induce stress responses in plants, enhancing their resistance to environmental stressors and potential pathogen attacks.

Lastly, endogenous elicitors are plant-derived compounds such as cell wall fragments or signalling molecules like jasmonic acid and salicylic acid. Released during cell damage or stress they act from within the plant to activate and amplify response, leading to production of defence proteins and other protective compounds.

Each type of elicitor activates specific signalling pathways that result in the expression of genes responsible for producing protective compounds, strengthening cell walls, and other defence-related activities, enhancing the plant's ability to resist stress and pathogens like Phytophthora infestans.

Defensive genes

Lawrence explained that it's possible to measure whether certain defensive genes are overexpressed when a potato plant is treated with a potential elicitor.

Ed Bingham says he's very confident about the strengths of a new product during the rapid canopy phase.

Lawrence Veryser said it's possible to measure whether certain defensive genes are overexpressed when a potato plant is treated with a potential elicitor.

He coordinated the testing of a range of compounds for elicitor effects, including Certis Belchim's CAA-inhibitor fungicide active substance valifenalate.

It was discovered that valifenalate is also a plant elicitor, from the abiotic elicitor category, that creates a long-lasting boost to the plant's defence system, making it much harder for the pathogen to infect cells, spread on the plant and within the crop.

"Phytophthora is trying to finish its lifecycle as quickly and efficiently as possible, with as little energy as possible. By using valifenalate, we can not only induce host resistance in the plant, but also reduce aggressiveness of the pathogen, as it must expend more trying to establish itself and survive," he said.

Valifenalate is one of two molecules in a new product which also contains cyazofamid, the active substance in Ranman Top.

The product has already been launched within the European Union as Areli and Ed is hopeful it will be in the UK next year, subject to HSE-CRD approval.

The active substances complement each other well. In combination, they are active against all current genotypes, offer good preventative activity and protect new growth. The full dose of cyazofamid also provides excellent tuber blight (zoospore) control.

Early season product

Explaining its positioning in programmes, Ed says it is an early season product.

"We are very confident about its strengths in that rapid canopy phase. You have tuber initiation starting then too, and getting a tuber blight programme going early on is beneficial. We think Ranman Top remains the choice for late season sprays during or after haulm destruction, as the importance of foliar blight control becomes less of a priority."

Ed adds this new blight fungicide shares the spreadability and rainfastness characteristics of Ranman Top, improving coverage on leaves and stems and maximising efficacy in catchy seasons.

Away from fungicides, Ed stressed that more sustainable late blight control will be aided by extending rotations and managing potato dumps and unprotected potato volunteers, which are major sources of inoculum.

Variety selection is another tool that can ease pressure and sourcing disease-free seed helps minimise the spread of resistant strains.

"Knowing what strains are present in your area is critical, so supporting initiatives like Fight Against Blight and Euroblight is extremely valuable to the industry, allowing agronomists and growers to tailor programmes to specific threats.

"We also need to be integrating biological products into programmes where we can, and we've started screening products that will help improve plant health. It's all part of the big picture to sustainably manage late blight."

Key points: Elicitors and sustainable blight control

EU_36, EU_43, and EU_46 are aggressive and problematic late blight genotypes, showing resistance to one or more active substances.

Resistance management is now crucial, with diversifying treatments and using full doses of fungicides in a timely manner key to sustainable control.

Elicitors activate the plant's defence system to combat aggressive late blight, slowing disease progression.

Certis Belchim's active substance valifenalate is also an elicitor. A new product containing valifenalate and cyazofamid has been launched by the company in Europe and is expected to be in the UK soon.

Extending crop rotations, managing volunteers and potato dumps, variety selection and monitoring genotypes remain crucial components of an integrated strategy. BPR

Slug pressure increases

As the slimy intruders make their presence felt in fields this season, we look at some of the conditions which have favoured their return and get some tips on how to handle them.

POTATO growers across the UK have been facing intense and persistent slug pressure over recent years, and although lower numbers were predicted for 2025, the reality on the ground has been very different.

The Royal Horticultural Society (RHS) had predicted lower slug numbers this year owing to an increase in natural predators, but a lack of significant frost in winter, rising temperatures and showery conditions have created perfect conditions for slugs.

In addition, although spring was amongst the driest ever seen in the UK, this, along with a summer without a period of sustained, intense heat, did little to lower slug numbers.

The ongoing slug pressures throughout 2025 pose a particular risk for potato growers aiming to protect tuber quality and maximise marketable yield.

Understanding the 2025 slug outlook

Lisa Harlow, Product Manager at Doff Portland, part of the Pelsis Group which manufactures slug control products, said regular consultations with growers and agronomists had revealed that the slugs have been unwelcome visitors to fields this year.

"During our spring trials this year, we heard widespread reports that slug populations were already estimated to be up by 20–25% compared to a normal year," she said. "Mild winter conditions with few prolonged frosts failed to reduce overwintering populations significantly, and while there was a period of dryness during April, it was not sustained enough to suppress reproduction.

"With summer temperatures consistently above 13°C and scattered rainfall, the conditions have been ideal for slugs to thrive and reproduce. Just one slug can lay up to 500 eggs in a season, highlighting how even minor oversights in control can have a major impact on slug populations."

Adding to the challenge, the use of cover crops, which is now common in many potato rotations, provides a dark, damp, and protected habitat that supports slug activity, Lisa said.

Slug control in potatoes demands a different approach because, unlike other arable crops, it is about protecting the tubers themselves and ensuring they remain undamaged and suitable for market.

"Growers often irrigate potato crops even during changeable weather, which unfortunately creates moist, slug-friendly environments regardless of broader weather patterns. This means potato fields remain vulnerable to slug damage during their entire growing season, but particularly when tuber are forming, bulking and skins setting," said Lisa.

Another distinction is in the slug species of concern. In potatoes, the common keeled slug (Tandonia budapestensis) is particularly problematic. It is known for its subterranean behaviour, making it more likely to reach the tubers and cause issues. This differs from the more common grey field slug (Deroceras reticulatum) which can also be a problem in potato crops.

Timing and application

Effective slug control in potatoes revolves around timing and product choice, especially since applications often coincide with irrigation, which itself creates slug-conducive conditions.

Choosing a rain-resistant slug pellet, such as Firescale, becomes critical in this context, Lisa said. Firescale is resin-based, with a rainproof formulation, and can be applied up to four times per season at a rate of 7kg/ha.

"As potato tubers begin to bulk up, slugs tend to follow cracks in the soil down into the ridges. This makes mid to late season a particularly important time to stay on top of monitoring and control. Growers should be especially vigilant during haulm removal, and if wet conditions delay lifting, as both situations leave tubers exposed and vulnerable to attack," Lisa said.

Optimising slug control

Before pellet applications, farmers are encouraged to trap and monitor slug activity to understand pressure levels. While thresholds are more widely discussed for cereals and oilseed rape, potatoes should be assessed individually based on risk factors like field history, soil structure, and elevated moisture levels.

"Another integral part of effective slug control is choosing the right pellet with optimal spreading efficacy," said Lisa. "For example, Firescale spreads uniformly up to 12 metres, aligning well with tramlines, and offers an optimal baiting point density of about 44 pellets per m2. This maximises the likelihood of slugs feeding on the pellets. For the best performance, pellet applicators must be properly calibrated for the chosen product."

Staying ahead of the risk

As 2025 continues to present persistent slug pressures, potato growers must remain proactive. Drawing from the lessons of recent years, Lisa said the key to protecting yield and profit lies in:

- Monitoring slug activity regularly, especially after irrigation
- Applying pellets with high levels of rain resistance like Firescale during key growth stages
- Staying vigilant during haulm destruction and in any delayed lifting scenarios
- Using properly calibrated spreaders for uniform pellet distribution

"By understanding the factors driving slug pressures and optimising application strategies accordingly, potato growers can stay ahead of the threat and ensure their crops stay protected right through to harvest," said Lisa.

Common keeled slug (Tandonia budapestensis)

Appearance: Mature slugs are typically 50-70 mm long.The body is pale with a very dense scattering of dark spots, giving it a brown or grey appearance. A distinctive orange or yellow keel runs along the entire length of the tail and the underside of the foot (the sole) is pale and features a dark central stripe.

Behaviour: When disturbed, it contracts into a C-shape rather than a hump.

Damage: It creates round holes and internal cavities within potato tubers.

Activity: Primarily active at night and becomes most active in warm, damp weather.

Control: Lifting potatoes as soon as they mature can limit damage, along with planting potato varieties that are less susceptible to damage can help.

The common keeled slug.

Grey field slug (Deroceras reticulatum)

Appearance: The slug is characterised by its light grey or brown color and milky-white mucus.

Behaviour: It prefers heavy, damp soils rich in clay or silt and can live underground for extended periods.

Damage: Grey slugs cause significant underground damage by hollowing out potato tubers, which may not be apparent until harvest.

Activity: This slug is most active in mild, moist conditions and can reproduce throughout the year, peaking in spring and autumn.

Control: Ploughing, especially deep ploughing, is effective for burying slug eggs, reducing populations and when preparing seed beds, aim for a firm, compact seedbed, as loose soil provides more opportunities for slug activity and egg-laying. BPR

The grey field slug. Photo: Bayer Crop Science

Agronomists, growers and technical experts involved in the Potato Partnership presented findings at a demonstration day in Suffolk.

PCN trials updates shared

Growers, advisors, and industry partners get the latest PCN insights at The Potato Partnership demo day.

Graham Tomalin of VCS Potatoes explained how the field trials were carried out.

THE potato industry was well represented in Suffolk this July to hear about the latest potato cyst nematode trials, which The Potato Partnership (TPP) is conducting this season.

Integrated control measures for potato cyst nematode (PCN) were once again on display at the TPP East demo site. With a background pressure of nine to 116 eggs of Globodera pallida per gram of soil, it was a tough test for the varieties, nematicides and biological control solutions on trial.

Graham Tomalin, of VCS Potatoes said that, to achieve a fair comparison, the field is separated into blocks according to the PCN pressure, and the treatments are stratified across low, medium and high classifications.

"We're trying to even out the pressure. It's not perfect because it's PCN," he said

Examining variety tolerance and resistance

The variety trial aims to examine existing and upcoming varieties for PCN tolerance and resistance. Leaf ground cover and yield are compared against two control varieties. Cara is the non-resistant, high-tolerance control, and Marfona is the non-resistant but low-tolerance control.

Selecting the varieties to test has been led by interest from parties within TPP, as well as what the seed houses would like to enter into trial. They tend to only look at them in TPP trials once they have been named and are close to market. However, some coded varieties in the trial are of interest to the group.

Managing Director & Agronomist at East Suffolk Produce Ltd, James Grinch said: "We're in the game of continuing to look at things that are interesting that might work. It doesn't mean it is the best, but you have to keep looking, otherwise you don't learn."

Graham added: "It's much better to know a variety that has a particular trait in a small plot than when you're growing 20 or 30 hectares."

PCN treatment options

If the variety trial was a tough test, then the PCN treatment options can be considered even more so. Maris Peer was used as the variety, which has a resistance score of two, and is known for poor tolerance, added to the high background pressure and stressful conditions for the crop this season.

Technical Manager for non-combinable crops at Agrii, Don Pendergrast, explained the treatments focus.

"In this year's trial, we have focused on the treatments that are currently available to us: Nemathorin (fosthiazate) and Velum Prime (fluopyram)," he said. "We have also looked at a completely new biological product, a potentially completely new synthetic product that might be available in the future, and investigated how we might partner with Velum Prime several products that have previously looked promising."

Last year, the best-performing treatment, in terms of efficacy, was a programme of Velum Prime at full rate combined with Nemathorin at half rate and a silicone wetter. However, the full-rate Nemathorin has looked better this year, he said.

"We have looked at Velum plus SP058, which is a silicone wetter. We have examined it in trials almost every year, consistently observing benefits in both canopy cover and overall yield. It works by improving the distribution of Velum in the soil profile, to get it to the PCN," said Don.

The biologicals tested, notably the Nemguard liquid formulation, showed a benefit to the untreated, but were noticeably behind the synthetic options. Don said that the initial control looked in line with Velum Prime, then after six weeks, the performance dropped away.

"It is great that some biological options are coming through, but we really have to look again at utilising them slightly differently, either by stacking them with synthetic chemistry or finding ways to use them later in the season," he said.

Technical Manager for non-combinable crops at Agrii, Don Pendergrast, explained the treatments focus.

The difference between tolerance and resistance to PCN

RESISTANCE is a measure of how much a variety will multiply PCN according to Graham Tomlin. "If it's completely resistant, there will be no multiplication of larvae which attach to the plants' roots," he said. However, there will always be a few eggs within cysts which remain where the stimulus to hatch from the growing plants flails to reach, he added.

This can become complicated depending on the pathotype of G. Pallida present, which in the UK to date is within PA2/3. Graham cites the example of Lanorma, which has varying levels of resistance in different parts of the country which is likely to be a result of the individual field population within the wide PA2/3 pathotype range

On the other hand, tolerance is the ability of a variety to grow within a PCN pressure. "While PCN is feeding on the roots, it will carry on growing and still produce the yields," said Graham, adding that, generally, stronger rooting and indeterminate varieties will demonstrate improved tolerance

Tolerance is hard to score, while other aspects such as season conditions, soil type nutrition and growing season will also have an effect on the crop performance in the presence of PCN but Graham said that grouping the varieties with low, medium and high classifications is really useful. It has proved to be a valuable resource to see how new genetics will perform in a PCN situation compared to existing standards.

What is The Potato Partnership, and how to get involved?

WITH more than £300,000 invested in potato trials to date, TPP is a collaboration between growers and the industry to tackle some of the key agronomic challenges facing potato growers today.

The main partners are Agrii, VCS, James Foskett Farms, East Suffolk Produce, and Greenwell Farms.

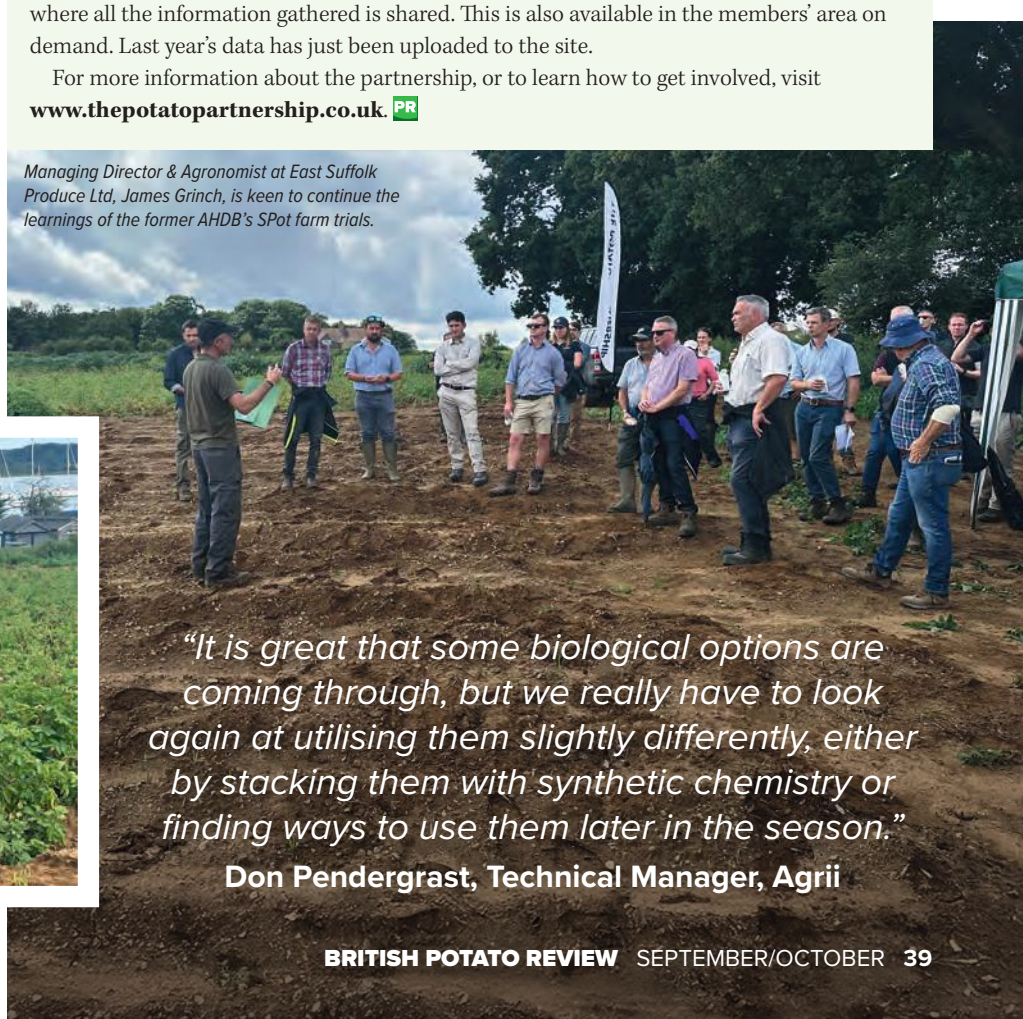
There are also trial sponsors from across the potato industry, including CUPGRA who are contributing to the budget for the Integrated control of PCN as well as several of the seed houses.

The partners want to fill the gaps resulting from the loss of AHDB potatoes and its SPoT Farm East.

Director of East Suffolk Produce, James Wrinch, said: "We wanted to continue those learnings in the field in a conversational way."

In addition to in-field demo events, there are three regional winter trials results meetings where all the information gathered is shared. This is also available in the members' area on demand. Last year's data has just been uploaded to the site.

For more information about the partnership, or to learn how to get involved, visit **www.thepotatopartnership.co.uk**. PR



Managing Director & Agronomist at East Suffolk Produce Ltd, James Grinch, is keen to continue the learnings of the former AHDB's SPot farm trials.

"It is great that some biological options are coming through, but we really have to look again at utilising them slightly differently, either by stacking them with synthetic chemistry or finding ways to use them later in the season."

Don Pendergrast, Technical Manager, Agrii

Pre-harvest checks encouraged following dry conditions

WITH this year's extreme dry conditions, potato growers are being advised to risk assess, and where necessary, carry out a pre-harvest residue test of tubers where granular nematicide has been applied at planting.

This is to assess where low soil moisture levels throughout spring and early summer have potentially caused higher than expected levels of granular nematicide - such as fosthiazate – to remain in the soil profile later into the growing season.

This issue could be compounded for growers with limited, or no, irrigation resources, especially earlier in the growing season.

Independent agronomist, Simon Alexander, explains what action growers should consider taking.

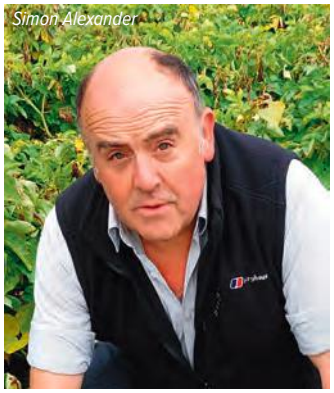
"Growers should take a representative sample from the treated area, selecting tubers from multiple plants across the field in a 'W' shaped pattern; a sample of at least 2.5kg of tubers should be submitted for testing," he said.

The product label for fosthiazate states that the product requires a minimum of 119 days (17 weeks) from planting to haulm burndown or harvest, and regardless of any residue test results and what they show, the harvest interval must be complied with.

Several independent residue testing facilities are available across the UK. Growers can contact their agronomists or nematicide supplier for more information. Any laboratory used needs to be ISO17025 accredited to satisfy the Red Tractor Fresh Produce scheme and other assurance schemes.

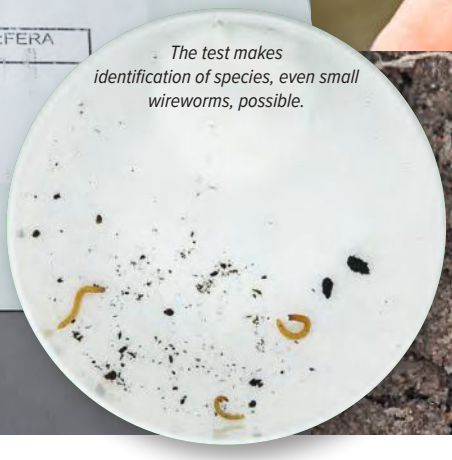
Chair of the Nematicide Stewardship Programme (NSP), Patrick Mitton, endorses this proactive approach.

He said: "The NSP has a long history in promoting best practice use and handling of granular nematicides. The advice being offered for this extremely dry season helps to guide the end of season actions of growers in their collective support for the continued use into the future of granular nematicides, such as Nemathorin 10G." BPR


Simon Alexander


Patrick Mitton

Growers purchasing a test will receive a kit to return with wireworms in for testing.

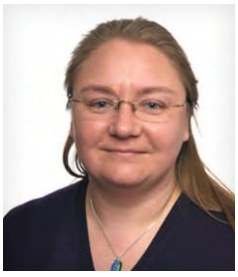


The test makes identification of species, even small wireworms, possible.

Escalating damage from wireworm has already cost the industry £100,000s.

Understanding which species are present is critical to managing pest populations.

New tool to target real pests



Dr Larissa Collins, Principal entomologist, Fera

DNA barcoding kit launched to help identify species plaguing potato crops.

FERA Science has launched a wireworm DNA barcoding test, designed to help UK potato growers accurately identify wireworm species and protect crops from escalating damage that has already cost the industry £100,000s.

Officially launched at Groundswell 2025, the new tool has been developed as part of Fera's ENIGMA I research project to meet the urgent need for more effective wireworm Integrated Pest Management (IPM).

Principal entomologist at Fera, Dr Larissa Collins, who led the project, said findings have revealed that climate change is creating more favourable conditions for wireworm populations.

"There are over 60 species of wireworms in the UK but only a handful are crop pests. Others do no harm, and some are even predators of the crop-damaging species. This means that understanding which species are present is critical to managing pest populations effectively," she said. "Accurate pest identification is the first critical step in sustainable integrated pest management."

The new DNA barcoding test can help growers pinpoint exactly which wireworm species are present in their fields. This will help to optimise pest management decisions to minimise crop damage and ensure that interventions, including cultural controls and insecticides, are used in the most effective way.

The new solution is a direct outcome of Fera's ENIGMA I research project, a collaboration with industry partners: Blackthorn Arable, Elveden Estate, G's Growers, inov3PT, Pearce Seeds and Syngenta.

The project involved analysing more than 13,000 field-collected click beetles to study wireworm life cycles, responses to increasing temperatures, damage patterns, and risk factors across multiple crops, revealing the six wireworm species most concerning for UK growers.

"We've worked closely with industry partners to develop a test to identify wireworms which are not possible to identify by visual examination, from samples sent in by growers," said Larissa. "Growers purchasing a test will receive a kit to return to us with wireworms in for testing, and if needed, we can supply a bait bag to help with collecting the wireworms.

"Using the samples, we can also measure the wireworms to give an indication of larval instar, so the timing of the lifecycle can also be used to make decisions about crop rotation and control measures."

The test makes identification of species, even small wireworms, possible, providing growers with actionable insights to implement IPM measures and reduce damage.

This research project has been crucial in developing a framework for sustainable pest management, said Larissa.

"With the impact of climate change, the shift towards sustainable agriculture and an increasing push towards IPM, these informative tools are becoming increasingly important to help farmers and agronomists make fully-informed decisions."

To find out more about the testing kits, or get involved with Fera's next wireworm project please contact larissa.collins@fera.co.uk.

"We've worked closely with industry partners to develop a test to identify wireworms which are not possible to identify by visual examination, from samples sent in by growers."

Dr Larissa Collins, Principal entomologist, Fera

A new role for microbes

Developmental work could result in a new biological application to make crops resistant to pests, disease and stress.

POTATO growers could soon be able to apply microbes to crops to 'reprogram' them to be resistant against pests, diseases and environmental stress such as drought and heat, as a new research project gets underway.

Azotic Technologies has been awarded half-a-million pounds from the UK's Advanced Research + Invention Agency (ARIA) to develop a low-cost, practical method of reprogramming plants by applying a microbial product to seeds or standing crops.

Azotic's Research and Development Director, Dr Adriana Botes said: "The project, part of ARIA's 'Programmable Plants' opportunity space, extends our utilisation of the same bacterium that we've successfully introduced to millions of crop acres with Encera® and Envita®.

"The active ingredient in these products, Gluconacetobacter diazotrophicus (Gd), possesses the unique natural ability to colonise a plant's cells, fix nitrogen and promote growth."

But that's not all it can do, according to Adriana. Once Gd has entered the plant cell, it can be used to produce and release a variety of bioactive molecules that can effectively 'reprogram' crops to display additional beneficial traits, or tackle – from the inside out – threats to yield and quality such as fungal disease, or insect pests.

The project will demonstrate how Gd's unique ability to live and multiply inside plant cells can be harnessed, modifying the bacterium to produce and deliver bioactive molecules to reprogram plants from the inside out.

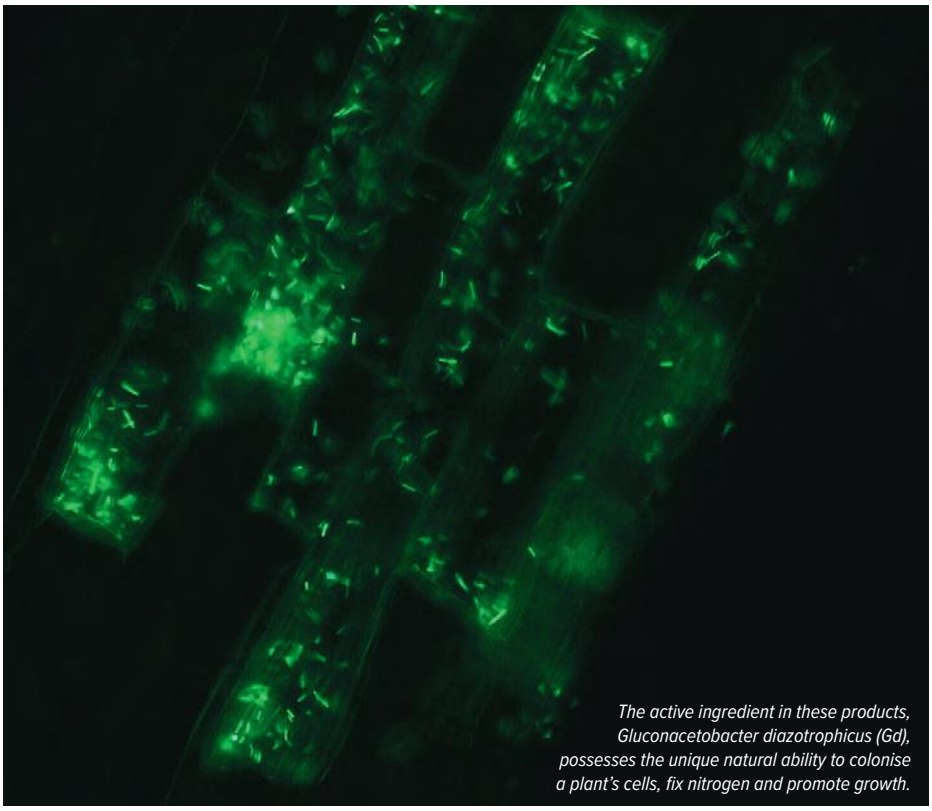
These molecules can reduce or replace the need for synthetic pesticides, as well as helping to protect crops against the effects of climate change without genetic modification or gene editing of the plant.

Of particular interest is its ability to produce dsRNA (double-stranded RNA). This can silence target genes by binding to mRNA, preventing translation of the mRNA to essential proteins.

The concept of gene silencing to program plants is not new, but existing gene-silencing methods have limitations that make them expensive, unappealing, impractical or ineffective.

"For example, while we can genetically modify plants to silence one of its own genes or that of an insect, pest or pathogen that affects it, we all know that acceptance of genetically-modified plants is difficult. But it's also impractical."

Gd allows influence over any plant trait without permanent genetic modification. Multiple traits can be delivered in parallel with just one application, and the speed at which the bacterium can be constructed and produced makes it possible to combat in-season disease threats.



The active ingredient in these products, Gluconacetobacter diazotrophicus (Gd), possesses the unique natural ability to colonise a plant's cells, fix nitrogen and promote growth.

Azotic's Research and Development Director, Dr Adriana Botes

"Faced with a difficult blight strain, or a new variant strain of yellow rust such as NIAB confirmed in June, we could design and produce an appropriate product within a few weeks," Adriana said.

As well as dsRNA, Gd can be used to produce biomolecules such as enzymes, peptides or other small molecules that can influence, alter or enhance plant biological processes such as stress response or growth regulation.

"I'm absolutely thrilled with this funding because we know the technology works, and we've already perfected Gd's fermentation, formulation and application. Now we have the means to find the practical ways of extending its use and realising its wider potential," said Adriana.

"Biotech is too expensive to develop a new product and production process for every need, so finding platforms – like Gd – where the same production and formulation processes can be used for multiple products and applications is a huge step forward.

"ARIA's grant gives us the broad proof of concept opportunity to unlock the vast potential of this disruptive technology platform."

Funding the proof of concept will allow Azotic to secure follow-on funding to demonstrate efficacy in the field, developing new Gd strains that will provide protection against plant pathogens for which no effective solutions currently exist. Adriana said the company will also engage with regulators to encourage the regulatory landscape to 'keep up' with the introduction of new biotechnologies.

The project will be managed from Azotic Technologies' York-based Technology Development Centre in conjunction with the University of Durham's Department of Biosciences. BPR

Renewed warning on Colorado

Beetle sightings prompt vigilance reminder to growers.

THE Animal and Plant Health Agency (APHA) has reminded potato growers to be vigilant for the presence of Colorado beetle, a major threat to potato crops.

The agency recently released a new warning and identification factsheet for growers.

The Colorado beetle has the potential to have a significant economic impact on the potato industry without action being taken. Adult beetles and larvae feed on the foliage of potatoes.

APHA sought to raise awareness of the pest at the RHS Chelsea Flower Show in May, when it staged an exhibition in which it detailed the impact it can have on UK food security and the potato industry, showcasing how to report suspected findings to APHA in an effort to protect the British potato industry.

TV gardener Alan Titchmarsh was amongst those to speak out about the pest, saying: "It devastates potato crops and we need all the crops we can get in this country. It's so savage, it'll wipe crops out. It's like locusts. It's that fast."

Colorado beetle larvae were confirmed in a potato field in Kent following laboratory diagnosis of samples in 2023. Prior to that, there had been outbreaks in the 1930s, 1950s and 1970s but the pest was swiftly eradicated owing to inspections and public vigilance.

The beetles have been known to be imported into the UK as 'hitchhikers' on plants, such as leafy vegetables, salad leaves, fresh herbs, grain and frozen vegetables, and APHA is urging people to keep an eye out when handling these items.

The beetle weakens crops and reduces yield.

Defra's Chief Plant Health Officer, Professor Nicola Spence, said: "The Colorado beetle poses a significant threat to plants and the wider potato industry. The public have an important role to play in helping us take swift and effective action to protect UK biosecurity. The public are urged to be vigilant and report suspected sightings to the Animal and Plant Health Agency with a photo and location details."

APHA Interim Chief Executive Dr Jenny Stewart added: "Our surveillance capabilities protect UK borders from a wide range of plant pests and diseases, including the Colorado beetle, but we cannot do this without the help of the public."

Anyone who finds a Colorado beetle is urged to capture it in a secure container and report any suspected sightings to APHA as soon as possible by telephoning 0300 1000 313 or by emailing the planthealth.info@apha.gov.uk mailbox. All sightings should include a photograph and location details.

For Scotland, contact the Scottish Government's Horticulture and Marketing Unit: Agricultural crops contact the local RPID officer: **http://www.gov.scot/Topics/farmingrural/Agriculture/AOcontacts/contacts**.

"The Colorado beetle poses a significant threat to plants and the wider potato industry. The public have an important role to play in helping us take swift and effective action."

Professor Nicola Spence, Chief Plant Health Officer, Defra

How to spot a Colorado beetle:

The beetle's body is yellow or cream with 10 black stripes and it has an orange head with irregular black spots.

It is usually between 6 to 11mm in length and 3mm in width. Its larvae are a pinkish red or orange colour, with black spots along each side and a black head and are up to 15mm in length.

They are distinctive in appearance, however, there are several beetles that are frequently mistaken for them. BPR

Many growers have spent the summer with irrigation systems running flat-out.

Potatoes, people, and the pressure of no rain

Scott Walker, CEO of GB Potatoes

Scott Walker, CEO of GB Potatoes, talks about a new industry development programme, while highlighting the need for government to step up on a watery issue.

IT is official: the lack of rain has now been declared a "Nationally Significant Incident".

That's not just another line for the weather record books, it is a wake-up call. When water runs short, food supply comes under real pressure, and potatoes are no exception.

This year's harvest has started earlier than last year, but what is actually coming out of the ground depends entirely on where you are and how much water your crop has had. Some growers were lucky enough to get just enough rain to see them through, while for many, it arrived too late to be particularly useful.

Others have spent the summer with irrigation systems running flat-out, reservoirs running low and pumps working overtime, every drop making the difference between a decent yield and a disappointing one. If you have got irrigation, you have probably reaped the rewards. if not, you have had to cross your fingers and hope. Either way, it is a timely reminder for government that food security means making agriculture's access to water a real priority.

But it is not just water that keeps our industry going, it is people, and on that front, I have some good news. For years, I have been concerned about how we attract the best people and just as importantly, how we keep the good people we already have. Too often, the same stalwarts are asked to do the work that benefits us all, because everyone else is too busy in their own businesses. We need to make sure the next generation is ready to step up - those newcomers with passion, commitment, and enthusiasm - because they are the lifeblood of any thriving sector.

Now, let's be honest: Working in potatoes isn't easy (or glamorous, unless you count a particularly fine pair of wellies). The crop really is the "livestock" of the arable world, always needing attention, whatever the weather, and demanding specialist know-how. But the upside? Ours is an incredibly diverse sector, with opportunities stretching from field to factory to fork. Making it perfect for developing people and careers.

That is why at GB Potatoes, we are putting our money where our mouth is. In July, in partnership with the British Potato Trade Association, we launched The Potato Industry Development Programme. It is designed to give participants a full journey through the potato industry from mini tuber production and seed cycles to the moment the crop ends up in a shopping basket. The response has been phenomenal, with more applications than spaces. We will be selecting the first cohort soon and, given the demand, are already planning to run the programme again in 2027.

I cannot wait to meet the first group when they visit Scotland next June. If their energy and enthusiasm are anything like what I have seen so far, the future of our potato industry is in very safe hands – rain or no rain. BPR

GB Potatoes

‘A significant exporter’

POTATO production in Armenia has reached 337,000 tonnes, according data unveiled by Deputy Economy Minister Arman Khojoyan, who oversees the country’s agriculture sector.

Of this, 14,000 tonnes were exported, a significant increase from the 1,300 tonnes in 2023. So far in 2025, exports have already reached 4,000 tonnes.

Over the past 10 years, the Ministry of Economy of Armenia has recorded significant changes in the country’s potato trade balance.

In recent years, Armenia has transitioned from being a potato importer to an exporter. While traditionally an importer, Armenia’s potato exports in 2024 saw a significant rise, with 2,500 tons exported in the first nine months. Simultaneously, potato imports decreased dramatically, with only 500 tons imported in the first 10 months of last year, mainly for seed purposes. This shift is attributed to increased domestic production and a decrease in reliance on imports.

Russian news agency TASS has reported that in the first five months of 2025, Armenia exported nearly twice as many potatoes to Russia as it did during the first half of 2024, and almost 17 times more than during the same period in 2023, the Armenian Ministry of Economy told TASS.

“Between January 1 and May 21 of this year, Armenia exported 4,200 tonnes of potatoes (fresh/frozen) to Russia, with a customs value of $1.777 mln,” the ministry noted in response to a TASS inquiry.

In 2023, Armenia exported $204 of Potatoes, making it the 151st largest exporter of Potatoes (out of 155) in the world, according to The Observatory of Economic Complexity (OEC). During the same year, Potatoes were the 933rd most exported product (out of 973) in Armenia. In 2023, the main destinations of Armenia’s Potatoes exports were: Russia ($204).

RTM export boost

A REVERSE trade mission (RTM) has helped expand product portfolios and strengthen commercial ties over the past year, according to Potatoes USA.

In China, importer-distributor Angliss Hunan reported a 15% sales increase after securing new restaurant accounts and Beijing Xianglong Taida launched an e-commerce campaign that boosted retail sales by 182%. Vietnamese importers expanded US potato volumes by 20% and secured new listings in retail chains. In Taiwan, imports rose 3%, including the first shipment of white fingerling potatoes.

In South Korea, the RTM contributed to new applications in school lunch programs and supported reintroduction of US fresh potatoes to retail after a four-year absence. In Mexico, US potatoes have entered 20,000 Oxxo convenience stores.

Potato training program

A SPECIALIST potato growing training program organised by the German Potato Trade Association (DKHV) recently attracted 46 participants, ranging from newcomers to seasoned professionals.

The training event, which took place in Hermannsburg, in Germany’s Lüneburg Heath, provided an opportunity to learn more about potatoes and gain hands-on, practical training.

DKHV representative Jutta Becker-Ritterspach gave an introduction, speaking about the origins, botany, and cultivation conditions of potatoes in Germany. Instructors then delivered lectures on modern breeding techniques, growth conditions, and requirements for quality and crop rotation. Plant protection was a key topic, with a special focus on pests, diseases, and proper field inspection in line with the Berlin Agreements.

Practical applications were demonstrated at the teaching and demonstration garden of the Lower Saxony Chamber of Agriculture, where the differences between healthy and affected crops was highlighted and participants learned how to identify typical damage patterns, with explanations on biological development phases, such as that of the Colorado potato beetle.

Reports give insights into fresh potato performance

For the first time, Potatoes USA has released a series of regional retail sales reports, providing an in-depth look at the factors driving fresh potato performance across eight distinct markets across the United States.

This new resource equips category managers and produce teams with region-specific, actionable insights to refine assortment, promotion, and merchandising strategies regionally.

The reports are part of a broader, national effort by Potatoes USA to deepen engagement and collaboration with retailers and provide useful tools that directly support store-level decision-making and strategic category growth.

Potatoes USA Global Retail Development Manager Nick Bartelme said the initiative is aimed at helping retailers uncover opportunities in their own region.

“Potato performance varies widely across the country. By breaking the data down regionally, we’re giving retailers a sharper lens on consumer demand in their markets — insights that inform how they merchandise, promote, and prioritise potato products in store. Whether it’s capitalising on rising trends like medleys or tailoring product assortments to meet local preferences, these reports support more precise, growth-oriented strategies.”

Rejections for imports reaches 35%

REJECTION rates for potatoes exported to Turkey have reached an all-time high, prompting better collaboration calls from European suppliers.

Turkey is the fourth-largest destination for EU-grown seed potatoes, with several European countries regularly exporting to the Turkish market. All seed potatoes destined for Turkey must undergo certification inspection to confirm their compliance with Turkish import requirements.

However, in recent years, the number of rejections by Turkish authorities, based on sampling and testing conducted upon arrival, has increased significantly. For example, last year, many European suppliers experienced rejections owing to Turkish testing. Rejection rates varied between companies, with some facing rejection of up to 50% of their total shipments.

This year's export season, which took place in spring, has seen even higher rejection rates. Based on data shared by Europatat members, rejection rates for some exporting countries reached up to 35% of total country exports. Moreover, the pests detected in rejected consignments this year differed from those identified last year.

European Potato Trade Association, Europatat, said that in one case, seed potatoes from the same production lot were shipped to Turkey in two separate consignments and one was accepted while the other was rejected. In the past, there have also been cases in which certain pests intercepted on European seed potatoes are not known to be present in the country of origin.

In addition to the rising number of rejections, a long-standing issue further complicates exports to Turkey, according to Europatat: The difference in nomenclature for different seed potato classes. While Turkey, like the EU, imposes phytosanitary conditions on imports, certain restrictions appear to stem from differences in classification rather than plant health concerns.

"As a result, exporting seed potatoes to Turkey has become increasingly difficult over the last few years. This export season, many Europatat members decided to divert their exports to alternative markets to avoid rejections at the Turkish border and significant financial losses. Next year, even more companies may avoid exporting to Turkey, as confidence in the process continues to decline," the organisation stated in a recent announcement.

"Europatat urges Turkish authorities to collaborate closely with the NPPOs of exporting countries and with exporters to ensure that official controls and testing performed upon arrival in Turkey are in line with the international standards. This cooperation is essential to confirm that seed potatoes exported by many European countries meet Turkish import requirements.

"Europatat remains committed to supporting the dialogue already initiated by several European NPPOs and Turkish authorities, with the aim of significantly reducing rejections in the next export season."

New export markets

EIGHT new export markets have been opened for Egypt's potatoes and other fresh produce in destinations including South Africa, Costa Rica, Uzbekistan, India, and the Philippines.

As a result, the country has exported 1.3 million tons of potatoes this year, according to intelligence source Zawya.

More planting as global competition increases

POTATO planting in the EU-4 countries (Belgium, Germany, France, and the Netherlands) rose 7.5% year-on-year during 2025, according to the North-Western European Potato Growers (NEPG).

The NEPG noted that European growers are increasingly exposed to global competition, with China and India having increased their exports tenfold in the past five years. European prices for frozen chips and other processed products are higher than Canada, China and India, mainly because of higher energy and freight costs.

As the new season begins, much of Europe remains heavily contracted. Sources reported that in January-February, processors agreed contracts at high price levels from previous years.

Historic early plantings this year added pressure, as old crop stocks overlapped with early arrivals of the new crop. Although hot and dry weather has affected parts of Europe in recent months, it's believed the impact on yields will not be enough to ease oversupply.

The NEPG said in a statement: "Collaboration between the different European stakeholders in the potato value chain is essential to improve our competitiveness. Growers probably overestimated the long-term profitability of potato growing and should open their eyes to the multiple limits before governments intervene with even more legislation."

President's warning to retailers

BELARUSIAN President Aleksandr Lukashenko has warned heads of retail chains that it is unacceptable not to keep quality and affordable domestic potatoes in stock according to news source BelTA.

During a meeting to discuss the development of potato farming in Belarus, he said: "I would like to warn heads of retail chains that lack of affordable high-quality domestic potatoes in stores will have dire consequences for all money-grubbers."

Increased import taxes

IN response to local growers requests, Sri Lanka's Cabinet has approved a report to increase import taxes on potatoes.

The report was prepared by the Food Security Committee, which assessed the effect of imported potatoes on domestic production. Growers have consistently called for higher tariffs, arguing that they face difficulties competing with low-cost imports, a report in Hiru News revealed.

At the time of going to press, the duty on imported potatoes stood at Rs 20 (US$0.067) per kilo.

Runner and industry supporter highlights consumer trends

FOURTH generation New Zealand grower Bryan Hart combines personal interest with professional dedication to potato production and highlighted how consumer perceptions are impacting on current potato consumption.

Bryan, General Manager of Growing Operations at AS Wilcox and Sons in Pukekohe, is a keen runner, using potatoes as a source of energy, boiling them and adding salt instead of relying on commercial energy gels, according to a report by Potatoes New Zealand.

The fourth-generation family business, established in the 1930s, supplies potatoes and other vegetables nationwide. Bryan is known for supporting research, improving productivity, and promoting the industry.

While welcoming the wider range of potato varieties now available compared to 20 years ago, Bryan said the emphasis on cooking methods and variety purposes has declined owing to retail consolidation, cost-of-living pressures, and less education around food preparation.

He believes low-carbohydrate diets have influenced perceptions. Wilcox has focused on taste-driven varieties such as Perlas and Inca Gold. Bryan said new-season Perlas provide an easy option for consumers, while Inca Gold carries health benefits.

Acreage falls to lowest level in 70 years

FOR the second year in a row, US potato growers are planting fewer acres, pushing 2025 planted acreage down to its lowest level in more than 70 years, according to reports by Mintec and Expana.

According to USDA's National Agricultural Statistics Service (NASS), just 912,000 acres (369,000 hectares) are forecast to be planted in 2025, a 2% decline from 2024 and 6% below 2023.

The cutbacks are concentrated in Washington, Minnesota, North Dakota, and Maine, with Washington alone reducing plantings by 15,000 acres (6,070 hectares). Only Colorado and Wisconsin expect slight increases, while seven other surveyed states are holding acreage steady.

The Pacific Northwest, which typically drives US potato production, is forecast at 503,000 acres (203,600 hectares), a 3% decline driven largely by a sharp 9.4% reduction in Washington.

Lesotho considers lifting import ban

THE Ministry of Agriculture, Food Security, and Nutrition in Lesotho is reviewing its decision to ban imports of potatoes and cabbage, following reports of reduced supplies from local growers.

Principal Secretary Thabo Moleko confirmed the possibility of lifting the ban.

The restrictions were introduced two months ago to protect local growers, with the Ministry stating that production levels were sufficient to meet domestic demand.

Minimum cold storage price set

THE interim government of Bangladesh has set the minimum price of potatoes at about US$0.19 (Tk 22) per kg at cold storage gates and announced plans to purchase 50,000 metric tons for storage.

The stock will be released to the market during October and November, according to a recent statement from the Ministry of Agriculture.

Recent potato prices have not aligned with production costs, causing losses for growers. To protect growers' interests and ensure a fair price, a review committee was formed, led by the agriculture secretary and including the commerce, food, and finance secretaries

The committee's recommendations resulted in the minimum price of potatoes being set at Tk 22 (US$0.19) per kg at cold storage, purchasing and storing 50,000 metric tons for release later in the year, and providing incentives for growers in the next production season.

Relevant ministries will take steps to implement these decisions.

20-30% decreases reported

SEVERAL companies in Italy's main potato-growing region, Bologna, have reported decreases of 20% to 30%, according to Vittorio Vitali, president of the cooperative Agripat.

As well as lower production volumes, there has been increased waste, reducing the amount of produce that can be sold, while a small number of growers did not even harvest.

"This was because there was too much waste. Harvesting would have caused further cost increases," Vittorio said in an interview with Fresh Plaza.

The top variety, Primura, was affected by Rhizoctonia disease, in addition to the usual sector problems, such as Elateridae and excessive temperatures while harvesting. However, yields in the province of Ferrara were even higher than in 2024, with increases of up to 10% for medium-to-good quality.

Pressure on domestic consumers as exports rise

POTATO exports in Georgia have risen nearly 3,000% year-on-year, with more than 78,000 tons shipped.

While exports are bringing higher revenues for growers and exporters, economists note pressure on domestic consumers. The outflow of produce reduces local availability, contributing to higher prices for potatoes.

Experts interviewed by Georgian daily newspaper Rezonansi suggested introducing rules to ensure a portion of harvests remain in Georgia or providing subsidies for growers who sell domestically. Others argue that Georgia has sufficient farmland and production capacity to supply both export and local markets if stronger state support for agriculture is implemented.

Delegation shares insights on climate-resilient innovations

A DELEGATION from Tamil Nadu, a South Indian state, recently attended an event hosted by the International Potato Center (CIP) to discuss seed systems, regenerative agriculture, digital breeding, climate-smart practices, and value chain development for root and tuber crops.

The team included experts from the Tamil Nadu Agricultural University (TNAU), the World Bank Group, and the Central Tuber Crops Research Institute (CTCRI) and the visit followed the launch of the CIP South Asia Regional Centre (CSARC) in Singna, Agra, Uttar Pradesh. The centre works with ICAR institutes, state departments, universities, and the private sector on potato, sweetpotato, and other root and tuber crop research.

The Tamil Nadu team participated in technical sessions, field demonstrations, and joint planning exercises, exploring how climate-resilient potato innovations in Africa could be adapted for Tamil Nadu. In return, the delegation shared lessons from Indian value chains, with approaches that could strengthen African systems.

Growth in retail sales

RETAIL sales of potatoes remained strong from July 2024 to June 2025, with total volume increasing 2.3%.

Volume sales were 13% higher than the comparable period from July 2018 to June 2019, indicating greater demand than before the pandemic.

Sales volume increases were driven by fresh (2.6%), frozen (3.7%), and deli-prepared sides (1.6%). At the same time, potato chip volume sales were stable (0.2%), and volume sales modestly declined for dehydrated (-2.0%), refrigerated (-0.4%), and canned potatoes (-1.1%).

The modest decrease in dollar sales (-0.5%) was driven by a 2.7% decrease in the average consumer price per pound of all potatoes compared to last year. Only refrigerated potatoes (1.6%), deli-prepared sides (2.8%), and canned potatoes (0.4%) saw consumer price increases. As a result, most potato categories saw a modest decrease in dollar sales except for refrigerated potatoes (1.2%) and deli-prepared sides (4.4%).

Among fresh potatoes, volume sales increased from the prior year for russets (4.0%), yellow (5.5%), petite (7.8%), and fingerling potatoes (1.5%). Sales volume fell for red (-11%), white (-4%), and purple potatoes (-5.5%). The average consumer price per pound of fresh potatoes decreased 5.6% compared to the year prior, driving a modest decrease in all fresh potato dollar sales by 3.2%. Russets saw the largest price drop (-11.8%), followed by white potatoes (-7.6%) and petite potatoes (-3.2%).

Volume sales increased for fresh potatoes sold in bulk, bags (representing 87% of fresh potato sales), and trays. Within the bagged category, the following pack sizes increased in volume sales: under one to under two pounds (7.2%), two to four pounds (10.5%), eight pounds (17.8%), and 10 pounds (3.6%).

These figures were supplied by Circana (IRI) which works directly with retailers.

Moves to secure supply and stabilise prices

KAZAKHSTAN is strengthening its stabilisation funds to guarantee affordable prices for potatoes in the 2025–2026 season, according to local news source Kazpravda.

Larger volumes of potatoes, from the new harvest will be contracted to avoid supply gaps and sudden price spikes.

Official data shows that as of August 22nd, growers harvested 512,900 tonnes of potatoes. Potato prices recently declined by 5.7%.

To improve transparency, the government is considering digital tools such as video monitoring and scanning systems in storage facilities. These measures would allow real-time tracking of stock inflows and outflows, ensuring that supplies reach consumers at stable, affordable prices throughout autumn, winter, and spring.

Kenya approves new potato varieties

SCIENTISTS from the National Potato Innovation Centre (NPIC), based at The James Hutton Institute, have introduced two new potato varieties to Kenya, Malaika and Glen. For more information on this, visit our Varieities and Breeding section.

Increased harvest

KYRGYZSTAN significantly increased its 2025 potato harvest, according to official data. By late August, growers had collected 273,800 tonnes of potatoes(+31,100 tonnes).

Bumper harvest and price drop

NIGERIAN potato growers have reported a bumper harvest and price drop this season, according to a report by local news source, Daily Trust.

Growers in Plateau State, Nigeria, saw higher yields, with tubers harvested in larger sizes and volumes than in recent years. The increase has followed several years of low yields.

The abundance has led to a decline in market prices. A 50kg bag that previously sold for ₦150,000–₦170,000 (US$103–117) now sells for ₦30,000–₦40,000 (US$21–27). The price drop has attracted buyers to markets in Jos.

Plateau accounts for about 90%bof Nigeria's potato production, according to the Potato Value Chain Support Project, assisted by the African Development Bank.

Growers attribute the higher yields to favourable weather. In recent years, the crop was affected by late blight, bacterial wilt, fungal infections from persistent dew, and other foliar diseases, but conditions changed this year.

Despite the improved yields, growers have highlighted challenges including high input costs, insecurity, and lack of storage.

Lower production and higher exports

THE Canadian potato sector has seen lower production and higher exports, impacted by variable weather, shifting markets, and global trade pressures.

While production volumes are expected to dip slightly, exports continue to rise in both tonnage and value, reinforcing the sector's role in North America, according to a report in Fresh Plaza.

British Columbia crops were progressing normally, while Alberta faced hail and extreme heat. Saskatchewan producers are dealing with wildfire smoke, and eastern provinces were late harvesting. The Maritimes struggled with early drought stress.

Despite these conditions, planted acreage is nearly steady nationwide, and early reports suggested stable yields.

Statistics from 2024 show Canadian potato production at approximately 6.4 million tons, a decline of 3.8% from the previous year. However, exports increased by 7% to 587,000 tons, valued at US$414 million. Analysts expect North American consumption and market value to show modest growth through 2035.

Reports that Canada had reduced potato exports to the United States by 41% or signed a US$1.6 billion trade deal with Asia were false according to industry leaders. Official data confirm a smaller, seasonal decline in exports, down 17% from Q1 to Q2, which is within normal variation.

The US remains Canada's largest export market, while talks with ASEAN countries continue but are not finalised.

Harvests hit by frost

BRAZIL potato harvests were hit by frost in São Paulo.

Frosts recorded in late June were expected to reduce yields, leading to smaller tubers, particularly for crops harvested from August onward, with the greatest impact projected in September.

Harvesting began in June and is scheduled to continue through December. Around 60% of the crop was expected to be marketed by the end of August.

Skins had not set completely because of the low temperatures in July. Limited sunlight during the day has slowed crop cycles. This year's mild climate has delayed development.

Pest pressure varied across planting cycles. In early plantings, vaquinha (Diabrotica speciosa beetle) was the main issue, linked to high temperatures in February and March. From June onward, and more intensively in July, wireworms became the main concern. Dry conditions and migration from other crops increased pressure, with mid-cycle plants particularly affected. Disease reports included cases of common scab, associated with soil management such as excess liming, as well as isolated instances of Rhizoctonia solani detected in late July harvests. All outbreaks were controlled.

At the end of July, average yields reached 42 tons per hectare and are expected to remain stable in the short term. However, a decline is anticipated from late August into September due to frost damage. With the harvest peak occurring in July, regional supply is projected to decrease gradually from August onward.

Pressure from imports

AS in previous years, imported potatoes are competing directly with local production in the Canary Islands during the summer harvest.

This season, the tubers arrived from Israel, rather than from Egypt, Cyprus, or the United Kingdom, which have traditionally supplied the market, according to local news source ArgenPapa.

The imports are already available alongside local packaged potatoes in supermarkets, affecting the marketing of domestic production still in storage. Growers report that several million kilos of local potatoes remain unsold, while wholesale prices paid to growers have fallen to €0.60–0.75/kg (US$0.65–0.81/kg).

Imports have been observed mainly in Lidl and Hiperdino stores, priced at €1.89/kg (US$2.03/kg) for three-kilo bags. These shipments were carried out by Dipacan (for Lidl) and Copacan Canarias (for Hiperdino). Mercadona is currently selling only local varieties from the Garañaña Cooperative, linked to the Casmi group.

Despite meetings convened by the Ministry of Agriculture with producers, importers, and retailers to prioritise local supply during the summer, imported potatoes are already present in major retail outlets. Growers emphasize that mid-season production harvested in summer has not yet been fully marketed, leaving sufficient stock to meet demand at prices considered viable, around €1/kg (US$1.08/kg).

According to ISTAC data, Canary Islands potato production in 2023 totalled 78,304 tons across 6,710 hectares. Over the past decade, cultivated area declined by nearly 40% and harvested production by 25%. At the same time, the islands' population increased by 100,000, and annual tourism rose by four million visitors.

Imports remain substantial. In 2023, the Canary Islands imported 64 million kilos of potatoes, falling slightly to 61 million in 2024, with a total value of €39 million (US$42 million). The United Kingdom supplied nearly two-thirds of the volume, followed by Egypt, Israel, and Cyprus.

In 2024, Canarian growers received an average of €0.70–1.30/kg (US$0.76–1.40/kg) for their potatoes, while retail prices ranged from €2.30–3.10/kg (US$2.47–3.33/kg). The gap between farmgate prices and final retail values was almost three times the income obtained by local producers.

More reliable access to seed

SMALLHOLDER growers in Uganda are set to gain more reliable access to quality seed potatoes following the licensing of Farm Inputs Care Centre Ltd. (FICA Seeds) as the country's first private company authorized to commercially produce tissue culture plantlets and early-generation seed potatoes.

The development is part of the Building Resilience and Inclusive Growth of Highland farming systems for rural Transformation (BRIGHT) project, coordinated by the International Fertilizer Development Center (IFDC). Until now, potato seed production in Uganda has largely depended on public institutions such as the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) and its Kachwekano Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (KaZARDI).

India potato output 60 million tons but lacks breeders

A LACK of breeders, agronomists, and agricultural engineers is slowing potential growth in India's potato sector, an industry leader has claimed.

S Soundararadjane, CEO of HyFarm, the agri-business unit of HyFun Foods, has raised concern over the skills gap, telling local news source Indian Express that it is limiting sector growth.

"Major growth is expected from the fries and crisps segments, but a lack of talent can make progress slow," he said.

India is the world's second-largest potato producer, with an annual output of 60 million tons, following China at 96 million tons. Frozen French fries from India have grown steadily in international markets, with the segment posting double-digit growth over the past seven years.

Soundararadjane emphasised the need for breeders to develop climate-resilient potato varieties. "CPRI [Central Potato Research Institute] has done excellent work, but we need to understand that they, too, have limitations in terms of manpower," he said.

The Shimla-based CPRI remains the main research body for the crop.

Indian potato production is divided into table varieties (92%), crisps and fries). Uttar Pradesh, Madhya Pradesh, West Bengal, and Gujarat are the leading production states. Gujarat specialises in potatoes used for fries, while Madhya Pradesh produces mainly crisping potatoes.

"Potato cultivation requires special attention, given the vast opportunities it can unearth for the country. Unfortunately, potatoes are taught as a single crop at state agricultural universities," Soundararadjane said.

He added that potato breeding requires focused investment, but most private companies have avoided this area, leaving CPRI as the only body releasing new varieties. "

But the major chunk of its work has been for the table variety which is used in curries, sabzis, samosas, etc," he said. Potato is one of the three crops prioritised under the Centre's 'TOP' (Tomato, Onion, Potato) scheme, which has supported cold storage infrastructure. However, Soundararadjane said the industry requires more work across the value chain.

"Work in terms of farmer outreach is also necessary to introduce high-end agricultural practices for potato cultivation in the country. But a lack of manpower who can carry out farm extension services is a problem," he added.

Potato exports slashed

IN the first half of 2025, Kazakhstan experienced a significant decline in exports of staple vegetables, while shipments of carrots abroad increased substantially, according to data from LS.

Potato exports totalled 23,700 tons, which is 12.4 times less than in the same period of 2024. The largest buyer remained Uzbekistan, which imported 17,200 tons, a decrease of almost 14-fold from last year's 243,600 tons. Deliveries to Turkmenistan fell to just 483 tons (down 36 times), and to Tajikistan to only 65 tons (a 527-fold drop).

At the same time, exports to Russia increased sharply, reaching 5,900 tons, which is 12 times more than last year. Belarus also purchased 43.6 tons, up 8.7-fold.

Temporary ban on imports

THE Syrian Ministry of Economy and Trade announced a temporary ban on potato imports last month.

The decision, which only covered the month of August, was aimed at protecting local producers and ensuring food security.

The restrictions were linked to difficulties faced by local producers, particularly in regions such as Hama, where growers faced low market prices. At the time of going to press, The Ministry had not announced whether the temporary measures were likely to be extended.

Turkey remains Syria's largest trade partner.

Russia potato shipments down 22% in July

AT the end of July, Russian agricultural organisations had shipped 123,500 tons of potatoes, 22.3% less than the same period last year, according to news source Oreanda News.

Tatiana Gubina, head of the Potato Union, noted that this reflects only the first month of the season, which runs until the end of October. She said plantings are in good condition and expects final harvest volumes to exceed last year's.

The decline comes amid a 2.3% reduction in potato acreage compared to 2024, totalilng 986,000 hectares. The Ministry of Agriculture reported that as of August 19th, more than 630,000 tons of potatoes had been harvested, with the pace matching last year. In 2024, yields fell by 11.9% while acreage declined 6.1%, leading to sharp price increases before stabilizing later in the summer with the arrival of the new harvest.

Stability this year has largely been possible through imports. Between January and July, Russia imported 857,000 tons of potatoes, compared to 440,000 tons in the same period last year.

Meanwhile, government support for growers has been reduced by 13% owing to budget constraints, amounting to 3.7 billion rubles (US$42.3 million).

Dutch contingent visits snack factory

POTATO snacks producer, Beirut Erbil for Potato Products (BEPP), recently welcomed Dutch Consul Adriaan Jsselstein and Second Secretary for Economic Affairs Eva Fijen, as well as staff members from the Dutch Consulate staff to its headquarters.

Company Chairman haaban Al-Nahar had previously visited the Dutch Consulate headquarters in Erbil and the latest visit aimed to strengthen trade cooperation and explore investment opportunities between the Netherlands and Iraq.

The visitors were briefed on the production processes and modern techniques used in the factory and discussions took place on market expansion and expertise exchange.

Dutch sieves now available from Standen

MANUFACTURER and designer of potato planting and harvesting machinery, Standen Engineering Ltd, has been appointed as the exclusive UK dealer for Hessels Zeefbanden, a Dutch manufacturer of sieve webs.

With in-house production and profiling of traction belts, Hessels can deliver sieve webs to any size or specification and the new partnership enables Standen to supply a full range of replacement sieve webs and spare parts, including rollers, joiners, web joiners, and drive sprockets for all makes, not just Standen, for potatoes and other root crops.

Sales Director at Standen, Edward Gilbert, said: "We've used Hessels webs on our own harvesting and destoning machinery for many years and can vouch for their outstanding quality. By stocking spares for both Standen and other leading brands, we're able to provide growers with fast, dependable support during critical spring and harvest windows."

Hessels webs and parts are available to order from Standen Engineering via its Parts & Service Team.

Inter-changeable box tippler

THE Broadwater K90 1800 heavy duty forward box tippler has been designed to fit and be inter-changeable between a forklift truck and a telehandler for filling hoppers, trailers or planters

The K90 is fitted with a top roller over system to clamp a box securely, leaving the top of the box free of any obstruction or contact when being tipped forward.

The forward tippler is able to turn a box 180 degrees to make sure the contents are fully emptied, whilst doing it in a controlled manor

The K90 is operated by two hydraulic operating functions, clamping and then turning a box forward through 180 degrees, but requires only one double acting service and no electrics. As the operating system uses a sequence hydraulic pressure system. When a box is clamped, the hydraulic pressure trips the sequence valve over to the tipping function. A set of locking valves prevents the roller over clamp from opening during the tipping cycle.

A set of adjustable pallet forks and a quick hitch/unhitch mechanism by turning a handle allows the machine to be mounted/demounted from a forklift carriage quickly are standard

Trio of harvesters demonstrated

FIELD machinery manufacturer Dewulf demonstrated all three of its self-propelled potato harvesters at Potato Europe, which took place in Lelystad in the Netherlands on September 3rd and 4th.

Leading the line-up was the tried-and-tested Kwatro, a robust four-row self-propelled harvester on tracks, featuring front pick-up and the largest bunker in its class. Renowned for its excellent stability, the Kwatro can harvest even in extremely challenging conditions.

The second-generation Enduro, Dewulf's now well-known four-row harvester on wheels, will be equipped with an axial cleaning module featuring a bypass, set at a variable angle between 0 and 12°, a unique feature in today's market. The machine also boasts a spacious 12.3 m^3 bunker.

The RA3060, a classic among two-row harvesters, was also demonstrated. This machine, which has proven its reliability since 1989, was recently given a facelift and a boost in ease of use. In addition to its refreshed look and feel, the updated harvester is equipped with the spacious Claas X11 cabin that isshared with the Generation 2 Enduro.

UK expansion for field and storage machinery manufacturer

POTATO growers in the Midlands, South, East Anglia and Yorkshire will have greater access to field and storage machinery, along with technical support, following expansion by Belgian manufacturer AVR.

AVR has added a new dealer, Ernest Doe & Sons Ltd, and two service points, Jackson Agri & Plant Ltd and Matt Horler Agricultural Engineering Ltd, to its UK network.

AVR manufactures a full range of potato machinery. From planting bed preparation, planting and ridging to haulm topping, harvesting and storing. The manufacturer is expanding its business in the UK market where it is looking to display its full machinery range. It began increasing its presence in other key markets and its local AVR UK team last year.

Ernest Doe & Sons has 20 stores across East Anglia, the South East and East Midlands. The AVR machines will be available throughout its entire network, which enables AVR to make its machines easily available to more potato growers and handlers.

Andrew Starbuck, Country Manager UK, AVR, said: "Partnering with Ernest Doe & Sons is an important step in strengthening AVR's presence in the UK. Their extensive branch network, experienced sales teams, and strong aftersales support make them the ideal partner to deliver our machinery to potato growers throughout the Ernest Doe trading area. We look forward to working closely together."

Following the appointment of Jackson Agri & Plant Ltd and Matt Horler Agricultural Engineering Ltd as new service dealers, potato growers in both the Yorkshire and South West region will now have local, specialist support for AVR machinery, including service, spare parts, and sales assistance for AVR's full range — from planters and harvesters to grading and crop care equipment.

Led by Managing Director Neil Jackson, Jackson Agri, which is based near York, is well-established as a provider of specialist servicing for a variety of equipment, including applicators from leading manufacturers such as Chafer Horstine, Stocks and others and has been operating since 2022. Matt Horler, based in Cullompton, Devon, has been operating since 2020 and services the South West region.

Belgian company to expand services to processors

POLYSENSE, Belgian start-up company specialising in AI and hardware for the potato and bakery industries, recently closed a €2 million investment round which it hopes to use to expand its work in Europe and the UK.

The company uses artificial intelligence to help manufacturers improve their process control. Computer-aided quality inspections and process parameters are linked so defects and other errors can be quickly identified.

French fry supplier Agristo, Croky crisps manufacturer Roger & Roger and Dutch processor Coroos are amongst those currently using the Polysense product and it is hoped the new investment will enable the company to further its operations in the UK and Europe.

CEO of Polysense, Yarne De Munck, said: "With the use of synthetic data, we're creating a digital replica of customer products in no time. That is how we can generate data fast and efficiently, saving a lot of time and resources."

Polysense was established in 2022 by Yarne De Munck (CEO), Lucas Van Dijck (CTO) and Jarne Bogaert (COO).

Weather whiplash tests yields and markets

Alexander Preston of Preston Waldon discusses summer shocks and autumn opportunities for British potatoes.

BRITISH potato growers have been on a rollercoaster, where a "double record-breaker" spring, the UK's warmest and sunniest on record, paired with abnormally low rainfall, left fields parched during planting and tuber initiation.

Early growth looked promising but was soon stressed by drought, unless irrigation was available.

Then came August, flipping the script. Showers turned harvest into a stop–start slog, blight risks soared in the humidity, and some crops aged prematurely under the heat. In short: Weather whiplash.

The result? Yields are all over the place. Scotland fared well, but parts of England saw poor returns where water ran short. National output may average out on paper, but that masks the brutal field-by-field variability.

Meanwhile, prices crashed. A hangover from last year's oversupply met reduced consumption and high EU production. By July, English packing prices had slumped to around £90/tonne, down nearly 90% year-on-year. A tough squeeze for growers facing rising input costs.

This summer proved that weather extremes can swing yields – but market prices are driven by global quirks beyond any one farm's control.

Fair-dealing rules: Contracts get teeth

While growers battled the elements, a quiet policy shift gave hope for a fairer future. On August 13th, new fair-dealing rules came into force for the pig sector, with crops widely expected to follow. These rules - backed by the Agriculture Act - require written contracts with clear terms on pricing, volume, length, dispute resolution and more. Enforcement falls to a newly-empowered Agricultural Supply Chain Adjudicator.

This is the most consequential supply chain shift since GSCOP – and it's arriving sector by sector. Even the National Pig Association, which pushed for change, welcomed the rules as "hard-won and workable".

Why does this matter for potatoes? Because one-sided or handshake contracts with processors and packers may soon be history. DEFRA has already hinted that cereals and produce are next. Forward-thinking buyers are preparing now, and growers should too.

Audit your contracts:

- Is pricing transparent?
- Are deductions fair?
- Do you have clarity on payment terms and volume guarantees?

Document any unfair terms or delays. The regulatory mood is shifting and the power balance is starting to tilt back towards the farmgate.

DEFRA's green pivot: Follow the money

DEFRA's summer budget reshuffle sent a clear signal: Environmental schemes are the priority. Funding quietly shifted away from traditional farm support, in favour of actions that deliver on water, biodiversity, and climate targets.

The latest £150 million environmental grant pot (opened on July 3rd) was fully allocated by August 1st. That tells us two things:

1. Demand is sky-high for support to invest in reservoirs, slurry stores, fencing, etc.
2. You must be ready. Shovel-ready bids win the race.

Meanwhile, each UK nation is diverging:

- Scotland: A new £20k Future Farming Investment Scheme launched.
- Wales: Its Sustainable Farming Scheme is due in 2026, with controversial tree rules scaled back.
- NI: Nitrate rules are still contested as farming groups push back on tough limits.

For cross-border operations, this "four nations" patchwork adds complexity. But the direction of travel is clear: Green delivery is now the gateway to public funding.

Grower's Playbook for 2026

This season delivered tough lessons. Here's how to turn them into action:

Build Climate Resilience: Invest in water security and soil health now. If grants align, grab them for irrigation, drainage, fencing, shelter belts. One pound spent today may save three in future flood or drought losses.

Demand Fair Terms: Don't wait for legislation. Insist on written contracts with pricing formulas, quality specs, and prompt payment terms. The policy mood has shifted so use it to your advantage.

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

Make Environmental Delivery Pay: Government is paying for good practice, from cover crops and min-till to insectary strips and rotations. Aligning with these schemes can boost income and your sustainability story with retailers.

Prepare for Price Swings: Market volatility is the new normal. Forward contracts, crop storage, and variety or market diversification all help manage risk. Always plan cashflow for a worst-case season.

Grower Power = Collective Voice: Join producer groups, engage with NFU, or push for change locally. This summer proved that growers have had enough of being told to "adapt" without a plan. The sector needs clearer, fairer paths and growers must help to shape them.

Policy stability matters more than flashy new pots. We need trust, clarity, and a joined-up route to change. BPR

Alex's observations draw from AgriLook, Preston Waldon's monthly briefing which connects the dots between policy, markets, and action, offering insights to help you stay ahead. For further information visit **www.prestonwaldon.co.uk/agrilook**.

Hutton-bred potatoes help battle major pest in Kenya

New varieties now included in country's National Variety List.

SCIENTISTS from the National Potato Innovation Centre (NPIC), based at The James Hutton Institute have introduced two new potato varieties to Kenya, that are now included in the country's National Variety List.

The project was a collaboration with the University of St Andrews, the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), the International Potato Center (CIP) and the International Centre of Insect Physiology and Ecology (icipe), as well as the Kenya Plant Health Inspectorate Service (KEPHIS) and Seeds2B.

The new varieties, Malaika, named after the daughter of a farmer who was integral to the early field trials, and Glen, reflecting the Scottish heritage of the varieties, have passed the obligatory National Potato Trials. They have also been approved by processors in Kenya.

They were bred originally in a joint project between Greenvale and Hutton Scientific Services, the commercial arm of the Hutton, and combine the preferred traits of local growers with resistance to potato cyst nematode (PCN), which is currently devastating the Kenyan crop. The microscopic parasite has been invading potato roots, stunting growth and diminishing yields.

Senior Scientist, Professor John Jones, the Hutton and St Andrews lead on the project, said: "The release of these two varieties is the culmination of many years work and is a collaboration between social scientists, crop scientists, plant breeders, the Kenyan Government, seed suppliers and farmers. It has brought together researchers and stakeholders in the UK and in Africa to help ensure that we are providing solutions that are in line with the needs of growers in the region. I'm delighted that we have passed this critical milestone."

Senior Scientist at IITA, Danny Coyne, added: "It has been a remarkable journey involving multiple partners who combined to ensure the success of this undertaking. PCN is a major pest of a key crop in Kenya, and the region, and the delivery of Malaika and Glen marks a major breakthrough for controlling this pest."

Potato is the second most important food crop in Kenya after maize and benefits around 2.5 million people across the potato value chain. With an approximate value of $500 million per annum, potato is a key economic agricultural driver for Kenya.

The Hutton carries out scientific research and breeding programmes aimed at developing new potato varieties with desirable agronomic characteristics and resilience to external stresses, such as temperature extremes and diseases. Malaika and Glen also have the potential to be of value in the countries surrounding Kenya where PCN is also present and to provide reliable, resilient crops that offer a route to food security.

Research carried out as part of the project showed that Kenyan smallholder growers need potato varieties that have low dormancy that can be replanted quickly after harvest, and that are fast-cooking to reduce fuel use.

Currently around 90% of growers source seed from their own farm or from neighbours, with only 6% buying from certified seed suppliers. The information collected during this project will be used to shape plans for distributing the new potatoes and to give growers the confidence to grow these new varieties. Their introduction will now be scaled up by working with Kisima seeds for the commercial sector, while Syngenta Foundation Farmers' Hubs will provide advice and multiply healthy seeds for smallholders.

Initial support for the project came from Innovate UK and further support was provided through the Belgian Government (IPBO) and The Syngenta Foundation to ensure that these new varieties reached Kenyan farmers.

New duo soon to hit supermarkets

A NEW salad potato and a good mash variety could soon be hitting supermarket shelves.

The two new varieties, unveiled at a recent field event in Caythorpe, Lincolnshire, are part of the variety development programme from supplier Branston, which organised an annual field walk for its growers from Yorkshire, Lincolnshire, Norfolk and Suffolk.

The salad variety, whose name is under wraps, was first developed with the James Hutton Institute, near Dundee, in 2015. Having been developed over the past 10 years, it is said to have a firm nutty taste while the other variety, named Inca Rosa, is quick cooking and good for making mash.

Inca Rosa, a 'pretty' white potato with pink eyes, cooks in nearly half the time of a normal potato, owing to traits from its native Peruvian heritage.

Organiser Martin Stothard, Branston's technical lead for seed, varieties and innovation, said: "We've been showing a host of varieties that have been undergoing various trials, with some nearing completion for growing commercially in readiness to be packed up for supermarket shelves.

"Our field walk event is a great opportunity to collaborate with growers by demonstrating the new varieties that are coming through and to exchange insights on topics such as yields and disease resistance.

"We are constantly searching for and developing new types of potatoes that will appeal to consumers. It's a valuable chance for growers to get ahead of the curve in growing their own commercial crops."

The potatoes on display have been identified as potential candidates to be approved and packed by Branston, a main supplier to Tesco. They are grown alongside a commercial potato crop before being dug up and taken to the Branston lab for grading and analysis. The subsequent data is given to the growers to demonstrate their growing attributes, yield and potential performance.

The trial site is rented from GR Ward and Co, which has worked with Branston for more than 25 years. It has 25 different plots of varieties and the potatoes are at various stages in their development – evaluation, demonstration, semi-commercial and finally commercialisation.

Another rising star is the Skywalker white potato, said to have good agronomic and sensory characteristics.

"The small plots on show to growers included salads, white and red varieties and are a really good test of how they will perform in the field and be produced on a bigger scale," said Martin.

"Forward-thinking growers are looking for the next variety that's a little bit different and can perform well in varying conditions. Our event is a great way of sharing knowledge."

Branston's buyers and agronomy experts were also in attendance, along with John Worth, Tesco's specialist Technical and Development Manager.

John said: "It's always interesting to attend field visits and talk to growers and suppliers about the new varieties coming through. There is some exciting innovation taking place and, as a company, Tesco has been working hard to get closer to growers."

10-year project pays off for IPM

IPM Potato Group recently visited potato growers in Kenya, who are growing the Java variety on small plots for processors and the local market.

The breeder has been collaborating with local partners to to develop and introduce improved potato varieties tailored to Kenyan conditions for the past 10 years, which has involved testing 20 varieties, building certified seed structures and importing invitro material. The smallholder growers are now achieving yields of up to 40 tons per hectare after planting Java. This is four times the national average, according to IPM's Business Development Manager Sean Owens.

"Seeing their success is a powerful reminder of what long-term collaboration can achieve," he said in a recent online post, adding: "It's been a long journey with a few false dawns, a couple of hiccups and even a global pandemic along the way, but seeing the final results first-hand makes the journey worthwhile."

Cash boost for true seed development

THE European Investment Bank (EIB) has signed a €20 million venture debt financing agreement with Dutch biotechnology company Solynta, to accelerate the development of potato varieties with enhanced resistance to disease and resilience to climate change.

Solynta will use the EIB support for its research into the use of true potato seeds instead of traditional tubers for cultivation.

True potato seeds, unlike larger and heavier tubers, don't spoil during transportation and long-term storage for the next crop season, boosting the chances of a successful harvest. The EIB backing for Solynta takes the form of venture debt and is supported under the European Commission's InvestEU programme.

EIB Vice-President Gelsomina Vigliotti said. "Potatoes are a food staple around the world, making sure that they can grow in increasingly difficult climates and with higher chances of a good yield is extremely important."

Using true potato seeds as an alternative to tubers for cultivation has the potential to improve the economics of potato production and, through hybrid breeding technology, Solynta has been able to create robust varieties that require fewer crop protection inputs.

Solynta's breeding method, which excludes genetically modified organisms (GMOs), can adapt potato characteristics relatively quickly to different needs including resistance to diseases such as late blight and adaptation to climate change.

Solynta Chief Executive Officer Peter Poortinga said: "Potato growers around the world need access to disease-free starting material with strong resistance against diseases like late blight. With our new potato

varieties, propagated via true seeds instead of the traditional tubers, we bring new varieties to the market that require fewer chemicals for crop protection and help improve global food security, particularly for local communities."

Klasja van de Ridder, Head of the Representation of the European Commission in the Netherlands, added: "Food security is a key element of the new Vision on Agriculture and Food of the European Commission. The loss of yield due to climate change is a threat to the EU and the rest of world. Development of more resilient potato seeds will strengthen global food security. The Commission supports this initiative under InvestEU, as it contributes to the EU 's priority for long-term competitiveness and sustainability of the farming sector and welcomes the cooperation with Solynta and the EIB."

Protein's role in drought survival

SCIENTISTS in Japan have identified a hidden player in plant survival: Myosin XI.

This unexpected link between the motor protein and hormone signalling that regulates water loss deepens understanding of plant stress responses and could open up opportunities for engineering drought-resilient crops.

With intensifying global warming and climate change, plants have evolved to counteract water scarcity via 'stomatal closure,' where the tiny pores on leaf surfaces responsible for gaseous exchange close to limit water loss. This process is regulated by the plant hormone abscisic acid (ABA), which plays a crucial role in the plant's internal stress-response mechanisms.

While the role of ABA in drought response is well-established, researchers have now discovered the contribution made by myosin XI, a motor protein traditionally known for transporting cellular components. To explore this, a team of researchers led by Professor Motoki Tominaga from Waseda University, Japan, conducted a study to determine whether myosin XI actively contributes to drought response in plants and to uncover the processes involved.

Researchers used used genetically modified plants lacking one, two (2ko), or all three (3ko), major myosin XI genes. These were then compared to wild-type plants across several tests, including drought survival, water loss, stomatal aperture, and ABA sensitivity.

Plants lacking myosin XI, especially the 2ko and 3ko mutants, showed a higher rate of water loss, impaired stomatal closure, and lower survival under drought. They were also less responsive to ABA.

Motoki said: "It was found that in multiple mutants of plant myosin XI, the rate of water loss during drought is four times faster than in the wild type. This finding offers a new perspective on how plants adapt to environmental changes."

Plenty of promise – but a note of caution

Belinda Clarke, Director of Agri-TechE, shares her thoughts on the inclusion of agri-tech in the UK Industrial Strategy Sector Plan.

THE newly-unveiled Modern Industrial Strategy offers lots of "wins" for UK agri-tech, hopefully removing some of the well-articulated barriers to help the industry realise its full potential.

As part of the over-arching 10-year Strategy, "agri-tech" has been identified as one of the six "frontier sectors" (alongside automotive, batteries, aerospace, space and advanced materials) within the Advanced Manufacturing 'Growth Driving Sectors' Plan.

As well as outlining some specific interventions for agri-tech (including committing at least £200m for the Farming Innovation Programme until 2030), there are some even bigger prizes for agri-tech embedded in the strategy.

Being named in the Sector Plan means that across various government departments there is a collective and agreed direction of travel. It means hopefully better cooperation between departments where they might have influence over different elements of a challenge – now they can and should work together to align their efforts.

Weather and seasonality aside, the challenges still facing widespread commercial agri-tech adoption are not unique to our industry. As we heard at our Challenge Convention, there is an urgent need to reduce energy costs, minimise supply chain disruption, raise finance, support scale-up, and develop the skills for the workforce of the future.

It's heartening to see that while many of the interventions outlined in the strategy are not bespoke for agri-tech, they certainly provide huge opportunities. For example, the plan includes data sharing infrastructures to support governance and build trust, leveraging public and private investor partnerships, and regulatory reform.

It also features specific deliverables, such as a new Robotics and Autonomous Systems programme, creating a network of physical Robotics Adoption Hubs to help businesses adopt these technologies. In addition, £100m has been committed over three years to enhance engineering skills, plus short courses in engineering, AI and digital skills.

So, we are going to have to learn to sit alongside other sectors and demonstrate the value, impact and potential return on investment to ensure money will be directed to agri-tech.

Looking at the other "frontier sectors," it's hard to imagine a farm, agri-business or supply chain player not looking to harness solutions from them. In fact, many of the innovations we classify under the umbrella of "agri-tech" have been developed within, or inspired from, these other sectors.

There are natural partnerships that will hopefully emerge, and co-operation, not competition, is going to be key.

Precision technologies feature strongly, with controlled environments, robotics and automation, advanced sensors, AI and data systems all named, as well as an ambition for "engineering biology" (formerly known as synthetic biology) to be applied to agriculture.

An additional £5m committed to the Farming Innovation Investor Partnerships which will hopefully leverage another £10m of private investment by 2030.

It is of course fantastic to see the Government's recognition of the impact to date, and the future potential for agri-tech in the UK. Its inclusion is the result of many months of work by unsung heroes behind the scenes, putting forward the business case for agri-tech's place amongst other key sectors.

This is a huge opportunity – but things have to change. There has been much success to celebrate, but there is some fatigue and even disillusionment over certain initiatives in the UK agri-tech community that haven't delivered on original ambitions. Displacement of existing commercial entities by mis-aligned public funding has also been a risk.

Change is needed, and there is now an opportunity to do things differently, reflecting the "new world order" and building on past successes.

The ultimate aim – for agri-tech at least – is to achieve a sector turnover of at least £20 billion by 2035. This is an increase from £13.1bn achieved back in 2023. It will be achieved by the success of the growing number of companies spending more on R&D, increasing their productivity, scaling and exporting.

When it comes to government success, the metrics are everything. Let's give them something to count on.

Longevity of leaf wetness can give key insights

KNOWING how long water remains on the surface of potato plant leaves is impossible via manual monitoring, but is useful knowledge that can be provided by weather apps, according to agtech supplier Sencrop.

Without a weather sensor to measure leaf wetness, it's necessary to walk around fields to observe the presence of water on the leaves.

Leaf wetness conditions play a crucial role in disease development, particularly fungal diseases, and by closely monitoring leaf wetness, growers can anticipate risks and plan interventions. Humidity also plays a crucial role in determining the optimal timing and positioning of treatments.

For low volume treatments, good leaf wetting allows for better dilution of products, improving their effectiveness, while for standard volume treatments, excessive moisture on the leaves can cause the product to wash off, reducing effectiveness, Sencrop's specialists advise, adding that by anticipating critical wetting periods, growers can plan treatments at the right time, reduce their expenses and gain efficiency.

Mobile phone app to detect potato wound early

POTATO blight could soon be detected using mobile phones, thanks to a new app being developed by Welsh scientists.

Led by a research team at Aberystwyth University, the DeepDetect project aims to develop a mobile phone app that uses artificial intelligence to provide early warnings of diseases in potatoes.

Dr Edore Akpokodje, Lecturer in Computer Science at Aberystwyth University, said: "Our aim is to empower growers by creating a resource that is not only scientifically sound but also practical and easy to use, to provide disease forecasts in their specific area, straight to their phones. By integrating farmers' feedback from the outset, we will ensure that this technology is based on real-world needs and challenges."

The project also aims to reduce the environmental and financial burden of the widespread use of preventive spraying.

See our disease section for more information about this and other disease monitoring advice.

Agristo cuts waste and boosts production efficiency for French fries with Polysense

AGRISTO faced a pressing challenge: Ensuring consistent potato quality at scale while cutting waste and avoiding costly delays, something traditional food quality inspections couldn't deliver. Polysense answered the call with artificial intelligence and multi-layer food quality inspections, monitoring production lines in real time to spot defects, anomalies, peel residue, and exact product dimensions. Instant, actionable insights let operators intervene immediately, keeping quality uniform and operations smooth. The outcome is faster deliveries, lower costs, and a more sustainable, profitable process. Scalable and adaptable, Polysense supports Agristo in meeting their production goals and scaling efficiently.

www.polysense.ai/agristo

Co-Director of CPFI appointed

THE James Hutton Institute has appointed Dr Mark Wilkinson as the new Co-Director of its Climate-Positive Farming Initiative (CPFI).

The CPFI, which is based at Glensaugh Research Farm, seeks to help growers tackle the climate and biodiversity crises with technological innovations, including smart water management, renewable energy production, agroforestry and more.

A senior research scientist in catchment hydrology, Mark joined the Hutton in 2012 following almost a decade at Newcastle University. He has a wealth of experience in catchment hydrology, land management strategies and nature-based solutions and a strong track record of building networks and working with farmers, landowners, policy makers and other key stakeholders.

In his new role, Dr Wilkinson will work alongside Professor Alison Hester, CPFI Director, and Dr Scot Ramsay, CPFI Coordinator.

He said: "I'm enthusiastic about the opportunity to co-lead the CPFI and contribute to delivering integrated, evidence-based solutions for climate-positive farming."

Alison Hester added: "I'm excited to work with Mark as we move into this next phase of the CPFI. Our setup has been a great success, and we have ambitious, transformative plans - Mark's expertise and enthusiasm will be invaluable in achieving them."

Dean to manage optical sorting division

DEAN Ekkaia has been appointed as Director of Product Management for optical sorting solutions at Duravant, the company which provides sorting and handling solutions for potatoes.

He will manage global activities that support development and sales of advanced sorting technologies that help food processors and packers optimise product quality, increase yield and maximise production efficiencies.

Jack Lee, Duravant Group President - Food Sorting and Handling, said: "For the first time, we're combining the optical sorting expertise of Key Technology, Multiscan and WECO under unified product management. This strategic consolidation allows us to accelerate innovation while fostering better collaboration between our teams, delivering superior equipment and aftermarket services that give our customers stronger competitive advantages."

Dean brings more than 15 years of experience in product management and leadership for automation and food processing equipment. Most recently, he served as an independent consultant advising on industrial product management strategies including AI adoption. Prior to that, he spent nearly seven years at Bühler in product management leadership roles, including as Global Product Management Director.

He said: "Ultimately, what motivates me every day is knowing the products our sorters inspect go on to feed families just like mine. It's a privilege to help advance technologies that contribute to safer, better food for everyone."

New role at agronomy cooperative

AGRONOMY cooperative Scottish Agronomy has appointed a new Company Secretary.

Scottish Agronomy is owned by its farming members and offers independent agronomy advice. There are five agronomists and a team of 17 running the 30,000+ trials plots across Scotland. The cooperative was set up in 1985 to give growers independent advice on crop varieties and inputs, so they could make their own crop management decisions without commercial bias.

Following the retirement of George Lawrie, Robin Barron, formerly the General Manager of East of Scotland Farmers, starts his role this month. Robin's role is to support the board and the management of the business, ensuring professional governance. He will work two days a week from the Scottish Agronomy office at Arlary, near Kinross.

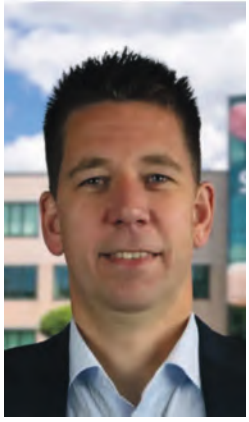
Managing Director of Scottish Agronomy, Adam Christie, said: "Robin has been involved in the arable sector and Scottish agriculture throughout his career and brings valuable and varied experience in both co-operatives and business. Not only has he worked in co-ops, including 21 years at EOSF and seven years as Project Manager at SAOS, but he has been on the board of SQC, SAOS and Chairman of AIC Scotland. His expertise and ability will be a huge asset and we are very much looking forward to progressing Scottish Agronomy with him."

The cooperatives agronomists use the findings from the variety trials with their own practical in-field experience to advise their members. The main aim is to give growers the information they need to make their own crop management decisions, based on the crops, varieties and management techniques which best suit their own farm business.

Adam said George Lawrie had a very positive impact on Scottish Agronomy during his term of office, describing him as 'a stalwart of Scottish Agronomy'.

"We are very grateful for the legacy he leaves. He has worn many hats over the years, but his role in the development of our cooperative has been pivotal. George's enthusiasm for cooperation and membership organisations is legendary, and he will always be remembered for his sage advice and the energy he brought to Scottish Agronomy, seeing and seizing opportunities, working collaboratively for the greater good and bringing the best out in the team. We wish him all the very best in his retirement."

New CFO for seed supplier



HENK Feijen has been appointed as the new CFO of potato breeding company and seed supplier Agrico.

With this appointment, Agrico once again has a two-member executive board. Feijen, together with CEO Mark Zuidhof, will be responsible for managing Agrico B.V. and its affiliated companies.

Although Henk has not previously worked within an agricultural environment, he does have an affinity with the sector. In his youth, he spent several years working for a table potato grower.

Handling and packing machines demonstrated

HANDLING and packaging machinery for potatoes will be displayed at the forthcoming PPMA show in Birmingham, where a number of processing products will be displayed.

Organised by the Processing and Packaging Machinery Association (PPMA), a UK-based association representing more than 350 member companies, the event will give visitors the chance to see machines used within growing and food processing, as well as attend free seminars where a line-up of industry leaders will discuss topics like sustainability, smart manufacturing, and operational efficiency.

A live demonstration theatre and networking events also form part of the event, which will take place at the NEC from September 23rd to 25th.

There will be static and operational demonstrations of sorting, weighing, bagging, and palletising solutions.

Collaborative, systems-based innovation to be highlighted at conference

AGRI-TECHE'S REAP Conference, which attracts growers, researchers, innovators, government officials and agri-business leaders from across the UK and beyond will take place at KingsGate Conference Centre in Peterborough on November 4th.

Baroness Minette Batters, who has just completed her Farm Profitability Review will be the keynote speaker, providing attendees with an insight into her findings.

"Innovation and technology are absolutely key to boosting on-farm productivity," said Minette. "The Farm Profitability Review, which will be completed just days before REAP, follows extensive consultation across the industry, and I'll have several conclusions and reflections to report during the keynote. It's a multi-faceted picture, but agri-tech has a vital role to play in building resilient, sustainable and profitable farms of the future.

"I've been trying to get to an Agri-TechE event for a while, so I'm looking forward to attending REAP and being part of the conversation."

Agri-TechE Director Belinda Clarke said the 2025 theme reflects the urgent need for collaborative, systems-based innovation in potato growing.

"As pressure grows on land, time, money, people and resources, both co-creation and co-existence are essential. We need mission-led innovation shaped by real-world challenges, and to embrace the reality that multiple systems will share the same space," she said. "Success and future farm profitability depend on how we bring them together, which is what we intend to bring closer to reality at REAP 2025."

We need mission-led innovation shaped by real-world challenges, and to embrace the reality that multiple systems will share the same space,"

For more details about these and other forthcoming events of interest, visit our industry diary at **https://britishpotato.co.uk/industry-diary**.

Global machinery trade fair

AROUND 2,700 exhibitors from more than 50 countries are expected at Agritechnica 2025, which will take place at the Exhibition and Trade Centre in Hanover, Germany, from Sunday, November 9th to Saturday, November 15th.

Attended by around 430,000 visitors, the annual event is organised by the German Agricultural Society, DLG, and is a global trade fair for agricultural machinery.

Exhibiting companies will showcase innovations and current strategies in tractors, harvesting machinery, soil cultivation and seeding, crop protection and fertilisation, as well as solutions for digital farming, automation, robotics and artificial intelligence.

The exhibition program is complemented by a technical program lineup featuring DLG's 'Expert Stages', 'Spotlights', pop-up talks, and networking events focused on smart efficiency, digital farming, agricultural machinery trade, alternative drive systems, and soil health.

Startup companies will also showcase their ideas and products in the agrifood start-up area. Making its debut this year is the Digital Farm Centre, presented by FarmRoboti in Hall 21 where visitors will be able to explore advanced technologies in digital farming, automation, robotics, and artificial intelligence.

New features for Euro gathering

A NEW conference and collaboration were due to be unveiled at Potato Europe, alongside the live demonstrations and demonstration plots, at the time of British Potato Review going to press.

The new conference has been co-organised with Europatat and World Potato Markets, and further details of a sustainable packaging collaboration with NNZ will be announced at the event.

The demonstration time schedule is now available to help those attending to plan their visit to Potato Europe, which was scheduled to take place at Wageningen University & Research, Field Crops in Lelystad, the Netherlands on September 3rd and 4th.

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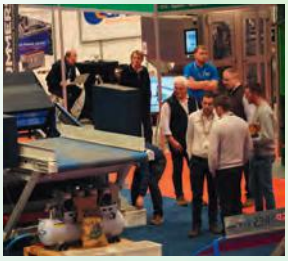

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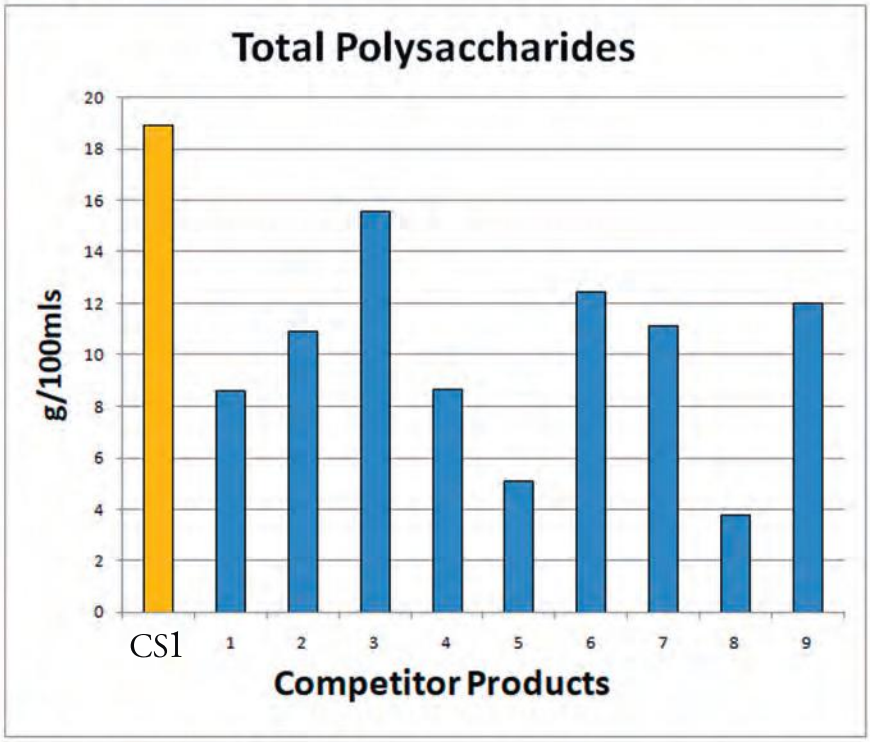

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