British
POTATO REVIEW

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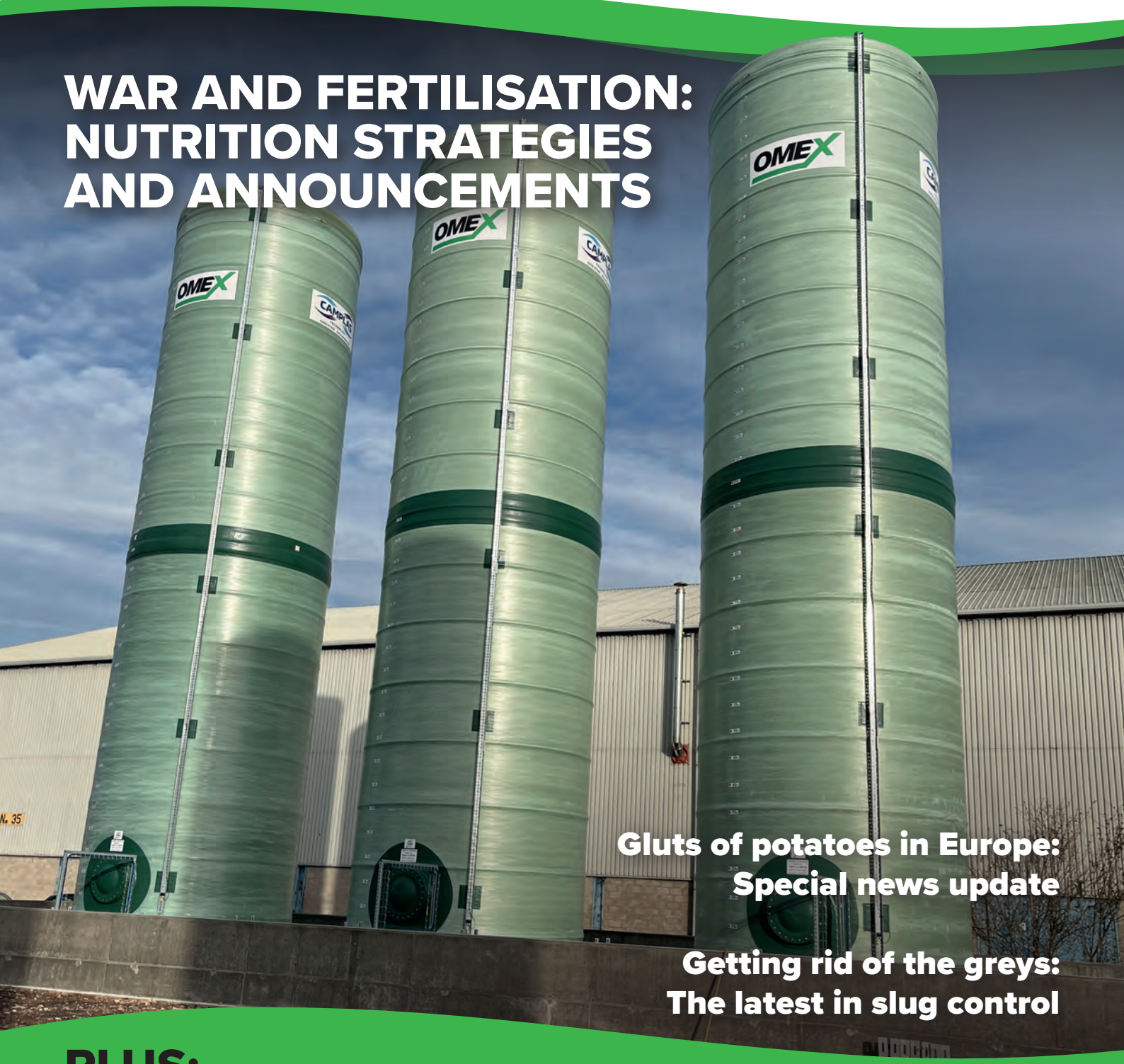
MAY/JUNE 2026



WAR AND FERTILISATION: NUTRITION STRATEGIES AND ANNOUNCEMENTS

Gluts of potatoes in Europe: Special news update

Getting rid of the greys: The latest in slug control

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Editor's letter

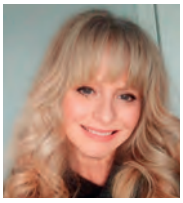
Conflict between nations is taking its toll on the potato industry and many growers may be tempted to cut back on their fertilisation strategies to protect growers' bottom line. But is this the correct approach or will it create more problems in the long run? Our in-depth feature takes a look at the current issues and how industry professionals are responding.

Despite the impacts of the war, fertilisation and nutrition strategies generally, are a hot topic at the moment, with new facilities opening and biostimulant trials showing positive results. I was lucky enough to join a contingent of journalists, agronomists and farmers on a recent trip to St Malo where I got an in-depth look into the hows and whys of seaweed-based biostimulant production and how this works for potatoes. This issue features the first in a series of articles examining everything from initial seaweed harvesting through to scientists' findings and products coming to market.

Stockpiles of unsold potatoes in Britain and Europe have been a great cause of concern for the industry. Some say it's because of changing diets – but is that really the case? Experts say not. Our special news feature on page 8 and insights from GB Potato's Scott Walker in the GB column on page 28 discuss this issue in detail and take a more rounded view of current circumstances.

The pests section in this issue has some interesting news to share, including how high-tech imaging could transform how growers monitor slug populations and how PhD research at Harper Adams University is improving understanding of how biofumigation can be used within practical IPM strategies for Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN).

We've also got some good insights in storage this month, with Cranfield University delving deep into dormancy and Adrian Cunnington explaining why the conversation around legislation affecting storage now needs to change.



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War and fertilisation

Conflict between nations is taking its toll on the potato industry. So what can be done to help protect growers' bottom line? We look at the current issues and how industry professionals are responding.

AS geopolitical tensions between the USA/Israel and Iran have continued to reshape global trade flows, a tightening fertiliser market is becoming of increasing concern to potato growers.

Fertiliser supply chains depend heavily on a small number of exporting regions and energy-intensive production, so when conflict disrupts energy pricing, shipping routes, or regional stability, it creates a chain reaction that potato growers feel almost immediately.

The conflict caused global fertiliser prices to skyrocket following the restriction of shipping through the Strait of Hormuz, where roughly one-third of the world's sea-borne fertiliser passes. The NFU reported that the conflict caused fertiliser costs to surge by up to 55% year-on-year while Oxford Economics' Alpine Macro recently said urea and ammonia prices had surged by around 50% and 20%, respectively.

NFU President Tom Bradshaw has said the potato industry faced a double whammy when this was combined with the surging cost of heating storage facilities, combined with large increases to standing charges for energy use.

"Growers are having to shoulder increased costs of fuel and fertiliser, often only being made aware of the price they will pay once products have been delivered onto farm," he said.

Some potato growers in the UK and US are reported to be considering lower application rates or switching to crops that require less nitrogen to cut costs.

With timing being crucial for potato planting and input decisions, higher fertiliser costs can lead to reduced application rates or shifts toward lower-yield crops and those decisions do not just affect growers themselves - they carry through to the supply chain and pricing.

Growers need transparency over pricing, Tom said – a factor recognised by the Competition and Markets Authority, which has been in discussion with suppliers and intermediaries to get further evidence and assess any consumer protection concerns.

The CMA's CEO Sarah Cardell said: "We will work with relevant officials and regulators to identify and monitor sectors likely to be affected by price rises and disruption – including agricultural inputs such as fertiliser and red diesel, groceries and travel – so that both the CMA and wider government can respond swiftly to any evidence of harmful practices across the economy."

Industry response

Fertiliser companies are recognising the challenges faced by growers and are trying to work with them, along with agronomists, to help minimise over-spending by ensuring applications are properly targeted. But at the same time, they warn against scrimping, pointing out that this could lead to even costlier impacts further down the line.

Crop Nutrition Business Manager at Yara, Tom Decamp, said the arithmetic is "unambiguous", pointing out that a 50-tonne pre-pack crop losing its quality premium of £40 to £50 per tonne represents up to £2,500 per hectare forfeited at the point of sale. Whereas the cost of correct soil-applied calcium nitrate fertiliser is less than £200 per hectare.

"Even allowing for today's elevated input prices, the potential return far outweighs the cost," he said.

Scott Baker, Business Growth Director Fortiflo, OMEX Agriculture, said in light of the current situation, growers needed to be optimising fertiliser and nutrient management for potato crops.

"We continuously advise growers to follow the 3R's: Right product, right place, right time. Making full use of available technology, such as SAP analysis, allows farmers to make precise, timely nutrition decisions that support crop performance," Scott said.

Storage day

MORE than 20 trade exhibitors, including principal sponsors Farm Electronics and UPL, will be present at a forthcoming Potato Storage Day.

The event, to be held on Wednesday, May 20th at Leadenhall Farm, Holbeach St Marks, courtesy of Dyson Farming, will feature a series of focused sessions on potato storage trials findings and best practice messaging, with additional content from companies specialising in new storage-focused products and systems.

It is organised by SDF Agriculture - run by Simon Faulkner and specialising in agronomic advice for potatoes - and Potato Storage Insight run by storage specialist and systems troubleshooter, Adrian Cunnington.

Scott Baker: "Make precise, timely nutrition decisions."

Tom Bradshaw: "Growers are having to shoulder increased costs of fuel and fertiliser."

CMA CEO Sarah Cardell: "We will work with relevant officials and regulators."

Simon Fox: "Not a year to apply nutrition on autopilot."

Tom decamp: "Arithmetic is unambiguous."

"As with any season, potato growers should focus on giving the crop exactly what it needs to thrive. Working closely with their agronomist and using data-driven insights from soil and SAP analysis helps ensure nutrition is applied efficiently and effectively.

"This year we've seen strong demand for our Fortiflo foliar nutrition range, particularly Bio 20, which growers rely on to support crop health and resilience under stress. Trials have also shown that blight control programmes can be significantly enhanced by incorporating the targeted nutrient treatment Zynergy."

Scott also advised that growers consider using inhibitors within their bulk liquid fertiliser applications.

"These products help protect the return on investment by reducing nutrient losses through leaching or atmospheric emissions, keeping more nitrogen available to the crop," he said. "Solutions such as NoXShield and NitroShield ensure fertiliser stays where it's needed, feeding the growing potato crop."

Simon Fox, CEO of Emerald Research Ltd, whose OptiYield system uses a data-driven approach to reduce fertiliser inputs, said: "The numbers coming out of the fertiliser market this spring have an uncomfortably familiar ring. UK-produced AN is around 30% above its pre-conflict level, granular urea is up nearer 40% and China's suspension of DAP exports until August has put a firm floor under phosphate prices. Potash has held up better, but rising shipping costs through a contested Strait of Hormuz will feed through soon enough.

"For a potato crop, where offtake is substantial and margins are thin, this is not a year to apply nutrition on autopilot!"

"When inputs get expensive the temptation is to cut rates. That is almost always the wrong instinct. What matters is not how much is applied, but how much the crop actually captures - and what it needs, in what proportion and when. Luxury growth is now a luxury we can't afford."

Simon reminded growers that the 2022 spike had shown that growers who pulled back hardest, without a plan to compensate, harvested the smallest crops and the worst margins. Those who came through best treated fertiliser as a precision input, not a commodity, he said.

"Start with the soil. A current analysis, honestly interpreted, tells you what the reserve is really offering. On well-indexed ground, modest reductions in granular P and K are defensible. On weaker sites, false economy is waiting to happen," he said.

'Modification can moderate costs'

MODIFICATION is the key to managing nutrition for potatoes while the fertiliser situation is less settled, growers are being advised.

While the Nutrient Management Guide (RB209) is still produced and updated annually by AHDB for the UK agricultural industry, including specific sections for potatoes, it should not be used for anything more than a starting point, Simon Fox stressed, pointing out that it had not kept pace with modern high-yielding varieties, changing rotations or UK summers that swing between waterlogged and droughted.

"It says little about micronutrient interactions, timing under stress, or the dynamics of nutrient availability in a bulking tuber crop. Variety, rotation, irrigation, soil minerals, organic matter history and realistic yield expectation all modify the picture - and that modification is where the margin lives or dies.

"If the forecast turns dry, strategy matters. Late N top dressings are a gamble when rain is scarce: Urea volatilises, prills sit on the ridge doing nothing, and uptake stalls just when bulking demands it - only to release just before lifting, when it is the last thing you want.

"Foliar nutrition comes into its own here, bypassing a dry rooting zone and delivering nutrient where photosynthesis is happening."

"But not all foliars are equal. The recent IFA monograph by Fernández and co-workers is plain: Crude "straight salt" foliars - raw sulphates and chlorides in water - are poorly absorbed, can scorch, and sometimes cost more in tissue damage than they deliver. Avoid. Cuticle penetration, droplet retention, humectancy, chemical form and proper complexation all matter. In a tight year, this is the difference between rescuing yield and quietly losing it.

"Magnesium deserves mention - the central atom in chlorophyll, routinely short on lighter soils, and cheap insurance against yellowing that steals bulking. Manganese, boron and zinc follow the same logic: Small quantities, disproportionate influence.

"Tissue testing pulls it together. Petiole analysis at end of tuber initiation and again at early bulking tells you whether the crop is on track. If so, spend nothing further. If not, a targeted foliar costs a fraction of a broadcast and works far faster."

Simon said biostimulants play a supporting role - particularly those acting on root development or heat/drought stress – which widens the window in which nutrition works.

"Measure, target, respond. The crop and soil will tell you what they need, if you ask!"

Carbon-light Georgina leads the way into stores

A LOW carbon concept farm in Lincolnshire has successfully grown its first crop of potatoes that are being sold by Tesco.

Established last year in a bid to help growers and suppliers reach net zero targets with innovative solutions, the low carbon concept farm is yielding successful results, with 500 tonnes of customer favourite variety, Georgina, entering Tesco stores in its Finest British All-Rounder and Baking Potato packs.

The potatoes have been grown using a combination of low carbon growing techniques such as circular economy fertilisers like CCm, which locks in CO2 as part of the process. Other techniques used include minimum cultivations without impacting yield or quality and transitioning the machinery's fuel to hydrotreated vegetable oil (HVO) fuel, which has an up to 90% lower carbon footprint compared to conventional fossil diesel.

The result is the same taste and texture customers expect from traditionally-grown potatoes, but at more than 50% lower carbon emissions.

Branston's Field Technical Manager Andy Blair, who is overseeing the operation at the concept farm, said: "It's a huge milestone to have achieved a lower average carbon footprint in the production of this crop of Georgina potatoes, compared to conventional production averages. The findings from this process will support the wider industry in edging forward towards national sustainability targets, which is exactly the outcome we'd hoped for.

"The ambition of the low carbon concept farm is not only to see how close we can get to a net zero potato, but to understand the interactions between crops as you move from one to the next. We've got several crops in rotation, so now we've made significant progress with the potatoes, we're looking at the carbon impact, soil health and biological impact of the process."

The team is already looking at next steps for future crops of Georgina and other varieties, including a focus on cover crops to help with soil structure and retaining nutrition, investing in R-Leaf fertiliser and trialling a biomethane tractor.

Andy said: "The low carbon concept farm will act as a test bed to roll out the practices more widely with the plan that all aspects are transferable to other farms and growers across the country. We've made huge progress but to get to net zero we're eager to work with others to see what technology and innovations can be used to take us even further."

Tesco's Head of Sustainable Agriculture and Fisheries Natalie Smith said: "Tesco Finest Georgina potatoes are a customer favourite, and we think they taste just as good as the potatoes grown using traditional methods.

"One of the aims of the farm is to test and learn from a variety of low carbon approaches, which in turn can de-risk the process for other farms in our supply chain and further afield. Increasing funding for innovation in UK agriculture is one of the key recommendations in our Greenprint for UK Farming report, and it's vital farmers have the ability to invest in new technology and approaches, if we're to tackle the challenges caused by climate change and nature loss."

Consumer call for organic largely met by Europe

BRITISH organic products are "in high demand" as the UK organic food and drink market enters its 14th year of consecutive growth, figures released today by Soil Association Certification reveal.

But while consumer demand remains strong, this is still largely being met by imports because the UK's overall organic production remains stagnant.

The newly-released Organic Market Report, covering trends from 2025, shows that the market has doubled in value over the last decade to reach £3.9bn.

In 2025 overall sales of organic increased by +4.2%, with the major driver of this growth in supermarkets where there was a sales uplift of +7%. Organic is also outpacing non-organic with the unit growth of organic in supermarkets four times that of non-organic.

Organic farmer and Soil Association farming advisor Adrian Steele said: "Supermarkets have been taking note and have reacted with rebrands and expansions to their organic ranges, along with more price promotions and loyalty discounts. This presents a key opportunity for our farmers to tap into demand from both consumers and retailers."

Latest government figures, covering 2024, show the overall percentage of organic UK farmland makes up just 3%. An increase in land in-conversion in England last year dramatically slowed when the Sustainable Farming Incentive (SFI) closed abruptly but the government recently revealed details for the revised SFI which included a renewed commitment to organic.

While England has yet to set targets to increase organic production, Scotland is aiming to double its organic farmland and the EU has also committed to achieving at least 25% organic farmland by 2030.

Plans to roll out a bigger potato-based cheese range

A FRENCH alternative cheese brand, whose products include potato as a key ingredient, has announced a funding round to bring more of its products to the UK and grow its range in Europe.

Jay & Joy uses potato starch and other potato-derived ingredients in several of its products to improve texture, binding, and melting properties. These include Josette (Spécialité végétale à fondre), an organic chickpea-based cheese alternative designed to melt, and Joy Juliette Vegan Cheese.

In addition to potato starch, Jay & Joy products often feature fermented cashews, coconut milk, and almond, particularly in its Jeanne (camembert alternative) products.

Jay&Joy launched in the UK in 2025, after becoming a market regular in France. It acquired Les Nouveaux Affineurs, another French brand, in January 2025, and launched into French supermarkets Monoprix, Franprix, Intermarché, and Carrefour, among others.

César Augier, CEO of Jay&Joy, said: "Our ambition is to make plant-based cheese accessible to everyone, without compromising on taste or enjoyment."

Jay&Joy draws inspiration from traditional French cheese-making methods, including rigorous fermentation and ripening processes. The recipes rely on short, minimally-processed ingredient lists, free of preservatives, additives, and colourings, while prioritising local sourcing.

Jay&Joy products are currently available in the UK from select independent stores and online retailers including Planet Organic stores, Abel&Cole, Alternativestores, VeganKind, Earth Natural Foods and Village Wholefood, The Grocery, Chelsea Health Store, Norwood Health Store, Portobello Wholefoods Ltd.

The €2 million funding round is led by investors Demeter, Beyond Impact, Mindstone, and Vivegan, and complemented by the arrival of new investors, including Makesense.

Swamped by potatoes - Europe under pressure

Large potato supply leads to a lack of market outlets, and low prices or even giving potatoes away for free has proven insufficient to reduce inventories.

THE European potato market is under pressure owing to a significant surplus, forcing growers in some cases to pay for the disposal of their product, according to price reporting agency DCA Market Intelligence.

The large supply has led to a lack of market outlets, and low prices or even giving potatoes away for free has proven insufficient to reduce inventories.

Dutch arable farmers, along with their counterparts in Belgium, Germany, and France, have significantly expanded potato cultivation over the past two years, driven by strong demand and favourable contract prices from the processing industry. Favourable growing conditions in 2025 resulted in high yields and, consequently, a large harvest.

However, demand for potatoes has clearly weakened. Increasing competition from Asia, import tariffs in the United States, and a weaker dollar have put pressure on the export position of European producers. This has led to a structural surplus.

Price formation reflects this situation. PotatoNL recently recorded prices of €-1.00 to €-2.00 per 100 kilograms for potatoes for animal feed, while prices for French Fry potatoes remain only slightly higher. Because of the surplus, volumes are increasingly being redirected to animal feed and bio-digestion, with disposal costs more frequently falling on growers, partly as a result of rising transport costs.

Although potatoes can technically be stored for long periods, the economic feasibility of doing so is declining. Without prospects for price recovery, growers are choosing to limit storage costs and bring their product to market earlier.

Potato market specialist at DCA Market Intelligence, Niels van der Boom, said: “Not everyone can store their potatoes for that long. Moreover, there is currently no outlook for market improvement. As a result, growers are deciding to stop incurring cooling costs. This is accelerating additional volumes onto the market, while storage space is needed for the new harvest.”

Surpluses in the Netherlands and surrounding countries are substantial. In 2025, the Netherlands harvested approximately 4.2 million tonnes of ware potatoes, 900,000 tonnes more than the previous year. Part of this volume has already been diverted to feed, digestion, or starch processing, but an estimated 500,000 to 600,000 tonnes still remain.

Other countries are facing similarly large surpluses. In Belgium, around 800,000 tonnes remain in storage without buyers while in France, the surplus is estimated at one million tonnes and in Germany, a comparable volume is expected. Based on DCA Market Intelligence estimates (2025), the total surplus in the EU-4 amounts to approximately 3.3 million tonnes.

In Belgium, promotional campaigns are being launched to market potatoes as food, feed, or as a feedstock for biogas. In France, GIPT and Arvalis are working on a protocol for controlled destruction to mitigate health risks.

In the Netherlands, the issue has been discussed, but concrete measures have so far not been implemented. Given the scale of the surplus, broader initiatives are needed to create sufficient capacity for the upcoming harvest in time.

The current situation underscores the need for market participants to realign production, contracting, and marketing strategies with a structurally changed market dynamic. BPR

“Growers are deciding to stop incurring cooling costs. This is accelerating additional volumes.”

Niels van der Boom, potato market specialist

DOWN TO EARTH

Peter has been a pioneer in moving towards sustainable farming and he is actively exploring new ways of thinking and doing. He keeps a very close eye on his crops. Regular field visits with trusted technical experts help him choose the most suitable solutions to the new challenges of transition. Peter stays tuned to what really matters, today and tomorrow.

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GROWING TOGETHER

‘Risk management more important than ever’

Key figures in British and US potato production look at some of the pitfalls faced by growers and potential strategies.

GB POTATOES chair Alex Godfrey, along with President of Potatoes USA Blair Richardson and Scottish Regional Director of insurance specialist Howden, Rory Gibson, recently discussed risks and strategies for the potato industry, while Rory introduced a new cover developed especially for growers.

Potatoes have always been a weather-sensitive crop, but with conditions becoming more volatile, protecting production is essential, Rory said, as he explained a new parametric protection policy for GB Potatoes members.

“We are seeing increasingly extreme and unpredictable weather patterns, while traditional insurers are becoming more risk averse,” he said. “Meanwhile, reduced farming subsidies and more uncertainty in crop returns mean protection is more important than ever.”

He explained that unlike traditional insurance that covers the risk of a peril such as fire, parametric insurance covers against a measurable event, such as 20 millimetres of rain. Once a certain threshold is met, payment can be made in as little as 24 hours and always within two months without the need for an assessor visit. The offer for potato growers is:

- Main risks identified: excess rain during harvest, not drought.
- Cover period: August 15th – November 15th.
- Three rain trigger categories: Short, intense rainfall (3 day event); Medium, prolonged rainfall (10 day event); Cumulative wet season over the whole period.

These thresholds are measured by satellite data and information from local weather centres. Rory said that potato policyholders will typically look to cover £5,000 per hectare of income. That would cost approximately £259/ha or just over £5/tonne. Typical payments are likely to be £2,273/ha for £1,554 of cover over five years.

Blair explained how a concerted campaign over many years has helped manage the reputational risk of potatoes and reinforce their standing as nutritious and versatile food for all ages.

“Fifteen years ago, little research existed on potato nutrition. Misperceptions - like the ‘couch potato’ stereotype - shaped public opinion. In 2010 we began investing $2–2.5 million annually in health and nutrition research, totalling about $30 million so far. This investment now enables us to respond quickly and confidently when inaccurate information appears in the media.”

He said the rise of social media has made the task of dispelling inaccurate information even more information, with studies showing that the vast majority of nutrition information on Tik Tok is inaccurate and 45% of nutrition information on Instagram misleading.

“Influencers have financial incentives to prioritise virality over accuracy. This makes credible, science-based research essential for defending the industry. Misinformation spreads faster than corrections, so our strategy includes engaging directly with media.”

This approach has resulted in a 36% retraction rate and a 60% reduction in the number of misinformation incidents requiring intervention.

“Our messaging, such as ‘potatoes are real food, real performance’, has gained strong traction, now ranking among the top search results for potatoes. This shift reflects the payoff of proactive investment rather than reactive communication.”

Blair said that Potatoes USA’s efforts to myth-bust are a global task and invited GB Potatoes to use its information and resources to promote the benefits of potatoes in the UK and beyond. GB Potatoes has already taken him up on the offer to help develop its own nutritional messages.

Five key aims

During the webinar, Alex, who is a Lincolnshire potato grower, told how GB Potatoes is working to help growers and the wider industry to manage its risks by focusing on its five key aims of building collaboration across the supply chain; horizon scanning to identify emerging issues; lobbying to influence policy, legislation and research priorities; promoting the British potato industry through traditional and social media and providing members with access to leading technical research and expertise.

Regular activity by GB Potatoes includes interaction with potato sector organisations and consultation groups for the seed and fresh groups. GB Potatoes also collaborates with the Horticultural Crop Protection forum and the National Potato Innovation Centre, with which it is running a joint summit in London in the summer to demonstrate the importance of the potato industry to policymakers.

Residual AHDB funding of £1.8 million means that risk-reducing projects such as the Fight Against Blight programme, aphid monitoring, virus management tools, CIPC residue monitoring and reputational management can continue, although Alex warned that the industry would need to self-finance these initiatives within the next three to five years.

A major win for GB Potatoes has been the CiC-START PhD programme, said Alex. Run jointly with the Scotch Whisky Research Institute, it has secured funding for 24 PhD positions over three years, including money for pre-competitive research.

This focus on the next generation is also seen in the Potato Industry Development Programme, facilitated by GB Potatoes, which is supporting enthusiastic new entrants. Participants have already visited potato supply chain companies Haith, McCain, Branston and AKP, with visits to Scotland and London planned. BPR

Protect against all blight strains from tuber initiation, with Ranman Top.

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GROWING TOGETHER

Your seed is your biggest asset, so it needs protecting from day one.

Field notes for a resilient season

Emily Harrod, Agronomist with Frontier Agriculture, offers some practical advice on potato blight considerations from growing through to harvest, drawing on recent trials findings.

WHILST the risk of blight is unpredictable and rarely follows the plan, a proactive and integrated strategy can effectively manage risk and maximise crop returns. Success relies on a joined-up approach that combines precise soil nutrition and targeted spray programs with careful application timing and high-quality storage.

A focus on these areas ensures your potato crop remains resilient and profitable throughout the season.

Lay strong foundations

I always tell my growers that you can't manage what you haven't measured. We always recommend starting with soil sampling for PCN and pH and core nutrients like P, K, Mg. We use those results to create fertiliser and soil treatment plans specifically for the situation on that farm, and to ensure the crop meets end market specifications.

It's also important to consider in-field variability. Using variable rate application supports a vigorous, healthy canopy that's easier to protect. Our agronomy and crop nutrition teams take those lab results on variability and use them to recommend the exact products and application methods that fit your soil. Being precise reduces wasted product and ensures every pound you spend is boosting your yield.

A key component of blight stewardship and resistance management is to ensure you're starting right. Careful management of dumps, removal of volunteers and planting clean seed. A focus on hygiene foundations early on will pay dividends later.

It starts with seed!

Your seed is your biggest asset, so it needs protecting from day one. When we're looking at seed protection programs, I've seen that liquid treatments like Maxim 100FS, Moncut Max, and Honesty are well worth the investment to get the plant off to a strong start. Your agronomist will be able to advise on the most appropriate seed protection programme for your potato seed.

Prevention is better than cure

Blight remains one of the biggest in crop threats, with populations and strains evolving. Good blight management should focus less on the ability to react in a blight event and more on preventing in the first place.

Emily Harrod, Agronomist with Frontier Agriculture.

When I sit down with a grower to build a plan, we look at the whole picture:

Risk tools: We use weather stations (like Sencrop) and blight forecasting models to monitor challenges.

Nutritional resilience: We use balanced nutrition - matching nitrogen to how the variety grows- to build a sturdy canopy. I've found that mixing granular and liquid fertilisers gives us the best results.

Filling the gaps: With mancozeb gone, we can't over-rely on fluazinam; we need the right tank-mix partners to keep the program robust. I'm also keeping a close eye on Alternaria during the rapid and full canopy stages.

New options: We have some new chemistry like Areli (valifenalate + cyazofamid) arriving, though keep in mind Revus Neo isn't being marketed for 2026.

Use nutrition to build resilience

Appropriate nitrogen levels in line with determinacy of the variety, along with adequate P, K Mg and sulphur helps grow a strong, uniform canopy. Working with growers, we've found that combining granular and liquid fertiliser products delivers great results, and, where it fits, we also look at enhanced nutrient efficiency options to match crop demand and reduce losses.

It's essential to balance your programme through the key life stages, with a comprehensive technically-robust programme allowing you to be flexible to changes in field and crop conditions.

Alternative modes of action and actives through the programme, keeping in line with maximum applications permitted on labels and FRAC guidance.

Consider volume of products in your programme and consider a closed transfer system (CTS) for application.

Don't forget to factor in alternaria control where needed during rapid canopy, and full canopy growth cycles, being particularly mindful of this with the loss of mancozeb.

Field-applied Maleic Hydrazide helps in-store sprout suppression

MH can still be a key cornerstone of in-field secondary growth control and early in-store sprout suppression. To make life easier, we can now get this in a liquid format for use with Closed Transfer Systems (CTS), which makes filling the sprayer faster and safer. MH also helps manage volunteers, supporting your whole rotation risk management. Our experience in the field has consistently demonstrated this product's value in recent seasons as part of a wider crop protection strategy.

Protect what you've grown

After a season of investment, it's important that the care and attention continues long after harvest. Keep lifting damage low and allow adequate skin set before loading. Nicked or wet tubers are a fast track to storage issues. When considering potato storage, you're looking for hygienic stores, verified airflow, and decisive drying/wound healing before pull down.

Potato agronomists will be able to help and advise through all aspects of the growing season from tuber treatment at planting, through the growing and harvest season, then onto store controls working alongside our potato store disinfection and fogging treatment teams.

Ultimately, there is not a silver bullet for blight. But by layering clean foundations with tailored nutrition and a technically-robust spray program, we shift from reactive crisis management to proactive protection.

Whether it's managing variety quirks or ensuring a bruise-free transition to the shed, a joined-up approach protects your investment from the ground up. BPR

"A key component of blight stewardship and resistance management is to ensure you're starting right. Careful management of dumps, removal of volunteers and planting clean seed. A focus on hygiene foundations early on will pay dividends later."

Bridging the gap

Biostimulants and phosphonates show promise in post-mancozeb blight strategies.

Above: Technical Manager for non-combinable crops at Agrii, Don Pendergrast, said there was a clear benefit to adding a third application of potassium phosphonate in the programme.

THE loss of mancozeb has left a big hole in blight programmes, both for late blight and Alternaria control, and for resistance management, and trials by The Potato Partnership (TPP) continue to be carried out to fill the gap with biological and plant health products, rather than more of the same systemic chemistry.

Those involved in the trials say they are seeing some positive signs in the work they're carrying out with biostimulants and phosphonates.

Technical Manager for non-combinable crops at Agrii, Don Pendergrast, said: "We are seeing a lot of potassium phosphonate-based products coming through, so there's a lot of focus on these. We also looked at some novel biocontrol options alongside plant health stimulators like Innocul8, which we have looked at for some years now."

The 2025 trial was at the Eurofins site in Derbyshire, using the variety Melody, inoculated with EU36 and EU37, although the conditions were so dry that little blight was seen until September, by which time the dominant strain was the oxathiapiprolin (OXTP) resistant EU46.

"Last year's trials built on our 2024 work, which used the biostimulant Innocul8 at the beginning of the programme. Alongside fungicides, it seemed to indicate a way of managing the loss of mancozeb," notes Don.

The conventional systemic fungicide programme, with Innocul8 replacing mancozeb, outperformed the programme including mancozeb in terms of green leaf area and late blight infection levels by the end of the season.

"The plant health effects of Innocul8 were underpinning the fungicide programme," Don said.

Because of these results and the fact that mancozeb is no longer on the market, all the 2025 programmes tested were based on a programme using early Innocul8 alongside the standard fungicide programme, which included several new products that are close to launch, submitted by crop protection manufacturers. Don says they wanted to move away from mancozeb always being in the conversation and compare a series of alternative products that represent a different approach.

Mixed into this programme, they compared different treatments using a range of potassium phosphonate products, micronutrition, orange oil and plant extracts.

"The first major infection event happened on August 14th, and differences were clearly visible by the middle of September, just prior to crop desiccation.

"There was a clear benefit to adding a third application of potassium phosphonate in the programme. Three applications of Privest (ametoctradin + potassium phosphonate) clearly looked like the best plot in the trial. This is partly because it was the only programme that excluded oxathiapiprolin or an equivalent mode of action fungicide, given that the dominant strain in the trial was OXTP resistant EU46.

"The orange oil treatment looked noticeably different in the field. The leaves were more waxy, and they had a sheen to them, which is no surprise considering we were applying something oil-based. The plant extract produced a similar sheening, and the crop looked healthy throughout," Don said.

Considering the number of phosphonate products applied, they checked residues in the tubers at the end of the season, and they were well below the maximum residue limit (MRL). Don said the team will continue to monitor this, because in a different season, up to six applications might be used which is close to the limit.

Last year's work shows that there are some alternative product options to support a standard blight programme, he added. Additional applications of potassium phosphonate products, orange oil products and micronutrition all offered benefits in the programme. The aim of the 2026 TPP blight trials will be to determine the most suitable timing for these.

Do biologicals offer blight resistance management?

THE confirmed presence of both resistant EU43 and EU46 strains in the UK, combined with the loss of the primary multisite in fungicide armouries, means that growers are right to be concerned about blight fungicide resistance this season, says Don.

So, can some of the biological products tested by TPP offer some degree of protection for the systemic chemistry?

"We have to draw partly on experiences in other crops," Don said "But, if you think of mechanisms like eliciting the plant's own defence mechanisms, which is what Innocul8 does, there is evidence that it disrupts resistant strains as well as susceptible ones. Products like orange oil have a physical mode of action, so they work similarly to a multisite.

"The more things you can add in a programme, the more potential you have to disrupt the overall flow of resistance development, particularly in high pressure situations. However, biologicals aren't the answer to blight resistance, especially when they act as biostimulants."

Biological boost to Alternaria control

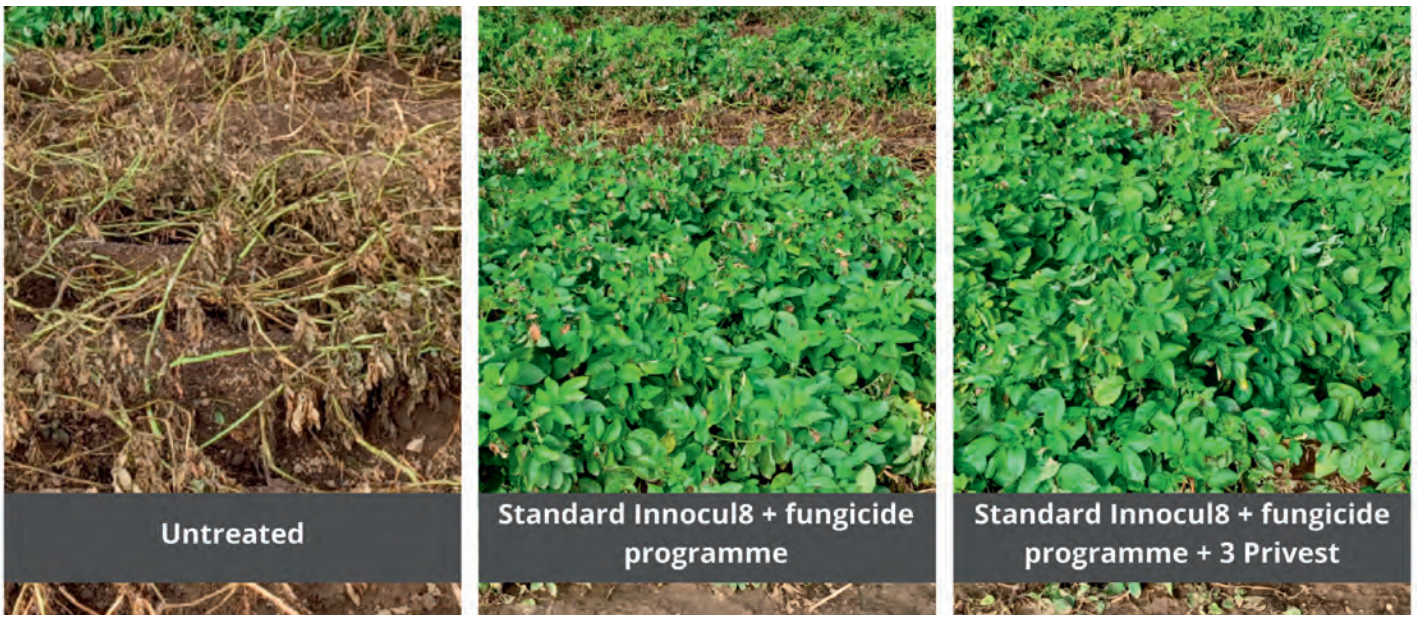
Ed Maule, lead Potato Technical Advisor for Agrii, stressed that a lot of Alternaria control is about keeping the crop healthy throughout the growing period with good base nutrition to support specific Alternaria fungicides in a preventative, protective manner.

It is because of this that the TPP trials also examined how plant health elicitors and micronutrition can enhance the efficacy of conventional fungicides against Alternaria. The loss of mancozeb will also affect Alternaria control, another issue the industry will have to get to grips with in the coming years.

"The trial showed that Innocul8 delayed the ingress of Alternaria into the trial. The best treatment was a fungicide programme supported by Innocul8 early, followed in later applications by a biostimulant containing copper and zinc," said Ed.

"This supports green leaf area retention. We know there are some varieties that can lose a lot of green leaf area quite early. If we can take those through to later in the season with this approach, we can help it to achieve its yield potential." BPR

The Potato Partnership (TPP) 2025 blight demonstration plot comparison, showing results in September 2025.



Performing for the global food stage

Stephanie Cornwall visited IFE 2026 to see how the potato industry is contributing and evolving within the international food delivery sector.

INTERNATIONAL food and drink event, IFE, brought together a host of potato suppliers, producers and market professionals in London recently, who not only showcased latest products but also provided clear insights into how the potato sector keeps evolving to stay abreast of changing consumer and professional expectations.

Belgian exhibitors led the way in this aspect, with a particularly strong contingent.

VLAM, Flanders' Agricultural Marketing Board representing Belgian fresh and processed potato producers, showcased the strength and diversity of one of Europe's leading potato industries, while The Potato Chef, Warnez and Clarebout also demonstrated everything from growing through to sorting and packing expertise on to wholesale processing.

Clarebout Potatoes, a leading Belgian producer of private-label frozen potato products for retail and foodservice, used the event to highlight its tailored solutions and international supply capabilities. Last year the family-owned company was acquired by the US-based Simplot Group but has maintained the branding and name which have made it a European mainstay for almost four decades and there was no shortage of visitors to this stand.

With consumer focus, as well as that of professional kitchens, increasingly leaning towards convenience, differentiation, and formats that fit the way both sectors use food, Warnez and The Potato Chef put forward strong examples of how they are evolving to meet these needs, offering a key insight into where some of the potato category is headed.

A grower, producer and packer of fresh and frozen potato products, The Potato Chef demonstrated its latest offerings for retail and foodservice, while Warnez, a Belgian supplier specialising in washing, sorting and packing fresh potatoes for private label and branded supply, put a focus on convenience-driven, value-added products designed for modern, time-sensitive consumers on its exhibition stand. The company, which has more than 70 years' expertise in delivering flexible potato solutions, highlighted its Pomvit range of fresh baby potatoes designed for high convenience, including products that can be heated directly in the microwave in six minutes with no preparation or cleaning required.

Originally a Belgian family business, processor Lutosa was acquired by McCain in 2013 and has a UK base in St Ives, Cambridgeshire. The company is still deeply rooted in Belgian potato culture, sourcing up to 70% of its potatoes locally, while exporting to more than 136 countries worldwide. Lutosa UK's stand highlighted frozen chips, potato specialties (Pom' Pin, Duchesse, Spicy Wedges, Röstis), organic options, pre-fried chilled chips, and dehydrated flakes for industrial use. Its offering focused on catering to food service, wholesalers, and retail buyers.

Bio-based packaging and space-saving focus

Lamb Weston, a global potato solutions leader with 75 years' expertise in frozen potato products, showcased its retail and foodservice products, with a focus on its Really Crunchy Fries and Frenzy Fries, designed to maintain crunch for extended periods. It also highlighted Snap Fries, a product aimed at pubs and venues with limited kitchen space or no fryers.

Lamb Weston's fry range was recognised as Product of the Year 2026 in the UK Chips category and the products displayed featured packaging made from 60% bio-based plastic.

Organic focus

Spanish family business Aperitivos de Añavieja, prides itself on being the first Spanish company to produce eco-friendly crisps. The company, which has more than 25 years' experience in the snacks sector, has become a well-established organic brand producer in Europe. The company controls the full production process from its own potato fields through to finished product, with a strong focus on sustainability and low-emission manufacturing. It has had its own 200-hectare field since 1998.

At IFE 2026, Aperitivos de Añavieja put a focus on traditional products made with olive oil, displaying crisps made in extra virgin olive oil and specialised flavoured chips made with natural ingredients.

UK brands

Based in Livingston, Scotland, Nisha Enterprises Ltd manufactures potato-based snacks which it supplies to major retailers and independent outlets across the UK and Europe. It exhibited its Golden Cross snack products.

Euro Food Service, a UK-based food distribution company founded in 1991 by Bangladeshi-born British entrepreneur Shelim Hussain, has become a major European producer of instant mashed potatoes. At IFE, it showed how it combines large-scale manufacturing with innovation across convenience potato formats.

Technology in the spotlight

Dutch company Sormac, a technology provider specialising in vegetable processing equipment, including high-performance potato peeling systems, made its debut at IFE 2026 to showcase its latest technologies. The company supplies integrated solutions for fresh-cut and processing operations.

Meanwhile, Indian manufacturer Falcon Agrifriz Foods, which specialises in frozen potato products such as French fries and value-added potato specialities, revealed how it uses advanced processing technology to deliver products for both domestic and export markets.

Multi-purpose potato

Finally, Martin's Famous Potato Rolls and Bread, a US bakery brand known for its potato-based bread and rolls, showed how it combines traditional baking methods with a strong focus on quality and flavour. Its products are made using flour derived from potatoes that are dehydrated and milled

The versatility of the 'humble' potato was never more evident than at this multi-faceted show, clearly showing that changing diets and consumer focus are less of a deterrent and more an evolving challenge for all those in the business of creating and marketing potato products. BPR

Blitzing and balancing

As the seasonal juggling act begins. **Andrew Goodinson** discusses how to ensure profit margins stay on target by getting the right mix of in-field action.

Andrew Goodinson, agronomist, and potato specialist at Hutchinsons, makes recommendations to help growers ensure the best results from their potato crops. At British Potato 2025, he won the award for Consultant/Advisor. Based in Herefordshire, Andrew has been working for Hutchinsons for 20 years and looks after 8000 ha of farmland, ranging from Cirencester, to the Welsh borders, south Shropshire and Worcester. Most of the potato crops he looks after are destined for the crisping or processing markets.

"Pest pressure is inevitable but our industry's adoption of IPM over the past few years has made us realise we can control pest and disease with reduced reliance on chemistry and more focus on biological and cultural alternatives." →

ONE of the main challenges for potato growers is the constant balancing act between less reliance on chemistry and effective pest control. If quality specifications are not achieved, it directly affects the grower's profit margins.

"As the conventional plant protection toolbox diminishes, and MRLs residues come under the spotlight, we have to think strategically about plant protection programmes," Andrew said. "Of course, professional growers have been using IPM strategies for a long time, with growers following good cultural practice strategies with their crop rotation. Nevertheless, to achieve yields and quality, plant protection plays a crucial role and bio-pesticides will play an increasingly important role."

All the major agro-chemical companies are developing methods of biological control. Some work prophylactically and prevent infections, while others target and kill.

Aphids and other sucking insects have become more difficult to control owing to changes in conventional plant protection markets and resistance to pyrethroids, and until now there have been relatively few biopesticides available, Andrew said.

"There is an increasing interest in the entomopathogenic fungus Lalguard M52 OD (which comprises the spores of the fungus Metarhizium brunneum strain Ma 43), which is sprayed on the crop, infecting insects such as aphids and killing them five to seven days later.

"It has a broad spectrum of control working against various growth stages of these pests and across all stages of crop growth, providing targeted activity and preventing populations from building. However, for efficacy, attention to detail is key, as the biocide needs to come into contact with the pest. At the moment, it more often used in protected crops rather than broad-acre."

The biopesticide is compatible with practical IPM strategies, he added, noting that there are no MRLs.

"Pest pressure is inevitable but our industry's adoption of IPM over the past few years has made us realise we can control pest and disease with reduced reliance on chemistry and more focus on biological and cultural alternatives."

He adds that biocides such as the fungus Prestop (Clonostachys rosea strain J1446) works against pathogens in the rhizosphere and the root zone, and offers some control against rhizoctonia and Phytophthora, working prophylactically,.

"For example, in potato crops, a pre-planting application stimulates the mycelium to create a web in the soil that the late blight pathogens find difficult to cross.

"As such, it has the potential to be effective across different blight strains."

NEMguard is a garlic extract that has a similar effect to conventional nematicides and targets juvenile nematodes.

Its garlic extract compounds are highly reactive, and are able to pass through pest cuticles and subsequently trigger high stress levels in the pest that they are unable to manage.

NEMguard has approval for use as a liquid in potato crops, he notes, adding that there is also a granular version which has been specially developed for the PCN species Globodera pallida.

Attention to detail during application is key, he emphasises.

"In potato crops, applying NEMguard via drip irrigation is ideal, but this may not be convenient for many growers. Two 6l applications are injected in the side of the ridge, so the product is placed exactly where it is needed for maximum effect."

In response to concerns that biologicals are very vulnerable to environmental aspects such as temperature, he observed that they can be less of a problem when they are applied in the soil.

"Obviously, if your land is currently free of nematodes, you should do everything possible to keep it that way."

Wireworm

The warm, dry spring of 2025 could have contributed to a rise in wireworm, particularly as nematicides had limited efficacy owing to the lack of moisture, says Andrew.

"Wireworm can build up without your realising it. The pest may have been building over the past three or four years, but you only notice when you grow a susceptible crop, such as potatoes," he said.

He emphasised the need to undertake effective risk assessments.

"This entails evaluating the crops in the rotation, whether there is spring stubble, and also the cultivation strategies followed (such as min-till or no-till). There is a lot of discussion about whether growing cover crops exacerbates the problem, but post-harvest cultivations, such as those for a cover crop, can actually reduce activity.

"If risks are high and the decision is taken to use a nematicide prior to planting, Nemathorin (fosthiazate) can be used. However, it is crucial to take into account the harvest interval, and care must be taken to follow stewardship application guidance."

Fosthiazate is currently licenced for use until 2029, and another active is close to market, he adds.

Tuber damage from wireworm increases as the season goes on, so early lifted crops can often escape more lightly.

"There appears to be varietal variation in attractiveness to the pest, with some varieties appearing particularly susceptible. However, we do not know enough the reasons behind this, so there is a real need to do more research so we can get on top of this pest."

Strategic aphid control

Reflecting back on 2025, the warm spring resulted in early aphid flights, but ladybirds had also emerged early, so they were initially able to suppress the aphid population, says Andrew.

However, by the beginning of June, they were overwhelmed and conventional controls had to be deployed.

Andrew says: "We had a very intensive time of aphid pressure for about three weeks, so growers needed to respond with robust programmes, using products such as Insyst (acetamiprid) and Sivanto Prime (flupyradifurone). Seed growers have the choice of Tapekki (flonicamid) and crop oils as well. If you were a few days late with insecticide applications, feeding damage was visible on the crop."

Once applied, conventional insecticides worked well, apart from pyrethroids.

Fortunately, ladybird populations appeared to recover quite quickly after applications, he observes.

Andrew encourages growers to continue to deploy aphid traps and send them to Rothamsted Research for identification, and to send seed and leaf samples for virus testing.

"Despite high aphid numbers, and the visibility of feeding damage, the incidence of aphid-transmitted viruses in seed crops, such as potato leaf roll virus (PLRV) and PVY were not as high as in 2024. However, we need to remain vigilant, and improve potato dump management and volunteer control."

He reminds growers that once a plant is infected, the virus alters its defence mechanisms, affecting the movement of carbohydrates and sugars.

"Potato leaf roll virus can affect tuber numbers, size and quality characteristics, and therefore impact on marketability and profitability. Virus in ware crops can between 30 -80% yield loss, as well as causing internal necrosis which affects quality and fry colours in processing varieties," he said. ➜

Andrew explains a lot of damage is done in the early stages of crop development, but infection may happen later in the season than expected, including at desiccation, so it is crucial to keep on top of aphid populations until the haulm is dead, especially with seed crops."

He warns against treating ware crops with aphicides before the threshold of five aphids per compound leaf is reached.

"IPM programmes are complicated and some growers may spray before they need to. This is because of the predator/aphid relationship and the need for sufficient aphid numbers for their predators to feed on."

FLN threat if soils not dry before planting

If the very wet soils following winter of 2025-2026 do not have the opportunity to dry a little before planting, compaction is likely to become a real issue, warns Andrew.

"Compacted soils can lead to with poor rooting, which stressing the crops and making them more vulnerable to rhizoctonia, and may be exacerbated by Free Living Nematodes (FLN). If potatoes get a good start, there is the possibility of growing away from damage. But if they sit in cold, damp soils, the risk of feeding damage is higher."

In the UK there are four main groups of FLN: Pratylenchus, Trichodorus, Paratrichodorus and Longidorus.

He points out that although FLN tend to occur more frequently in sandy soils, living in the pores between the soil particles, wet weather enables them to move around more. The damage they cause creates pathways for rhizoctonia and other soil-borne pathogens to enter into the potato plant."

One of the problems is that it is hard to diagnose FLN damage in the field because symptoms can vary, and at the same time they can appear similar to those caused by rhizoctonia, such as patchy emergence.

"Crop emergence and canopy closing take longer, so not only do yields suffer, but sugar content in the tuber can also be affected. Some varieties appear to be more susceptible than others; those with more roots are better able to compensate for damage than those with weaker root systems."

Andrew recommends taking soil samples the autumn before growing a potato crop.

"These samples can be done in a similar way to those for PCN, but when taking them, growers should be aware that FLN move up and down in the soil profile, so can be found deeper into the soil than PCN, which makes effective soil testing more challenging."

Some FLN species (such as stubby root nematodes Trichodorus and Paratrichodorus) are the vector of the virus that can cause spraing (corky ring spot). However, he emphasises that not all FLN are vectors of this virus.

Symptoms include unsightly corky circles and rings of healthy tissue with brown flecks throughout the tuber. Affected tubers are often rejected by processors and packers.

Andrew recommends that growers suspecting they have an issue with FLN should undertake soil testing apply an in-furrow nematicide.

Leafhoppers activity

Although Leafhoppers were around in 2025, Andrew did not find as many as in 2024, although they were in more diverse species of crops.

"These piercing and sucking insects appear to overwinter in hedgerows and nettles, and became active from the second part of June," said Andrew. "Although the pest is present worldwide, at the moment they are more frequent in the east of the country, but they may be more common than we think, as they may not be correctly identified in other areas."

They insert their piercing-sucking mouthparts into the underside of potato leaves and feed on phloem and xylem, sucking out plant juices, which causes the leaves to appear mottled with 'hopper burn' scorch on top of the leaf.

"This damaged tissue can then provide an entry for pathogens such as botrytis and Alternaria," he says adding that leafhopper injury also reduces production and translocation of photosynthate, and may increase sugar content in the tubers.

"These pests can be controlled by acetamiprid (which is probably the most effective) as well as pyrethroids, flupyradifurone and spirotetramat."

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GROWING TOGETHER

Building tuber quality from the ground up

With the price of fertiliser subject to upward pressure owing to geopolitical tensions in the Middle East, some growers may be pausing for thought. But crop nutritions experts say this is false economy - the right nutrition is key to getting your final crop bought.

WITH input costs already under intense scrutiny, and nitrogen prices rising sharply following instability in the Middle East, potato growers are carefully examining every expenditure line.

Yet Tom Decamp, Crop Nutrition Business Manager at Yara, says evidence suggests growers targeting pre-pack quality are largely maintaining their traditional nutrition programmes and seeking savings elsewhere – in land rental decisions, machinery investment and contractor use - simply because of the financial prize at stake.

"Potato growers may cut back a little on total nitrogen," Tom said. "But they're still trying to achieve that premium over the general ware price, which can add £40–£50 a tonne to the return from a crop. If you are achieving a yield of 50 tonnes per ha, for example, this could potentially increase margins by around £2,500 per ha from achieving pre-pack quality."

A nitrate fertiliser, for example Yara's Tropicote, is therefore a sound investment as part of a potato nutrition strategy, Tom said, adding that soil-applied calcium nitrate remains the most effective route when it comes to getting calcium and plant-available nitrate nitrogen into the potato crop at tuber initiation.

Why calcium nitrate must go in through the roots – and early

The agronomic case for soil-applied calcium nitrate is rooted in fundamental plant science. Calcium is only mobile upwards within the potato plant, so the only pathway into the tuber is through the fine root hairs in the soil. Foliar calcium applied later to the canopy will stay within the canopy, enriching the foliage, but it cannot travel down into the developing tuber.

"When the tuber initiates, and it's just hooking over and booting up, that's when it's critical to get the calcium in," says Tom. "We've demonstrated this process using YaraLiva Tropicote and a red dye. You can see the calcium nitrate moving through the root hairs and flooding into the tuber, like blood through an artery."

Another key advantage of a high-quality, granular calcium nitrate fertiliser is that it begins working immediately on contact with soil moisture, without requiring rain or irrigation to activate it, he said.

Applying something that works in cool, wet conditions as well as under drought stress conditions, without having to go through the nitrification process can be a valuable time-saver, with the calcium and nitrogen being available straight away.

"Cool or dry, you will get uptake," Tom said.

Timing is crucial, he added.

"You don't want to be moving way past tuber initiation because it becomes too late," he said.

Calcium's role inside the tuber

Once inside the tuber, calcium strengthens cell walls, providing the physical integrity needed to withstand the rapid growth spurts that occur during warm, moist conditions. Without adequate calcium, cells expanding too quickly simply burst.

"When the cell walls are not strong enough, they expand and burst — and that's necrosis," explained Tom. "They die, and that's the internal browning (rust spot) that triggers rejections at the packhouse and strips pre-pack growers of their hard-won premium."

The benefits of adequate calcium reach beyond internal quality. A stronger outer cuticle provides greater resistance to bacterial infections and skin disorders. Tom points to observed reductions in silver scurf and other skin complaints alongside improvements in storage performance, including reductions in soft rots. Calcium also builds stress tolerance: During dry periods where irrigation is unavailable, calcium-rich crops are better equipped to survive and recover.

"If they're looking at a sample and they start cutting them in half and there's internal rust spot, they'll get rejected – they won't get through for pre-pack and you lose your premium. It's the same story if the skins are terrible, or they're all irregular sizes. Supermarket pre-packs might be four in a pack - everything has to be absolutely right."

The benefits of well-supplied calcium also carry through into seed potato production.

Tom Decamp, Crop Nutrition Business Manager at Yara, says that even allowing for today's elevated input prices, the potential return far outweighs the cost of nutrition.

A stronger, healthier mother tuber produces better quality seed for the following season, which is a consideration of particular importance in Scotland.

Insurance better than 'false economy'

Although some potato varieties carry a lower rust spot risk, and some seasons are kinder than others, Tom says the unpredictability of which seasons and varieties will be affected is itself an argument for applying calcium nitrate to the soil early and treating it as a non-negotiable part of the programme rather than a discretionary extra.

Tom said the arithmetic is unambiguous. A 50-tonne pre-pack crop losing its quality premium of £40 to £50 per tonne represents up to £2,500 per hectare forfeited at the point of sale. Against an application cost of under £200 per hectare soil-applied calcium nitrate, even allowing for today's elevated input prices, the potential return far outweighs the cost.

The recommended application for YaraLiva Tropicote is 400kg per hectare at, or close to, tuber initiation. At this rate, growers are delivering exactly 64kg of nitrogen per hectare.

New liquid fertiliser facility

OMEX Agriculture has opened a new liquid fertiliser facility at the Port of Dundee.

A customer open day and formal ribbon-cutting carried out by Mairi Gougeon, Cabinet Secretary for Rural Affairs, Land Reform and Islands, marked the official opening, featuring a guided tour of the new Multiflo storage tanks and an address from OMEX Chairman Max Winkler.

OMEX has operated a 16,000t liquid nitrogen and sulphur storage and distribution facility at the Port of Dundee since 2018. Working in partnership with site operators Forth Ports, OMEX has delivered this new state-of-the-art facility to strengthen supply and service for growers across Scotland.

Multiflo is OMEX's premium NPKS liquid fertiliser range used in potato growing. All Multiflo grades are 100% water-soluble and include NP, NK and NPK formulations, with sulphur available across the range to enhance nutrient uptake and performance.

How the nurturing landscape is changing

We learn what trial results are telling us about biostimulants in potatoes.

FOR potato growers, the 2025 season was a reminder that quality has become the defining factor in securing a profitable crop.

Agronomically, it was one of the driest potato growing seasons in recent memory, with prolonged warmth, high sunshine levels and significant drought pressure across many parts of England.

Yet, commercially, it was also a season when buyers could afford to be more selective, with surplus crops in stores, greater supply across Europe, and weaker demand all weighing on the market.

Having grown potatoes himself for more than a decade before he became Technical Product Manager for crop nutrition company Timac Agro, David Newton said this meant quality, consistency and marketable yield mattered just as much as headline tonnage.

With similar patterns expected to continue, he said: "Successful growers will have to adapt their systems to better cope with unpredictable weather, tighter crop protection options and a market that is less forgiving when quality slips."

In that context, he said the growing interest in biostimulants in supporting crop resilience and protecting marketable yield is understandable.

"When crops come under stress from heat, drought, restricted rooting or fluctuating nutrient uptake, a biostimulant can be added to keep cogs turning.

"Working at a cellular level within the plant, they support metabolic processes, nutrient uptake and the plant's ability to regulate osmotic stress," he said. "By helping the crop maintain chlorophyll production and photosynthesis, they support continued production of sugars and starches, which is critical for tuber development."

However, he warns biostimulants are not a silver bullet, and they are not a replacement for sound agronomy, irrigation planning or balanced nutrition.

"Used alongside a fertiliser plan, biostimulants can help the crop to remain physiologically active in most critical growth stages for quality and yield, even during periods of stress."

In the UK, the regulatory picture is still evolving, one reason David said growers remain cautious and why product claims need scrutiny.

"Biostimulants have really gained traction with growers over the past five years, but the market has also become crowded with unverified products. When products make claims they cannot back up, growers become sceptical of biostimulants' efficacy in general. That's why it's so important to look at a product's credentials before committing to it," David said.

That need for credible data is echoed by Dr Bill Watts, Research and Development Manager at Greenvale Produce Solutions Ltd.

He believes biostimulants could have potential in potatoes, but there is a need for robust data from well-designed trials.

"Over the past decade, the loss of familiar chemistry and tighter legislation has pushed growers to look at alternative ways of supporting crop performance," he said. "But there's still a lot of scepticism around biostimulants. Growers need to be confident that a product is doing what it said it does.

"A major challenge for industry lies in claims of exceptional but unbelievable yield uplifts from biostimulants."

Bill is most interested in yields of 1-3 t ha, from well-designed trials, with low natural variability.

"These differences are more believable, but often in single trials, will fall below the limit for statistical separation. That is the challenge to overcome. We need high-quality, repeated trials to come to well-supported conclusions," he said.


A Nectar crop is shown on the left of the photo, with Electra on the right.


Average tuber weight increased from 140.9g to 186.3g

In the meantime, Bill suggests growers and agronomists look out for results that agronomy knowledge can explain, and "be cautious of the miraculous."

On-farm results

As part of its Farming Innovation and Technology Showcase, Timac Agro UK trialled a foliar biostimulant programme on Nectar potatoes in Cambridgeshire during the 2025 season.

The trial used two biostimulant products, Seactiv Gold and Seactiv Magical, in a four-spray programme timed around key stages of crop development.

David said Seactiv Gold, a seaweed-based formulation enriched with boron and molybdenum, was used to help fortify the crop and support it through periods of drought and temperature stress.

Seactiv Magical, which contains calcium and magnesium, was then used to support root function, cell wall strength, photosynthesis and nutrient movement within the plant.

Importantly, he said the programme was designed to fit within a practical commercial system.

"These products can often be applied alongside existing blight spray timings, subject to label checks and tank-mix guidance, which means they can be integrated into a programme without adding unnecessary passes.

"The first application of Seactiv Gold was made at tuber initiation, around 40 days after emergence, followed by a second spray one week later. Seactiv Magical was then applied twice, once in June and once in July, with 10 to 15 days between applications," said David. "The idea was to target the crop when demand was high and when the plant needed to keep functioning efficiently to drive tuber development."

According to Timac's trial data, the treated crop produced fewer but larger, more marketable tubers than the untreated control.

Average tuber weight increased from 140.9g to 186.3g, contributing to an 18.7% increase in marketable yield. Based on a programme cost of £114.40/ha, Timac calculated a net return of £2,736/ha.

For David, the dry conditions add weight to the results.

"The trial year really tested the crop, which is why the outcome is so interesting," he said. "The treated potatoes appeared better able to maintain performance despite the conditions, and that is exactly the sort of response growers are looking for from this type of product."

To provide an independent view of the findings, Timac Agro worked with Ceres Research.

Dr Alexander Setchfield, Manager of Research and Knowledge Exchange at Ceres Research, said the role of the business is to help bridge the gap between scientific innovation and practical farm use.

"There is a lot of good science taking place, but too often it stays within research institutions and doesn't make the jump into practical farming," Alexander said. "We aim to help interpret results in a way that is scientifically credible, but also useful to growers who need to make real decisions in the field."

After reviewing the trial data, he said the results were encouraging, though they should still be viewed as part of a wider evidence base as further tests are carried out.

"I think these trials support the case that biostimulants can have a place within potato nutrition plans, particularly as growers face greater weather volatility and increasing pressure to protect crop quality," he said.

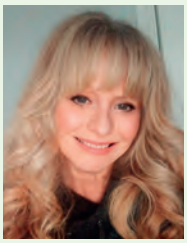
"At the same time, one trial in one season is not enough on its own. Wider testing across more sites, seasons and soil types would help build a stronger picture of where the response is most consistent."

For potatoes, where quality specifications are tight, stress can be expensive and seasons like 2025 can quickly expose weaknesses in the system, products that help the crop stay functioning for longer deserve careful attention, he warns.


Left of the flag shows crops treated with biostimulants, while right of the flag are those where control methods have been used.

The real question is no longer whether biostimulants are worth testing, but which products, timings and situations are most likely to justify their place in the programme.

"On that point, well-run trials and independent interpretation matter more than ever," said Alexander. BPR



Editor Stephanie Cornwall recently joined a knowledge-finding trip to St Malo and Pontrieux in France, hosted by Timac Agro, one of the first to bring biostimulants to market. There, she gained a full insight into how nature's natural defences are harnessed to bring a targeted approach for potato crops. Be sure to read the next issue of *British Potato Review* to find out what she learned from researchers, technical specialists and engineers and gain a glimpse into how it all comes together – from the sustainable harvesting of seaweed off the coast, through formulation and testing in labs and the final granulation and production processes.

Stress relief improves bulking rates

OVERCOMING stress conditions through the use of specific biostimulants led to significant increases in bulking rates and final yields in potato crops in trials conducted by Dyson Farming Research (DFR).

Potentially biostimulants could be used to increase bulking in good growing conditions, but last year's trials showed best results when used as stress protectants in the hot, dry spring and summer, according to Dr Christine Jones, a crop research scientist for Dyson Farming Research.

The trials tested a number of different biostimulant products, each tested according to the manufacturer's recommendations, at two different sites.

Drip irrigation was available at the Nocton site, meaning that stress in the crop of Elland was delayed until just after a particularly hot spell in mid-August when temperatures reached 30C.

"We didn't see any effects on the initial rate of bulking, which average about 7 t/ha/week in treated and untreated plots, meaning there didn't appear to be any growth stimulant effect in these conditions," Christine said. "But after that particularly bad stress period, the untreated plots more or less stopped bulking, while some of the treated products continued bulking albeit at a lower rate than previously."

One of the products that was most effective at producing that response was Biimore from Rovensa Next. Obtained from the bacterial fermentation of sugar case molasses by a proprietary strain of Corynebacterium glutamicum, Biimore is rich in primary and secondary compounds that act as a natural biostimulant in agriculture.

In the DFR trials, the product was applied just once at 100ml/ha when the potato plants were 10-15cm tall with the stolons elongating, Christine said. "It was around two weeks after emergence."

While there wasn't any visual difference above ground in either trial, regular yield digs showed a different story underground, once the crop became stressed. At Nocton, that resulted in a 26% increase in total yield for the Biimore-treated plot versus the control plot without any biostimulant products applied.

While there wasn't a significant yield difference in the 40-80mm grade, Christine said the trial plots were left growing for longer than in a commercial crop. "A lot of the extra yield was bigger potatoes. Commercially, we would have stopped the crop earlier if 80mm was the maximum size grade."

At the second site at Leadenhall without irrigation, the dry spring and summer weather hit crop growth much sooner, Christine said. "Stress started before the onset of bulking, with much poorer growth than we would usually expect on the silt soils."

This time where Biimore was applied there was a significant increase in the bulking rate of around 33% compared with the control plots. That translated into nearly 30% higher total yield, Christine says.

"There weren't any oversized tubers in this trial, partly because of the poor crop growth from early in the season, so there was also a significant increase in 40-80mm sized tubers."

The more than 200 compounds in the Biimore formulation work by helping to control various genetic pathways in the plant, the firm's Bruce Morton says. These include enhancing potassium translocation, photosynthetic efficiency, sugar synthesis and improved cell wall construction.

"All of these enhance tuber size and quality," he says. "But in these trials, we think it was the potassium boost that drives the bulking of the tubers."

Similar results have been seen in trials across north Europe in the crop, he adds, with an average yield increase of 13% and 10% increase in tuber numbers found across 35 trials in the past four seasons.

The DFR trials highlight that growers perhaps need to think again about the benefits of using biostimulants in potato crops, Christine says.

"One of the challenges is there's not a lot of understanding about how these products work, so there's a tendency to distrust them, particularly if they've been used previously where a grower was led to expect yield increases in a situation where a product wouldn't work. Doing trials like these helps us understand where to use them best, and whether you should expect a response in most seasons or just when there's bad stress."

Promising results from Melody plot trial

DATA from a 2025 trial has been published by Richard Austin Agriculture that demonstrates how using biostimulants has reduced the impact of late potato blight and increased yield.

The plot trial used the Melody variety and applied the biostimulants from July to October, along with fungicides Enervin and Privest. The best total yield was achieved with a mixture of Sirius and Trident Plus, which also had a comparable percentage of blight infection to using just Privest and a lower percentage than the combination of Phusion and Enervin.

Trials manager Michael Rodger said the trial looked at how biostimulants such as Sirius and Trident Plus could be used alongside a conventional fungicide programme to support crop performance.

"The results were encouraging in terms of yield and crop response, but further field-scale trials will be needed to better understand their role within an integrated approach to late blight management," he said.

He added that biostimulants may help reduce the impact of late blight indirectly by improving plant resilience rather than directly controlling the pathogen.

"Silicon can strengthen plant cell walls and create physical barriers that make infection more difficult. It can stimulate natural plant defence responses so the crop reacts more quickly to infection," said Michael.

He also suggested that biostimulants could improve overall plant vigour, nutrient uptake and stress tolerance, helping plants maintain growth and yield even under disease pressure.

"Some products may also influence leaf surface characteristics, which can make conditions less favourable for pathogen establishment. When used alongside conventional fungicide programmes, these effects may help support crop performance and contribute to an integrated approach to blight management," he said.

The favourable combination was applied with a spray interval of between seven and 10 days, with 0.5l/ha of Sirius combined with 3l/ha of Trident Plus.

"To see both yield improvements and a reduction in blight using this rate of application makes the use of biostimulants both a sustainable and cost-effective option. A healthy, stress-free plant is more resilient to both biotic and abiotic stress, which may help crops better tolerate disease pressure when used alongside conventional fungicide programmes," said Michael.

Innovations in PCN control

PhD research at Harper Adams University is improving understanding of how biofumigation can be used within practical IPM strategies for Potato Cyst Nematode (PCN).


Dr Matt Back

MANAGING the persistent challenge of PCN typically requires a combination of measures, including resistant varieties, rotation, and the responsible use of nematicides as part of an integrated pest management (IPM) strategy.

At the same time, there is growing interest in methods that can reduce pest pressure while also supporting soil health. Biofumigation and soil microbiology are increasingly being considered within research to support the industry long-term.

Dr Matt Back, a nematology expert from Harper Adams University, said one of one of the advantages of biofumigation over traditional trap cropping is its flexibility.

"Biofumigation involves growing specific plants, such as Indian mustard (Brassica juncea), and incorporating their green material into the soil. When crushed, these plants release glucosinolates, natural compounds which break down into isothiocyanates, gases that are toxic to soil-borne pests like PCN," he said.

"Unlike conventional chemical treatments, this approach utilises the plant's own natural chemistry, offering a more sustainable option for managing nematodes while also contributing to soil health."

Whereas trap crops often require a full growing season, from June to October, biofumigant crops can be drilled in late July or early August and incorporated before October, making them easier to fit into commercial rotations without giving up as much productive time, Matt said.

There are several practical factors that influence how successful biofumigation will be in the field. Choosing the right species and variety is key, as is drilling early enough to build biomass, and creating the right conditions for glucosinolate production and release.

Earlier work by the university highlighted specific varieties such as Caliente 199, widely studied for its efficacy against PCN, and the Dutch variety Brons, which has shown promise in partial biofumigation.

Learnings so far also indicate the chosen variety should be sown by late July where possible to target strong fresh biomass. Supporting crop growth with nitrogen and sulphur can also encourage both biomass and glucosinolate production. Careful chopping and immediate incorporation into moist soil remain key where full biofumigation is being practised.

Partial biofumigation

Emerging work has now shown that biofumigation does not always rely on full incorporation. Partial biofumigation is based on the release of glucosinolates from living roots during crop growth, with soil microbes then breaking those compounds down into products that can suppress pests, such as PCN.

Varieties such as Bento and Doublet performed particularly well under this approach in previous trials. Dr Back also shares that growing these crops can increase the microbial community involved in glucosinolate breakdown.

"By reducing the need for intensive chopping and incorporation, partial biofumigation could lower labour demands, offer greater flexibility over timing, and reduce the risk of damaging soil structure in wetter conditions," Matt said. "This matters because it could make partial biofumigation a more practical option for growers."

Impact of oilseed radish varieties

Recent research at Harper Adams, conducted by PhD student Francis Kawalya, compared different oilseed radish and Indian mustard varieties to see which work best for partial biofumigation.

Nineteen varieties of oilseed radish and eight varieties of Indian mustard were assessed. Strong and consistent performers included Caliente 199 and Brons for Indian mustard and Doublet, Terranova and Bento for oilseed radish.

These best-performing varieties also shared a few key features which included having stronger roots, higher glucosinolate levels, and increasing the activity of soil microbes.

If variety choice, nutrition, crop management and soil conditions can be fine-tuned, this method could offer a more accessible route for growers looking to reduce PCN pressure in a sustainable way.

Instead of treating biofumigation as a one-size-fits-all practice, this latest research suggests it may be possible to tailor it much more precisely, selecting the right varieties and management approach to improve consistency and performance in the field.

As growers look to balance biological approaches with existing control measures, including granular nematicides, such as fosthiazate, Simon Alexander, independent agronomist and member of the Nematicide Stewardship Programme (NSP) group, said: "As this work develops, growers will better understand not just whether biofumigation can work, but how to make it work within an integrated pest management plan to reduce PCN pressure." BPR


When crushed, Indian mustard (Brassica juncea) releases natural compounds which break down into gases that are toxic to PCN.

Getting rid of the greys

High-tech imaging could transform how growers monitor slug populations.

Technical lead for the SLIMERS project, Dr Jenna Ross OBE.

RESEARCHERS from the UK Agri-Tech Centre and Rothamsted Research have identified a high-tech method to detect the grey field slug or Deroceras reticulatum.

Their discovery paves the way for both automated in-field monitoring and the development of novel, precision slug control strategies, including the use of biocontrols and biorationals.

The researchers' studies have explored the potential of multispectral and fluorescence imaging to detect slugs. Results showed that multispectral imaging can be used to identify D. reticulatum and differentiate the pest from common agricultural field-surface materials.

They found that as few as five wavelengths were sufficient for slug detection including from the UV (365 nanometer or nm), blue (405 and 450nm), green (570nm) and NIR (880nm). Fluorescence imaging failed to detect a slug-specific signal.

The paper brings together data from two Innovate UK funded projects – SlugBot and SLIMERS – which were supported through the SMART and Defra's Farming Innovation Programmes, respectively. Their work focused on the grey field slug, one of the most economically significant slug pests and a major pest in potato crops.

Historically growers have monitored slugs using traps or visual observations. However, these manual approaches are labour intensive and reduce the scope of monitoring. Automated slug detection could provide more detailed insights into slug populations and support the development of precision slug control strategies.

Technical lead for the SLIMERS project, Dr Jenna Ross OBE (UK Agri-Tech Centre), said: "This exciting piece of work brought together a fantastic multidisciplinary team to develop a game-changing solution for improved monitoring of pestiferous slugs.

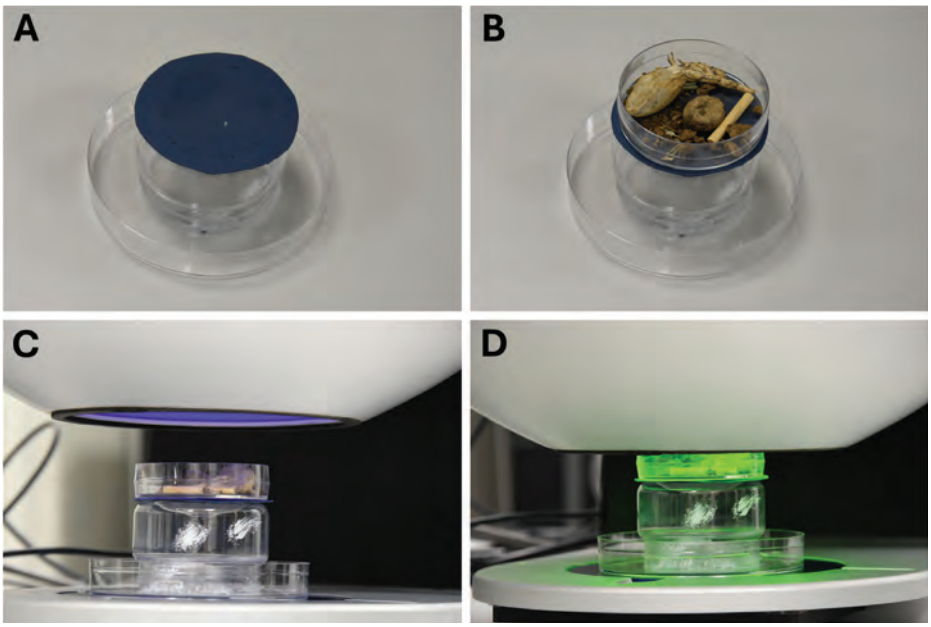
"By identifying these unique wavelengths of light, we can start to use these data to develop real world applications for improved slug monitoring and subsequent control."

SLIMERS – Strategies Leading to Improved Management and Enhanced Resilience against Slugs – is a three-year £2.6M research programme involving more than 100 farms and seven partners.

Funded by Defra's Farming Innovation Programme, delivered by Innovate UK, the project is led by the British On-Farm Innovation Network (BOFIN). It combines expertise from partner organisations the UK Agri-Tech Centre, Harper Adams University, the John Innes Centre, Fotenix, Farmscan Ag and Agrivation. Together the consortium is developing cost-effective forecasting and precision treatment tools, an AI-based autonomous system for the targeted application of biological control, and exploring 'slug resistant' wheat varieties. BPR

"By identifying these unique wavelengths of light, we can start to use these data to develop real world applications for improved slug monitoring and subsequent control."

Dr Jenna Ross OBE



Supplementary Figure 1. Experimental setup optimised to prevent a direct path for slugs to enter the integrating sphere during image capture. (A) Imaging platform; (B) Sample plate containing mixed field-surface materials positioned on platform prior to image capture; (C) Sample positioned under raised dome prior to imaging; (D) Integrating dome being lowered for image capture. For image capture the base of the dome was aligned with the level of the material to be imaged. Imaging was conducted in a darkened room to prevent interference from ambient light.

USA

Huge disposal required for unused potatoes

AROUND one hundred million pounds of potatoes are having to be disposed of in Alamosa County and Rio Grande County.

A warm March damaged stored potatoes while a tight market, combined with the loss of a major processing plant two years ago, has left growers with limited options to move their crop.

Lower consumption and high-yielding varieties are affecting the believed to be affecting the market.

Low water levels in the Upper Rio Grande Basin are expected to reduce production in 2026 and the loss of the Colorado Gourmet processing facility to fire and a soft domestic market are expected to continue affecting storage in the coming years.

Responsibility for disposal remains with individual growers, although local authorities are being approached for support, according to a report in the Alamosa Citizen.

Sprouting risks and high storage volumes

GROWERS in the San Luis Valley, Colorado, have been managing high storage volumes in mid-April following a warm winter and an unusually hot March, which was affecting product quality. Potatoes in storage showed increased sprouting risk, creating challenges in meeting quality standards required for shipment.

Cheesy Bliss potato brand launch

GRIMMWAY Produce Group has launched a new potato product, Cheesy Bliss Potatoes.

The company which supplies more than 65 organic USA-grown crops throughout the US and Canada, has paired cheese sauces and bite-sized potatos for the product line, which features three flavours in a microwavable tray format. These include Creamy Gouda, Bacon Jalapeño Cheddar and Mild Cheddar.

Chipping focus for university program

AT Michigan State University, a breeding and genetics program is focusing on chipping potatoes.

The latest development is a bioengineered potato designed to maintain sugar balance during cold storage, supporting reduced spoilage. The variety is currently in seed production for commercial testing.

Breeding work also includes disease-resistant varieties used in markets such as Nigeria, Kenya, Rwanda, and Bangladesh. In the US, Michigan is a leading producer of potatoes for chip processing, with around 70% of the state's crop directed to this segment.

Approximately 50 potato varieties are used for chips in the US, according to the National Chip Program, which evaluates around 225 new varieties annually and advances around 100 for further trials.

New president

BEN Sklarczyk, a third-generation potato grower and owner of Sklarczyk Seed Farm, has taken on the role of President for The National Potato Council (NPC) for the next 12 months. He, and other new members of the council's executive committee, were elected at its annual Washington Summit.

Pesticide education for growers

MICHIGAN State University's Pesticide Safety Education Program has released a new self-paced online course designed to help pesticide applicators strengthen their potato pest management skills and earn Restricted Use Pesticide (RUP) recertification credits.

CANADA

TGA research

RESEARCHERS at Lethbridge Polytechnic IN Alberta, Canada, are carrying out tests to deduce whether or not short-wave infrared hyperspectral imaging can be used to assess Total GlycoAlkaloid (TGA) levels in potatoes.

While TGA can serve as natural pesticides, peaking in green, damaged, or sprouted areas, high level consumption by humans can cause gastrointestinal distress, and the researchers are working to ensure every potato reaching consumers meets high food safety standards.

AUSTRALIA

Weather extremes in south

CROP quality has been impacted by extreme heat followed by significant rainfall across South Australia.

However, conditions are positive for the late South Australian season crops, according to Mitolo Family Farms' Chief Commercial Officer John Tselekidis.

"Demand has been softer post-Christmas as cost-of-living crisis pressures continue and consumer discretionary spending tightens. Global supply chain disruptions because of the war in the Middle East are adding unplanned costs to growing, harvesting, transporting, and production, which is reluctantly being passed on to retailers and in turn driving up prices for consumers," he recently said in an interview with Fresh Plaza.

DENMARK

Funding for fungi focus

A FUNDING round has raised 2.4 million Euros to support the development of a new biological solution using fungi to overcome late blight.

The funding will enable Mycoverse, an agritech spin-out from the Technical University of Denmark (DTU) to develop its AI-driven discovery platform, which identifies promising fungal strains and develops bioactives that provide crop protection.

ALBANIA

Rise in imports puts pressure on producers

POTATO prices in Albania have declined, with high-quality product currently retailing at 60 lek per kilogram (US$0.63), compared with more than 100 lek (US$1.05) at the same time last year.

Dada released by the Institute of Statistics (INSTAT), the national authority responsible for the compilation and dissemination of National Accounts in Albania, shows the average price in February 2026 at 77.9 lek per kg (US$0.82), down 22% year-on-year.

An increase in imports, mainly from Germany, is being linked to the price decline. These rose by 65.5% in the first two months of 2026, reaching over 5 million kilograms compared with the same period in 2025.

Imported potatoes are entering the market at an average price of 49.91 lek per kilogram (US$0.52), placing downward pressure on domestic prices. While this has supported consumer spending, it has increased competition for local producers.

TAIWAN

New quarantine ruling on processing crops

UPDATED quarantine protocol for processing potatoes imported from the US means any showing signs of sprouting, rot, or mould must be removed and destroyed at processing facilities.

The Animal and Plant Health Inspection Agency (APHIA) latest ruling brings import standards on a par with domestic regulations, according to a report in the Taipei Times.

The update follows the US Trade Representative's 2026 National Trade Estimate Report, which noted that Taiwan had rejected entire shipments containing sprouted potatoes since 2018. Revised rules adopted in February 2026 now allow shipments with sprouting, rot, or mould to enter, provided affected potatoes are sorted out and disposed of at processing facilities.

The policy has raised concerns among lawmakers and the public regarding the potential presence of toxic glycoalkaloids, including solanine, in sprouted potatoes. APHIA stated that imported potatoes must contain no more than 200 parts per million of solanine, matching domestic standards.

The agency added that existing restrictions remain in place, including a ban on potatoes carrying any of eight specified pests and diseases. Exporters are required to apply sprout inhibitors and ensure shipments are free of soil.

If imported processing potatoes show signs of sprouting, rot, or mold, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is notified, and shipments are directed to designated processing plants. At these facilities, affected potatoes must be removed and destroyed in line with standard operating procedures.

APHIA said the system combines border inspection and processing-level sorting to maintain agricultural and food safety standards. Imported potatoes must meet requirements for pest control, sprout inhibition, solanine levels, and pesticide residues.

Even after passing border checks, any potato with sprouts exceeding 0.5 cm at the processing stage must be excluded from production.

Previously, all US imported potatoes were subject to the Quarantine Requirements for the Importation of Table Stock Potatoes. Taiwan has adopted a new protocol for processing potatoes based on Japan's standards.

GERMANY

Organic growers prepare for long storage season

CONDITIONS for organic potato planting have been favourable in many areas, with work progressing quickly, according to the Managing Director of Bio Kartoffel Erzeuger e.V.

Bio Kartoffel Erzeuger e.V. (BKE) is an interest group representing over 250 organic farms across Germany, which cultivate approximately 45% of the country's organic potato acreage.

Its MD, Josephine Hardt, said organic growers have prepared for a long storage season extending into early summer.

"The cold storage facilities currently still house many loads suitable for retail, under the careful supervision of the producers. We expect that organically grown potatoes from local farms will be available until the start of the new season in the Palatinate," she said. "Now we hope that the retail chains, as partners of the agricultural sector, will support this goal, just as they have in previous years."

Josephine added that retailers and growers have a shared goal of providing locally-grown organic potatoes 365 days a year, stating that much of this stock is already in producers' cold storage facilities.

POLAND

Large volumes unsold

POLISH potato growers are facing pressure from large volumes of unsold produce, with estimates of between 700,000 and 1 million tons needing to find a market, according to the Polish Potato Federation.

The organisation has warned that without market outlets, producers face financial risk and attributes the situation partly to imports from other EU countries. President Tomasz Bieńkowski said supply from Germany, the Netherlands, and Belgium has increased, linked to the closure of a potato processing plant in Western Europe, which has contributed to a surplus estimated at around 2 million tons.

NETHERLANDS

Impacts felt as others expand processing capacity

COUNTRIES such as Egypt, India, and China are expanding their processing capacity, reducing demand for European exports, according to a Dutch potato trading company director.

Michel van Oijen, Director of APF-Eriva, said the euro/dollar exchange rate is also making its potatoes relatively expensive, although Northwest Europe remains competitive thanks to high yields and efficient production.

APF-Eriva was formed in 2019 through a merger between APF Holland and Eriva.

Lower demand for Maltese imports

AN importer of early Maltese potatoes says it is becoming increasingly difficult to get them into supermarkets as major chains are increasingly switching to year-round domestic potatoes.

Kees Schouten, who runs Altena Potatoes with his brother Joop, is in his final year of running the company, intending to hand over to his son Eddy next season.

While supermarket demand has changed over the past 20 years he's been with the company, Malta's production has also changed, Kees has said, with many older Maltese growers selling their land for tourism and housing, leading to declining volumes. Having initially imported around 80 containers per season, it now imports around 50% less.

Altena Potatoes is a 90-year-old Dutch family-owned potato trading business located in Veen, the Netherlands, specialising in supplying wholesalers, packers, and supermarkets. The company trades in ware/Agria potatoes.

INDIA

Procurement protection for eastern growers

GROWERS in Uttar Pradesh, in the north of India, should receive stable returns and reduced exposure to low market prices, thanks to action by the Government of India.

The Government of India has approved procurement of potatoes in Uttar Pradesh under the Market Intervention Scheme for the 2025-26 season, covering 20 lakh metric tons at a price of Rs 6,500.9 (US$78.00) per ton.

In the east, potato markets in West Bengal, 14 to 15 million tons of potatoes were produced in 2025-26, around 20% higher than the previous year. As a result, farm-gate prices have declined to Rs 4 to Rs 5 (US$0.05–0.06) per kilogram. Because the surplus supply has reduced market absorption, some growers have opted to leave crops unharvested owing to storage and handling costs.

Export policy changes have also affected market access. Previously, potatoes were shipped to states including Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, and Andhra Pradesh but current restrictions have meant these markets have shifted to alternative supply sources, reducing demand for West Bengal produce.

Wholesale data shows price decline

POTATO prices are declining across short and long-term periods, according to wholesale data from AGMARKNET (Agricultural Marketing Information Network), India's Ministry of Agriculture e-governance portal.

Potato prices declined to Rs 633.41 per quintal (US$7.60), compared to Rs 675.99 (US$8.11) a week earlier, a 6.29% drop, and down from Rs 702.10 (US$8.42) a month ago, a 9.78% decrease. On a year-on-year basis, prices fell 44.36% from Rs 1,138.42 (US$13.66) in April 2025. Prices are also below Rs 1,593.13 (US$19.12) recorded two years ago and Rs 828.32 (US$9.94) from three years ago.

BRAZIL

Lower-than-average rainfall has impacts

PLANTING is on schedule in the regions of Curitiba, Irati, and Ponta Grossa, having finished by mid-March, while lower-than-average rainfall has been seen in the first quarter of the year.

The low rainfall is expected to impact on productivity and tuber quality as large areas are not irrigated while pest activity from whiteflies, leafminers, and beetles has risen and cases of alternaria have been reported.

Turkmenistan

40,600-ton projected harvest for region

POTATO growers in the Balkan region are aiming to cultivate on 2,900 hectares this year, with a projected harvest of 40,600 tons, according to the country's online news platform, Business Turkmenistan.

NIGERIA

'Collaboration needed to grow sector'

COLLABORATION between private sector businesses and the government is needed to grow the country's potato sector, a government official said recently.

Dr Olufemi Oladunni, Chief Executive of government-owned Management Development Institute (MDI), said collaboration is required to improve productivity, increase yields, and support growers, and a coordinated approach would strengthen competitiveness in both domestic and export markets.

Some varieties are currently undergoing regulatory procedures for release after successful trials in Nigeria and other participating countries in which they performed better than more commonly-grown types.

BELGIUM

'Earlies will hold their own'

EARLY potatoes are in good condition and have benefited from a favourable spring without extreme cold according to Stijn Windey, operational manager of East Flanders supplier Agra Claessens.

Despite the current unfavourable market, Stijn expects the new potatoes to hold their own as they are a niche product and said demand is building for these.

"Consumers are actively asking about availability. The current spring weather works in their favour in this respect, as it traditionally stimulates consumption and, especially when asparagus is fully in season, asparagus à la Flemish with new potatoes remains a widely-eaten dish among consumers and in restaurants. This places it in a different segment, and people will continue to buy them," he said in a recent interview.

NEW ZEALAND

Organisation celebrates another year

POTATOES New Zealand has just celebrated its 14th anniversary.

Since its formation in 2012, the organisation has led major research programmes to improve crop performance, invested in science to protect against pests and disease, and worked closely with government and partners to support the long-term viability of potato production in New Zealand.

Chief Executive Kate Trufitt said: "This birthday comes at a time when many growers are under real pressure. Input costs remain high, markets are tight, and uncertainty continues to weigh heavily across the sector.

"While it's important to acknowledge how far we've come as an organisation, our focus is firmly on supporting growers through the challenges they are facing right now — with practical tools, strong advocacy, and science-based solutions that help build resilience for the future."

Wider tyres for low-bed spreaders

BERGMANN has introduced new, slightly wider tyres for its low-bed spreaders whose controlled application rate ability allows for the optimised usage of fertilisers required for intensive crops like potatoes.

The Bergmann M and TSW 2140 E low-bed spreaders feature an approximately 1.8m wide, conical box-shaped body and high VF 480/95 R50 tyres with an overall width significantly below 3m. With the new, slightly wider tyres, the spreader overall width still remains less than 3m.

The new tyre size is VF 520/85 R50 Trelleborg TM 150 TL 177 D. These tyres are offered as an alternative to the previous VF 480/95 R50 Alliance 354 AGRIFLEX+ TL 176 D tyres. At 2,165 mm, the new tyre has a similar diameter to the previously-offered tyres (2,187 mm), ensuring optimum and smooth rolling characteristics. Since the contact area is larger, the ground contact pressure of these tyres is also significantly lower compared to low-bed spreaders, which are produced in a conventional design with lower but wider tyres and V-shaped box cross-section. The wide lugs ensure greater stability of the tyre under load. Compared to standard tyres, the VF tyre makes it possible to carry up to 40% more load with identical tyre pressure, or to reduce the tyre pressure by up to 40% with the same load.

Bergmann spreaders are generally supported in the UK for both new and used equipment.

50–60 tonne-per-hour potato wash line

POST-harvest machinery manufacturer Wyma, recently installed a 50–60 tonne-per-hour potato wash line in Canada.

The New Zealand-based manufacturer of post-harvest handling equipment has a dedicated UK sales and service office in Snetterton, Norfolk, (Wyma UK) and operates globally. It provides machinery for washing, peeling, polishing, and grading potatoes.

Heartland Fresh Pak, a potato operation in Canada, needed a wash line capable of handling high volumes of varietal potatoes—reds, yellows, and russets—at 50–60 tonnes per hour. The solution had to integrate seamlessly with an existing flume pit and downstream optical grading equipment, while maintaining product quality and efficient water use.

The Heartland system processes red, yellow, and russet potatoes from the flume pit through to optical grading, incorporating debris removal, flexible dual-polisher operation, destoning, washing, drying, and extensive conveying. The line integrates with existing infrastructure and third-party equipment to support reliable, high-capacity operation.

Machinery manufacturer acquired

SMT GB (Steve Mander Team Great Britain) has completed the acquisition of Kioti UK, bringing the distribution and technical support for the compact tractor onto British soil after 25 years operating in the UK.

While not a manufacturer of specialised planting or harvesting potato machinery, SMT GB offers heavy and compact equipment widely used by British potato growers for site handling, storage management, and infrastructure maintenance.

Kioti produces tractors that can be used by British potato growers that, while not the primary, large-horsepower brand for heavy-duty maincrop harvesting, are well-suited for smaller-scale growing, specialist crop tasks, and utility work.

Milestone celebrated by manufacturing legend

GRIMME chairman Franz Grimme has celebrated his 80th birthday, taking the opportunity to speak about his 46 years at the helm of the successful German family business, whose machinery can be seen in many potato growers' fields as well as facilities used for storage, handling, and sorting.

The company was founded in 1861 as a forge in Damme in Germany and the factory was later run by Franz's father, until he himself took over in 1980.

Under his leadership, the product range has broadened and its international markets have widened, with notable acquisitions including Danish vegetable technology specialist Asa-Lift in 2013 and US potato technology manufacturer Spudnik in 2003. Ricon, a company for the production of webs and conveying equipment, was also founded in 1995.

Grimme subsidiaries and service agencies have also been established in the UK, Ireland, France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Finland, Russia, Denmark, Turkey, Poland, South Africa, Canada, Brazil, and the German locations in Uelzen (Lower Saxony) and Langquaid (Bavaria)

The group of companies is now present in over 120 countries and operates 37 locations worldwide, including seven production facilities.

Even at the age of 80, Franz Grimme is still present at the company every day. As Chairman of the Supervisory Board of GRIMME Holding, he and his wife Christine support their sons Christoph and Philipp, who are the fifth generation to run the group of companies.

Franz said: "My wife and I are very proud that our sons Christoph and Philipp have taken on full responsibility for the companies and that we can both support them with advice and assistance. It is a very comforting feeling to know that everything is in good hands."

He said he was also 'Inspired' by the large GRIMME team.

"We have achieved a considerable degree of progress together and still have a lot to accomplish," he said.

New 600sqm logistics and assembly facility

SCOTTS Precision Manufacturing is constructing a bespoke 600sqm logistics and assembly facility, due for completion this summer.

The new purpose-built facility will provide dedicated parts reception and expanded stores, supporting its growing product portfolio. The company caters for pre-cleaning and de-soiling equipment predominantly for the potato sector.

Alongside increased capacity, the new layout is geared towards significantly improving the flow of materials, components and finished machines across the site, enhancing yard access and overall efficiency. Improved stock management, more streamlined assembly processes and better organisation of space will support shorter lead times and allow the company to respond more effectively to growing demand while maintaining the high standards of quality and service customers expect, according to Managing Director Derek Scott.

"As a family business, we always invest with the long term in mind," said Derek, adding: "Lack of space has always been a thorn in our side. Despite our best efforts to be as efficient and tidy as possible, the 600sqm will be a game changer for our business, and allows us to grow unrestricted for many years to come."

Latest model for wet potato strip lines

KEY Technology's latest ADR X model is seeking to address the challenges encountered by those who frequently have to deal with potato yield losses.

Those who run a wet potato strip line are more than familiar with dealing with these challenges. Raw product comes in with variability that can't always be predicted, defect loads anywhere between 10% and 40% are part of the job, and every bit of good product that doesn't make it through is yield and margin that simply disappears.

On wet potato strip lines, high defect loads make it difficult to recover usable product without removing good material, and Key's new, next-generation ADR X uses advanced multi-channel sensing to improve detection of subtle defects like green discoloration, while a redesigned sanitary architecture supports long production runs with faster cleaning and less maintenance.

Along with the manufacturer's optical sorter, the system is designed to integrate into existing lines and carry more of the operational burden.

"Labour scarcity stopped being cyclical"

FAM STUMABO, which engineers and develops industrial cutting machines for potatoes, has highlighted the difficulties processors are facing in recruiting and retaining skilled operators.

Strategic Director Guy Baeten said: "Labour scarcity stopped being cyclical. Processors now assume permanent difficulty."

Such difficulties are driving demand for automation, integrated lines, and machines that reduce manual handling and operator dependency.

The change in direction was brought to the fore at the recent Fruit Logistica event, where the company exhibited.

Guy said pressures that once appeared temporary have become structural and conversations at the show revealed how demands from processors are changing. Cutting is no longer viewed as a mechanical step. It has become a critical driver of quality, yield, and downstream performance, he said, pointing out that uniform cuts and controlled cell damage directly influence shelf life, visual appeal, and processing stability, making cutting precision central to protecting margins and brand value as throughput increases.

Discussions at Fruit Logistica highlighted that processors want to test solutions on their own products and validate performance before committing to an investment.

"Test labs and customer trials allow processors to move from assumptions to evidence. They can validate cut quality, yield, throughput, and product behavior on their own raw materials," said Guy.

500R sprayer to make debut

JOHN Deere's 500R sprayer will be making its first appearance in June.

The self-propelled machine was unveiled in 2025 and will be travelling to Diddly Squat Farm in June to take part in a Sprays and Sprayers Arena demonstration.

John Deere's 500R self-propelled sprayer series is designed for high-value crops, including potatoes. The sprayer uses ExactApply technology and PowrSpray for accurate, consistent application rates, which are crucial for tuber management.

The manufacturer has given a new design to its largest sprayer, with technology and features to optimise performance while also simplifying daily operations.

The 550R and the 540R have tank capacities of 5,000 litres or 4,000 litres respectively. Both have the option of a 30m or 36m steel boom – capacity and boom span are the only key differences in what is otherwise two almost identical standard specifications.

So everyone's on fat jabs – or are they?


Scott Walker

Scott Walker, CEO of GB Potatoes, discusses the latest consumer trends and why headline-grabbing reads don't always tell the full story.

THESE days, it seems easier to give yourself a quick injection than hit the gym or rethink your diet.

Across the food world, appetite-suppressing weight-loss drugs are making an impact and just imagine what will happen when they move from injectable to pill form. And yes - it is sparking questions about what it will mean for potato consumption.

Some headlines have been quick to blame these "fat jabs" for a drop in potato sales. But let's put that into perspective. Fresh potato sales have been declining long before these drugs became a talking point. The humble potato has lost ground to more exotic options and, in some eyes, has lost its healthy reputation - despite being packed with fibre, vitamin C, and an impressive amount of potassium.

Simple, quick, affordable, and versatile, the potato remains one of the most nutrient-rich foods you can put on the plate. Even the processed sector has worked hard to keep recipes healthy, showing just how adaptable the potato is.

It is true that this year has been challenging, with lower prices and some growers unable to sell all of their crop. It is tempting to point fingers at a single trend, but there's no silver bullet. Multiple factors influence potato sales, from shifting consumer habits to competition from other foods. Growers must adapt, and many already are.

Tim Rooke, Chair of the NFU Potato Policy Group, recently made a strong case for "growing for your market." That advice has probably never been more relevant.

Personally, I have received a lot of calls from journalists asking about the effect of weight-loss drugs on the potato sector. My message is consistent: This isn't necessarily bad news for potatoes. In fact, it could be an opportunity. Smaller appetites mean people need foods that deliver real nutritional value - and potatoes are ideal. Re-educating consumers about their health credentials is key, and working closely with retailers and processors will make that message stick.

This situation also highlights why the sector needs a strong voice. GB Potatoes works tirelessly to ensure our industry's perspectives. We actively seek solutions, share knowledge, and learn from international examples. For instance, Potatoes USA recently shared its experiences tackling similar challenges in the US. Their openness and willingness to share best practice is helping us think creatively about how we respond here. For members who missed our recent webinar with Blair Richardson, CEO of Potatoes USA, the full recording, and insights are available on our website.

Looking ahead, the potato has a real chance to reclaim its place as a go-to healthy, versatile food. GB Potatoes will continue to speak up for the sector, provide guidance for growers, and work with retailers, packers and processors to put potatoes back on the menu where they belong.

But we can't do it alone. The more growers and businesses that get involved, the stronger our collective voice becomes. Together, we can ensure the potato not only survives but thrives, proving it is as relevant, nutritious, and adaptable today as it has ever been. BPR

GB Potatoes

Delving deep into dormancy

Cranfield University research aims to overcome sprouting challenge via a two-pronged approach.

FINDING a breeding solution to the problem of dormancy break in potatoes during long term storage is one of the key objectives of a £3.6m BBSRC-funded Prosperity Partnership project.

Understanding the genetics that control dormancy could enable the breeding of new potato varieties with enhanced dormancy, addressing several challenges, according to Dr MariCarmen Alamar, Senior Lecturer in Postharvest Biology at Cranfield University and academic lead on the project alongside PepsiCo (industry lead) and hybrid potato breeder Solynta.

"It could help us reduce reliance on chemical sprout suppressants, and potentially allow longer storage at relatively higher temperatures, lowering energy costs and improving the carbon footprint of the crop," she said.

The project is taking two approaches to investigate the genetic basis of dormancy. One uses dedicated breeding populations from Solynta to screen for tubers with contrasting dormancy, which will be used for genetic studies to identify genetic signals that can ultimately lead to the identification of causal genes.

This information will then be used to support marker-assisted breeding of varieties with naturally enhanced dormancy, MariCarmen said.

"Because Solynta works with well-characterised diploid germplasm, rather than the more complex tetraploid genetics of the current commercial varieties, it becomes much easier for scientists to study the genetics and biology of traits such as dormancy."

A second, more targeted approach uses analysis of selected genes known to be involved in tuber initiation and development that could influence tuber dormancy as well.

"We will functionally characterise these candidate genes by silencing or over-expressing them under laboratory conditions to evaluate their role in dormancy."

The findings could eventually be used to breed new potato varieties with enhanced dormancy, which could be achieved more rapidly using state-of-the- art precision breeding, MariCarmen suggests.

The project also explores how pre-harvest growing environment and management can influence tuber dormancy.

These methodologies are being supported by the development of a rapid phenotyping model that can act as an early warning system for dormancy break. "We are taking thousands of images of potatoes to train an AI-model that will automatically identify early signs of sprouting using a machine learning approach originally used in medicine."

From a research perspective, an accurate model would help speed up and increase accuracy of assessing potatoes produced during screening of breeding lines, MariCarmen notes.

In addition to visual detection, the project is also examining whether electrical signals - detected by minute electrodes installed in plants in the field or tubers in store - can be used to predict dormancy break by detecting changes in electrophysiological measures.

Cranfield University is also one of 18 partners in an EU-funded Horizon project, PataFEST, researching the potential future pests and soil-borne pathogens that might pose a risk to potato production. One such disease is zebra chip, caused by a bacterium, Candidatus Liberibacter solanacearum, which affects potato crops in South America.

"We are trying to identify volatile organic compounds released in the very early stages of the disease, which we can then develop sensors for and further install in stores to detect the disease much earlier."

Dr MariCarmen Alamar

Information will be used to support marker-assisted breeding of varieties with naturally-enhanced dormancy.

An AI-model is being trained to automatically identify early signs of sprouting.

MariCarmen's team is focused on postharvest technologies that look at ways of slowing down the progression of fungal diseases such as black dot.

Part of the research is looking for potential pre-harvest solutions, such as foliar sprays.

Transmitted by plant lice not currently present in Europe, it not only has a big impact on yield but also quality, MariCarmen reports. "The tubers have a discolouration inside that makes them unsuitable for processing."

Part of the research is looking for potential pre-harvest solutions, such as foliar sprays that would prevent the psyllid from feeding on the plant, development of resistant varieties through breeding programmes and real-time diagnosis tools for early disease detection but MariCarmen's team is focused on postharvest technologies.

These look at ways of slowing down the progression of some fungal diseases, such as black dot and silver scurf, which get worse the longer the potato is stored. Examples of possible solutions include the use of controlled atmosphere environments in store that contain higher levels of carbon dioxide and lower oxygen concentrations, and edible coatings, that the potatoes can be dipped in or sprayed with, that reduce disease progression.

"We're also looking at tools for early detection, not only for zebra chip, but also other diseases like dry rot. We are trying to identify volatile organic compounds released in the very early stages of the disease, which we can then develop sensors for and further install in stores to detect the disease much earlier."

While this wouldn't stop the disease, early detection would allow timely and informed management decisions that will help reduce storage losses, she concluded.

Laura Bouvet, Knowledge Exchange Manager at Agri-TechE, has emphasised the significance of technical research in the potato sector.

LAURA Bouvet, Knowledge Exchange Manager at Agri-TechE, has emphasised the significance of technical research in the potato sector.

Agri-TechE is a not-for-profit membership organisation that fosters collaboration between growers, researchers, technologists, and entrepreneurs to drive innovation and sustainability in agriculture

"Researchers play a vital role in our agritech community, feeding in evidence, exploring emerging needs and helping shape practical solutions. Every breakthrough begins with scientific curiosity, and researchers are often the first to discover, test and refine the ideas that become tomorrow's agri tech solutions," she said.

"Through Agri TechE, those discoveries gain pathways to impact: Connecting researchers with industry, enabling new partnerships, supporting spinouts and opening doors to commercialisation. Much of today's on-farm innovation began in research institutions like Cranfield, who continue to push that frontier forward," she said. BPR

The REAP conference is Agri-TechE 's flagship event that brings together researchers, innovators and growers from across the UK and beyond. Laura, seen here at a previous event, said the aim is to remove the mystery and mistrust of technology and innovation so growers have realistic, tangible solutions that they feel comfortable adopting.

‘If we stop measuring, we start losing storage’

Adrian Cunnington, Chair of the CIPC Residues Monitoring Group, explains why the conversation around legislation affecting storage now needs to change.


Adrian Cunnington

FOR several seasons now, the potato industry has been working through the legacy of CIPC and much of the attention has, quite rightly, been on residue levels in stores that were historically treated.

That focus was essential in the early years after withdrawal, but the latest monitoring results suggest the conversation needs to evolve.

The data continues to tell a reassuring story. Residues are still detected in some stores, yet levels keep falling and remain comfortably within the temporary Maximum Residue Level (tMRL) of 0.35 mg/kg. This aligns with what many growers and store managers are observing in practice, where improved store management, more rigorous cleaning and a better understanding of contamination pathways are steadily reducing background levels.

The issue now is not what the data shows, but whether we are collecting enough of it to sustain the regulatory position that allows these stores to remain in use.

The tMRL is reviewed annually and depends entirely on the industry demonstrating, with credible evidence, that residues remain within acceptable limits. Without that evidence, regulators have no basis on which to maintain it.

This matters because a significant proportion of UK potato storage has some historical association with CIPC. If the tMRL were to lapse through lack of supporting data, many stores could fall outside compliance regardless of how low their actual residue levels may be. In effect, storage capacity would be at risk for administrative reasons rather than technical ones.

That is why the priority for the 2025/26 season is to strengthen the evidence base, drawing on results from potatoes stored for at least 60 days in facilities with a history of CIPC use. For many businesses, this does not require any change in practice. Multi residue testing is already part of routine assurance for a large share of the crop. The gap lies in the fact that these results are not always being shared as part of the wider dataset that underpins the tMRL.

“Multi residue testing is already part of routine assurance for a large share of the crop. The gap lies in the fact that these results are not always being shared.”


Although CIPC has not been used since 2020, it can persist within the fabric of stores where it was previously applied. Photo: Adam Fryer

Submitting them is a straightforward process. Results are accompanied by a small amount of contextual information about the store, and all data is anonymised before being passed to the regulator. The intention is to build a representative national picture, not to assess individual sites.

It is also worth recognising why residues continue to appear at all. Although CIPC has not been used since 2020, it persists within the fabric of stores where it was historically applied. This behaviour is well understood and explains why residues can still be detected even where current practice is exemplary. It also reinforces the importance of end of season cleaning. Levels are declining, but the process is gradual and depends on consistent attention to detail year after year.

The industry has made steady progress in reducing residues and improving its understanding of how they behave in storage environments. The next step is ensuring that this progress is properly reflected in the data submitted to support the tMRL. Without a sufficiently robust dataset, the regulatory framework that currently allows these stores to remain in use becomes harder to justify, and the risk of losing storage capacity increases for reasons that have little to do with actual residue levels.

Data can be submitted to the CIPC Residues Monitoring Group by visiting the GB Potatoes website at www.gb-potatoes.co.uk. All submissions are anonymised, and only limited contextual information is required. BPR

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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.

SFI changes to adapt to

THE SFI26 (Sustainable Farming Incentive 2026) changes represent a "recalibration" whereby potato growers will need to adapt to lower payment rates for specific actions, tighter limitations on how much land can be used for environmental measures, and a simpler, three-year agreement structure.

While the overall ambition of SFI remains the same, supporting environmental delivery alongside food production, SFI26 introduces important structural and financial changes that will affect how agreements should be designed and managed.

SFI26 introduces several significant updates:

- 71 actions available (down from 102 in SFI24)
- £100,000 annual cap per agreement
- One SFI26 agreement per farm business
- 3-hectare minimum eligibility threshold
- Rotational actions capped at Year 1 levels
- SFI management payment removed
- Many former five-year actions reduced to three-year agreements
- Base and supplemental actions must now be applied for together

In terms of application windows, Window 1 will open in June 2026 and remain open for around two months. However, it may close sooner if demand is high and the allocated budget is fully committed. Window 2 will open in September 2026 for all farms. A fixed end-date has not been set at this point, because it will depend on how many apply.

The Soil Association has welcomed the announcement that the new SFI will support organic farming.

Soil Association Policy Director Brendan Costelloe said it provides "much-needed clarity and reassurance" for growers, many of whom have had plans on hold.

"The continued support for conversion to organic and the core ongoing organic land management options will help to give further confidence to the growing numbers looking to seize the opportunities from the booming organic market," he said. "Next, we need an Organic Action Plan for England, as Scotland have done, which would add to the growing momentum in the UK around organic."

Employment considerations

SIGNIFICANT employment law and payroll changes came into effect in April which are set to impact on potato-growing businesses.

These updates affect sick pay, minimum wage, and employment rights - particularly for farms with seasonal, part-time, or casual staff.

Land Use Framework released

THE Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) has released England's first Land Use Framework - the long-anticipated policy document intended to guide how the country's land resource is managed across competing demands, including food production, nature recovery, climate action, housing, and energy infrastructure.

The framework draws on what Defra describes as the most detailed land use data ever published for England, and sets out a series of principles for decision-makers at national, regional, and local level.

The publication of the policy follows a public consultation in early 2025.

CEO at Nature Friendly Farming Network, Martin Lines, said future emphasis needs to be on multifunctional land use - delivering multiple outcomes from the same piece of land rather than separating nature and food production.

Sustain, the alliance for better food and farming, echoed this view.

Policy and Advocacy Director Glen Tarma said: "We particularly welcome the emphasis on multi-functional land use, valuing the multiple ways that land can deliver for food production, nature recovery, climate goals and energy, and it is a welcome advance to the fragmented approach of the past. Although hard choices are still to come on land use, this publication is a positive beginning to build from."

For more information visit www.gov.uk/government/publications/land-use-framework.

Call for transition measures

AS the government sets out which food, feed and farm practices it expects will be aligned with the EU as part of the future SPS (Sanitary and Phytosanitary) Agreement, the NFU has called for sufficient transition measures so growers and markets can effectively prepare for any resulting changes.

A transitional arrangement for rules on organic practices, plant protection and biocidal products, along with safeguarding of industry progress in combatting anti-microbial resistance and precision breeding technology to be safeguarded are amongst the measures recommended by the NFU.

NFU President Tom Bradshaw said: "The main thing we're hearing from our members is the need for a sufficient transition period. Farming is a long-term business – many farmers are making production decisions now that will impact food sold beyond mid-2027.

"The government has said it is considering transitional arrangements for some sectors. If this agreement is to work for the British farming sector, it cannot be bound by an impractical deadline which will only increase the cost of producing food, both for the domestic and EU market. We need government to take a pragmatic approach."

Revus strategy to beat blight

Blight advice for the 2026 season

- Always apply REVUS in mixture with a fungicide with a different mode of action.
- Apply REVUS, or other CAA fungicide, in strict alternation with a fungicide with a different mode of action.
- OSBPI fungicides should not be applied in an application preceding or following a CAA.
- Use up to six applications of mandipropamid, or other CAA fungicide, making up no more than 50% of the intended number of sprays.
- Good mix protectant partners for REVUS include: fluazinam; propamocarb; amisulbrom and cyazofamid.

More aggressive blight strains and the risk of fungicide resistance developing should be top of mind for potato growers and agronomists this summer, warns Syngenta Technical Manager, *Andy Cunningham*.

That means making best use of the most effective fungicides throughout the season, including a strategy to fully utilise the strength and reliability of REVUS.

The confirmation of a single case of EU_43 blight in the UK at the end of last year further focusses minds on putting together highly effective blight control programmes for this season, and the future.

Currently the blight population in England is dominated by the EU_36 strain, which has not got any resistance issues in the UK. However, it is highly aggressive and reinforces the priority to start spray programmes early and maintain them through to full senescence.

While the EU_43 strain had become a serious issue in parts of Europe, a switch to mixing fungicide actives in each application and alternating modes of action with each spray has successfully countered the problem – as well as minimising the risk of new strains developing.

Such measures are already seen as good practice and widely recommended by UK growers and agronomists.

"It's highly positive that the UK approach of alternation and mixing blight fungicides can be very effective against new strains of blight, even those which show some levels of resistance."

Independent UK trials at Eurofins have shown REVUS mixed with various combinations proved highly successful. Including six mandipropamid applications mixed with fluazinam in a 12-spray programme - the maximum permissible under FRAC Guidelines - giving the best results.

Incorporating a higher number of REVUS applications in a programme, up to a maximum of four per crop, consistently delivered higher levels of blight control and green leaf area protection.

BlightCast adds application advice

New for the 2026 season the acclaimed Syngenta BlightCast infection risk forecasts will be incorporated with the highly popular Spray Assist App.

Now potato growers and agronomists will be able to receive up to 7-days advance warning of localised blight risk, including notifications, along with integrated application advice indicating opportunities to spray, nozzle recommendations and tank mix advice.

That will ensure effective blight protection, before the risk of blight infection occurs. Assessing levels of sustained blight risk can also help with decision making on product choice and timing.

The Syngenta Spray Assist App will also include the Quantis Heat Stress forecast, bringing these important tools to support potato crop management decisions in one place.

Download the Syngenta Spray Assist App for free on Google Play or the App Store.

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