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Editor's letter

WHO can believe a month has already gone by since Potatoes In Practice?

When I penned my last intro, we were all busily preparing for the event that is such a key date in the British potato industry's calendar. This year's event did not disappoint.

Alongside the 59 exhibitors showcasing latest developments, technologies, products and services, there were 21 field plot demonstrations as well as two live working demonstrations. Judging by the amount of people coming forward for 'introductions', I wasn't the only one who was particularly impressed by the lovable bunch of canines who showed how their sniffing skills could be used for the benefit of the potato industry!

There were some strong seminar topics this year, with drought and virus providing challenges for growers this year and industry specialists providing some key insights into work being done and how to put in place effective strategies for managing these in the future on the back of changing climates. We cover both topics in depth in our pests, disease and water management sections.

On the varieties and breeding front, we carry full details about a global research initiative launched to accelerate the delivery of improved crop varieties and the UK's first precision-bred potato, PiperPlus, which has just received regulatory approval.

Another key event we attended this year was Groundswell, where cost-cutting storage tech and sustainable soil strategies for potato growers were amongst the exhibits. You can read our full review on page 30. Then there was Restrained's AccumulatR potato seed treatment open day at Cockerill's in Malton, full details of which can be found in our storage section, along with some key storage insights from Adrian Cunningham.

It's not been an easy year for potato growers generally, and the knock-on effect on the rest of the industry is obviously being felt. Sharing information and good practice can go a long way towards easing those pressures, so please get in touch if you have any insights or updates to share.



Editor

Stephanie Cornwall

04 NEWS ROUND-UP

08 POTATOES IN PRACTICE



12 DISEASE

16 PESTS



21 SEASONAL FOCUS

26 BRITISH POTATO CONFEX



27 WEED CONTROL

28 WATER USAGE

32 BREEDING & VARIETIES

33 INTERNATIONAL MARKETS

36 STORAGE

38 FERTILISATION & NUTRITION



40 MACHINERY

44 GB POTATOES



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British POTATO REVIEW

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EU potato crop forecast below 40 million MT as prices rise

LOWER supply for the EU processed potato sector is envisaged for the 2026/27 season as a result of reduced planting, heatwaves, and drought conditions across key growing regions, according to Expana (Mintec), the world's largest agri-food-focused price reporting agency and market intelligence company.

The 2026 crop is forecast to be below 40 million MT for the first time, around 15 million MT below last year.

The expected decline follows oversupply during the 2025/26 season. Plantings were reduced ahead of the new campaign as the market sought to rebalance supply. Germany, France, the Netherlands, Belgium, and Poland all recorded year-on-year reductions in planted area. Five heatwaves in recent months and subsequent drought conditions are expected to further restrict crop volumes.

The supply outlook comes as European processors record increased exports to several markets. According to Trade Data Monitor, EU processed potato exports to South America increased 45.1% year on year in June, led by Brazil, Colombia, and Chile. Exports to the Middle East rose 23%, while

shipments to Africa increased 26.8%. Asia remained lower, with 12-month volumes down 23% as competition from regional suppliers increased.

Sources suggest that North American trade conditions have also affected EU export activity. U.S. tariff policies and trade uncertainty have disrupted supply chains, while Canadian frozen fry exports could face tariffs of up to 50% entering the US Market sources suggest this has contributed to buyers in the Middle East and other markets sourcing EU product.

Concerns over the 2026 crop have also affected processing potato prices. Expana Benchmark Prices for Fontane processing potatoes EXW Belgium increased from €10/MT in late July 2026 to €150/MT at the start of August.

Trade is currently reported to be slow, with some growers delaying harvest in anticipation of rainfall. Rain is forecast for the coming week, although market participants remain uncertain about its potential impact on yields and tuber size. Prices remained at €150/MT on August 25th as the market awaited further indications of crop availability.

Prepared potato brand extended

BRANSTON'S Nanna Tate potato brand has expanded its prepared potato range with the launch of Buttery Tates, following the introduction of Nanna Tate Baby Potatoes in May.

The new range consists of potatoes designed to be microwaved in the pouch and served as a side dish. Two dressing options are available: Herby-licious, containing a parsley- and mint-infused dressing with salted butter, and Garlic-tastic, containing a garlic- and herb-infused dressing with garlic butter.

Buttery Tates have an RRP of £1.75 per 400g pack, with each pack providing two side-dish servings. The products are being introduced in selected Tesco stores and online.

England potato growers face up to 50% irrigation cuts during drought

DROUGHT was officially announced for England and Wales this season, with growers facing reduced tuber growth, irrigation restrictions, and tough harvesting conditions.

Having faced the driest July on record and seeing reservoir abstraction licence restrictions

put in place, GB Potatoes was anticipating lower crop volumes than in recent years and greater variation in tuber sizes.

Wholesale potato prices were reported to have increased by more than 40%.

See our feature on drought on page 28.

'Direct voice' for industry

GB POTATOES has confirmed its membership in the Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (Defra) Horticulture Expert Growers Group.

The organisation said the appointment gives the potato sector a direct voice in the Government's horticulture growth review, which is being conducted through the Farming and Food Partnership Board. Through its participation, GB Potatoes plans

to highlight key industry priorities, including production costs, water availability, plant health, research, innovation, supply chain resilience, and market growth.

The group will contribute to shaping future horticultural policies, with GB Potatoes emphasising the importance of potatoes in supporting food security, economic development, and healthier diets across the UK.



Scottish researchers target blackleg and soft rot

RESEARCHERS at the University of Glasgow are developing a bacteriocin-based treatment for blackleg and soft rot in potatoes, following more than 15 years of research.

The diseases, caused mainly by bacteria and spread through infected seed tubers, are estimated to result in the destruction of billions of pounds worth of crops worldwide each year. Individual outbreaks can cost potato growers up to £100,000.

A research group has been investigating bacteriocins, naturally occurring protein antibiotics, as a method of targeting the bacteria responsible for the diseases. The work, supported by the Industrial Biotechnology Innovation Centre (IBioIC), has led to the formation of spin-out company Casdu Crop Solutions.

Early glasshouse trials found that the treatment can suppress infection in seed tubers. The researchers said wetter summers could increase conditions in which infections spread.

Joel Milner, who is leading the research, said: "This isn't about a silver-bullet cure. It's about delivering a genuine improvement in the sustainability of an industry that matters hugely to Scotland, the wider UK, and indeed all countries where potatoes are grown."

The team is now working towards developing the treatment for use by growers.

Weather challenges and later planting

THE British potato crop was planted later than last year but earlier than in the wet spring seasons of 2023 and 2024, according to the World Potato Markets.

While planting conditions were generally favourable, growers have since faced a combination of heatwaves and intermittent rainfall and prolonged hot weather is likely

to have increased irrigation costs and will potentially affect yields, the report states.

Early field assessments indicated yields may be below last year's levels, although tuber numbers remained encouraging, suggesting potential for recovery if growing conditions improved.

Summit delay raises questions over seed potato trade

QUESTIONS remain over seed potato trade following the postponement of the planned UK-EU bilateral summit, originally scheduled to be held at the end of July in Brussels. The summit was postponed following the Prime Minister's resignation announcement and a new date is still awaited.

The delay is being closely monitored by the potato industry, as the summit was expected

to provide updates on a proposed Sanitary and Phytosanitary (SPS) agreement between the UK and the EU. Industry representatives believe such an agreement could pave the way for the reopening of seed potato trade between Great Britain and EU member states.

Further clarity on implementation timelines is also anticipated once a new summit date is confirmed.

Hands-on holiday projects

CHILDREN across Lincolnshire have been gaining hands-on cooking experience and food education with potatoes thanks to supplier Branston.

Branston sponsored the sessions and donated potatoes for this summer's Holiday Activities and Food programme (HAF) a government-funded programme run by Lincolnshire County Council across the north of Lincolnshire and

Gainsborough providing free holiday clubs for children in reception to Year 11 in place of free school meals during the school holidays.

During the sessions, children created their own frittata and potato salads, following recipes created by Helen Walker owner of Cook Stars Lincoln North & Gainsborough. They also took home recipe cards featuring baby potatoes.



Low carbon event

TESCO held an open day in Lincolnshire recently to showcase the work it is carrying out with growers and food processors in its supply base.

Hosted by GB Potatoes and Branston Ltd, the event focussed on sustainable, carbon-neutral potato crop rotations and soil health and showcased methods aiming to cut emissions in potato farming by over 50%

The event took place at The Tesco Low Carbon Concept Farm in Langrick, South Lincolnshire, bringing together growers, industry stakeholders, and agricultural experts. Hosted with the permission of grower Paul Grant, it gave attendees a firsthand insight into efforts to establish a carbon-neutral potato rotation system.

Participants were able to explore soil health and biology, assess the impact of farming practices throughout the crop rotation cycle, and learn how available resources can be used more efficiently.

The Tesco Low Carbon Concept Farm trial utilised several lower-carbon fertilisers to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by

50%. These included: CCM which recycles food waste and anaerobic digestion (AD) digestate into pellet form; R-Leaf, a unique crop nutrition spray made from a chemical composite that captures nitrous oxides from the air and converts them into plant-absorbable nitrogen; Yara Crop Nutrition, a program utilising fertilisers that are produced through renewable energy instead of traditional, carbon-intensive synthetic nitrogen.

The wider rotation system was also on display, featuring contributions from Greenyard (peas), Haygate (wheat), and TH Clements (brassicas and leeks).

In an online video launched in tandem with the event, Tesco CEO Ashwin Prasad stressed the vital role suppliers play in the supply chain. Tesco's key suppliers include Branston Potatoes and Mark Willcox of Branston demonstrated how the company uses sensors, soil analysis and nitrogen efficiency technologies to deliver potato crops more efficiently.

Annual spud education for children

THE annual Grow Your Own Potatoes Challenge recently took place throughout Perth and Kinross schools and Nurseries, co-ordinated by Lorraine Henderson.

The project, which has been running for around a decade, was sponsored by ISJ, Horticultural Seed Potato Company Almondbank Perth. Other potato companies supporting the project with diverse varieties included Albert Bartlett, Andrew Skea of Potato House and Branston Potatoes Abernethy.

Growing Packs were distributed by local RHET volunteers to around 100 classes throughout the area with each participant having the opportunity to write stories, create healthy recipes, have fun with STEM based puzzles and learn where potatoes comes from.

This year's winner for the heaviest crop was again Craigclowan Primary One. Runners-up were Luncarty and Abernethy.

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Packaging insights gained

POTATO suppliers who visited London Packaging Week will have had an opportunity to discover sustainable mono-material bags, lightweight sacks, and smart packaging tech to cut waste, meet UK retail demands, and comply with upcoming Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) regulations

Amongs the exhibits, there were recyclable paper and bioplastic films that keep potatoes fresh while lowering carbon footprints and visitors will also be able to explore packaging designs that reduce bruising, moisture damage, and food waste during transit.

Regulatory and market insights were to be shared, such as how to adapt to new UK packaging and recycling laws from experts representing WRAP and Defra and visitors had an opportunity to connect directly with major UK supermarket buyers such as Tesco, Sainsbury's, and Marks & Spencer.

The event, which was due to take place at Excel, London, over two days, offers an opportunity to source alternative materials from pioneering start-ups before they hit the mainstream market.

New president for Europatat

EUROPATAT, the European Potato Trade Association, has appointed Peter Ton as its new President following the election of a new Board during the Europatat Congress 2026 in Brussels. Ton succeeds Tigran Richter of Norika/DHKV (Germany), who served on the association's board during the past four years.

18 graduate at McCains

FROZEN potato manufacturer McCain Foods has celebrated the graduation of 18 colleagues from its Manufacturing Academy.

The ceremony was held at the company's Scarborough headquarters and was attended by Alison Hume, MP for Scarborough and Whitby. The milestone celebrates the achievements of colleagues who have completed nationally-recognised qualifications (NVQs)



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Potatoes In Practice 2026

The lead-up to this year's key event was a far cry from last year's storm-battering and there were some novel new demonstrations amongst the key industry attractions.

GROWERS, researchers, industry professionals, suppliers and exhibitors from across the potato sector came together at The James Hutton Institute's Balruddery Farm for its annual Potatoes in Practice event.

The event attracted more than 740 attendees, including exhibitors, suppliers and visitors. A total of 59 organisations exhibited, showcasing the latest developments, technologies, products and services available to support growers and the wider sector.

There were 21 field plot demonstrations, showcasing the latest research, trials and developments in potato production and two live working demonstrations offered practical insight into technology and innovative approaches in action.

Seven static machinery demonstrations also provided attendees with the opportunity to explore the latest equipment and technologies and a live cookery demonstration added a new and engaging dimension to the event, demonstrating the versatility and value of the potato.

A key feature of this year's event was the seminar programme, with four sessions featuring 11 expert speakers. Supporting the overarching theme of 'Future-proofing the Potato Industry', the seminars brought together leading researchers, industry experts and growers to share knowledge, discuss emerging issues and explore practical solutions to the key challenges and opportunities facing the sector. The sessions provided a valuable platform for discussion and knowledge exchange, helping to address key issues and opportunities for innovation and

collaboration and supporting the continued development and resilience of the potato industry. More details on these seminars can be found in our Pests, Disease and Water Usage sections.

The field plot demonstrations, exhibition stands, static machinery displays, live working demonstrations and seminar sessions were all well attended throughout the day, with visitors engaging positively with exhibitors and speakers and taking the opportunity to discuss the latest developments directly with those working across the sector.

New highlights

In one of the new additions at this year's event, former MasterChef finalist Sarah Rankin delivered a live cookery demonstration, showcasing the potato in a fresh and engaging way. ➔

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The National Robotarium's roving robotic dog, SPOT, proved to be a major attraction, drawing considerable interest from attendees and demonstrating the potential for robotics and autonomous technology within future agricultural applications.

Real sniffer dogs from K9 Manhunt & ScentWork Scotland were also present. Their demonstrations generated significant interest and were particularly well received by attendees, providing an engaging example of how specialist detection dogs can be used in practical applications in the future.

Exhibitors share insights

Catching up with Alistair Redpath, Director at Cygnet Potato Breeders Ltd, he gave us an insight into his experience of how crops are faring in Scotland compared to England this year, as well as sharing which varieties have performed best in 2026.

"We've had moister, cooler conditions compared to England, which has been in the grip of a serious drought. If you asked any of the agronomists up here, they'll say it's been like chalk and cheese," he said. "Some of the

seed yields in England are smaller because of the drought. The tonnage isn't there, whereas up here we've got good yields and good size."

In terms of varieties, Elland is having a good year, and Manhattan has done exceptionally well, he said.

"Elland is quite an indeterminate variety, so it's holding on through the drought. Even in unirrigated crops, it'll hold on until it gets a bit of moisture later in the year and then bulk up. The one variety that's done really exceptionally well has been Manhattan - although it's dying back now because it's an early main crop. It's a funny variety. It doesn't put much into the top growth, it puts everything into the growing crop underneath so there's good size and good skin finish."

Manhattan had proved to be popular in both England and Scotland this year, he added the early maincrop variety gained commercial traction and industry attention around 2016 as a promising pre-pack and baking potato and is now widely used for the fresh market, prepack ware, and baker production owing to its high yields of bright, uniform, short-oval tubers.

Charlie Roper, Director at Cool Climate Solutions, which partners with Dutch company Omnivent by providing specialised agricultural refrigeration, crop storage, and HVAC engineering support to UK customers, took time out to tell us about the storage concept he was demonstrating on his stand.

"The newest thing is Omnicuro Next. It's basically an updated version of the Omnicuro which uses AI technology to look at the controls. Whereas before, it was a very manual input, its use of AI now means you can basically just press one button. It will go, and it'll look at all the settings itself. You tell it what temperature to achieve, what the ventilation times are and so on."

The technology automatically regulates ventilation, cooling, heating, and hatches to keep harvested crops in prime condition. Currently a prototype, Omnicuro Next is already being used by half a dozen stores in the Netherlands, and it is hoped it will become a key tool for British growers in the future, he added.

Low yields, lack of moisture and increased irrigation during this year's intensely-dry season have impacted on what machinery



purchases have been made as growers have been forced to cut costs this year. However, Ed Gilbert, Sales and Marketing Director of Standen Engineering, said his team had seen a good start to the year and remained committed to helping growers in whatever capacity they could.

"With the potato crop, there are so many different facets to it. Whether it's seed, chipping potatoes, salads or crisping, one sector can be doing well, while another sector might be down," he said, adding that the potato side is performing better than cereals.

He reflected on the change in the industry landscape since he joined the company and began attending Potatoes In Practice eight years ago.

"In a good production year, growers invest in machinery that will save them money or complete a field application more efficiently, and there are now fewer people trying to do the same amount of work. The farms are probably becoming fewer, but bigger," he said, adding that finding skilled labour was definitely a challenge for many in the industry.

Technical Managers Grace White and Ed Scaman fielded various questions on

late blight, alternaria, and crop protection strategies on Bayer Crop Science's stand.

Grace, who joined the company in 2024, having previously been a trials agronomist with NIAB, spoke about the differences she'd seen compared to the North West and East Midlands regions she covers.

"There have been a lot more aphids up here compared to down south, which is an obvious negative, but the crop in general is just a lot greener - even the crops that haven't been irrigated," she said, adding that blight had been more of a concern this year.

Nichino Europe integrated Interagro (UK) Ltd into its brand, with potato and plant health products previously associated with Interagro transitioning fully under the Nichino Europe name last year, and this was the first time the proprietary adjuvant, biostimulant, and crop protection technologies used in potato production such as GOZAI, KABUKI, and Moncut were exhibited under the revised branding.

Nichino's Commercial Technical Managers Christopher Blashill and Oliver Johnson were on stand to field questions and said

they found the event had presented a good opportunity to have more meaningful conversations and the time to engage with the potato-growing community generally this year.

Oliver said: "We've got quite a good distribution network that we tend to look after and have good relationships with those guys. Being here, we've put the new brand awareness out there while being able to support some of the local growers with some technical knowledge as well.

"It's been busy all day long. It's amazing how far it draws people in from."

CC Powell, which sells new and used potato machinery, cultivators, and sprayers, showcased and operated a live Flikweert Vision optical grader on its stand, which drew many spectators.

Service Manager Ricky Mackie demonstrated key features introduced underneath the unit to manage the waste and separation lines. These included an optional second ejection unit underneath the main sorting area, a reject separator which sits in line with the waste stream, and a three-way product stream split. **BPR**



Viruses and vectors

The challenges presented this season were hotly debated at a recent Potatoes In Practice seminar, when a panel covering different areas of the supply chain discussed the onset of Leafroll and other viruses making their presence felt.

MILDER winters have caused aphids, the primary vector for the Potato Leafroll Virus (PLRV), to fly up to three weeks earlier than average, elevating virus risks. Over the past eight years, this has led to recorded incidents in the UK increasingly dramatically.

Chairman of the Potato Sub-Committee for the Scottish Society for Crop Research (SSCR), Andy Steven, chaired a Potatoes In Practice

seminar session whose panellists included Alistair Melrose, Commercial Director of Perth-based J&E seed potato grower Smillie Potatoes and and past president of BPTA; Ryan Torrie, General Manager at Aberdeenshire seed growing company J.S. Cruickshank and Vice Chairman of PB Growers Association; and Jamie Harrison, Director of Norfolk family growing company E G Harrison & Co and HDF Farming Ltd.

“We’ve got different pressure than we had historically. We need to move with the times.”

Eric Anderson, Agronomist



Andy urged people to sign up to the ‘Six Steps of Virus Control’, an integrated management strategy developed by the Scottish Aphid-borne Virus Working Group and promoted by GB Potatoes that is used in UK potato growing to prevent crop degradation from aphid-vectoring viruses like Potato Virus Y (PVY) and Potato Leaf Roll Virus (PLRV).

Its aim is to get growers and people involved throughout the chain in a discussion about the virus and the challenges the industry is now facing, he explained.

“The targets are changing,” Andy said, stressing that mosaic, a specific class of foliar symptoms caused by viral infections, is back and there is PVY in crops.

“It’s not just one virus we’ve got to deal with. It applies to them all,” he said.

Effects

The panellists discussed some of the effects being felt within production and procurement this year.

Ryan works on around 350 acres in Aberdeenshire where around 35 different varieties are grown for various different companies. He said the landscape was very different to 10 years ago and that leafroll has presented the biggest challenge for him since 2018.

“Levels have been ramping up. We hadn’t had a leafroll problem really for probably the previous 10 years but it has been very much going up over the last few years. We generally don’t see it at our stage at relatively high levels, but, obviously, it’s still managing to find its way into the production system there and if we can’t keep it clean, then what chance does everyone have?”

Alastair grows 700 acres of mainly seed potatoes on rented land, which makes it more difficult to monitor. He said that while the virus level is low, it is “always there”.

He said the virus situation is making things more difficult from both a growing and buying perspective.

“Since 2018 we’ve been growing our own seed, basically that essentially we use ourselves. We take in mini tubers and we bring them forward, we don’t certify anything,” he said, adding that the seed was S grade, having a low tolerance for diseases, viruses, and blackleg, therefore virus was becoming more and more of a problem. →



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"Fortunately, our high grade supplier in the Black Isle, who grows King Edward, Maris Piper and Estebana potatoes for us, doesn't seem to have the same issues and, in fairness to him, that stuff has always been good, so we don't see major issues there. But we do see it in our own stuff, which we've been growing at fairly low altitude for the past three years now."

Seed growing has now moved uphill to land which could only otherwise be used for grazing so the current field is now 750 feet above sea level, with nothing around it, he said. Natural grass barriers have formed between plots which, while unintentional, are very welcome.

"But still, even at that level, we are finding aphids in the yellow water traps this year. The aphid pressure is very, very low but it has still had an impact on us," he said, adding that virus risk was always there.

"I think by us keeping generations short, hopefully we're eliminating the risk of multiplication taking place."

For Jamie, in North Norfolk where the family business is growing on 400 hectares for Lamb Weston and seed production, buying good quality seed was, as ever, the key to this year's challenges, as well as the use of aphid monitoring traps.

The family business covers 1,300 hectares where potatoes and sugar beet are grown. Ware production takes place on 400 hectares for Lamb Weston and Albert Bartlett and some prepacked customers and there is 16 hectares attributed to seed production, which goes back into its own business, being supplied to seed houses and Lamb Weston.

"The key for us is buying good quality input stock for one year modification and then sending on," he said. "Norfolk is heavily concentrated in ware potatoes so finding isolation for seed production is challenging and there are rotational challenges as well. We want to be working on one in eight minimum in our own seed production crops. By using

aphid monitoring, traps, regular spraying, we're keeping leafroll at bay. But with climate change, hotter summers and milder winters, this aphid problem is not going to go away - that's for sure. "It's affecting us all."

Effects

Leafroll had been a serious problem for Ryan last year. While some of this had carried over into 2026, this season the virus situation had been "better than expected".

"We're still not seeing that much mosaic PVY. It is still mainly leafroll. I suppose the positive to take out this year is that we didn't see the kind of spike in aphid levels in June that we have seen in previous seasons."

While aphid levels had picked up slightly at the start of August, things were improving, he said, and he was optimistic that the mature plants were less at risk than when they had been at the emergence stage in June.

Alastair said that while they were being vigilant in Perthshire and Angus, he echoed what Ryan said.

"All our PB2s have passed this year, which is not normally the case. We usually have a casualty within there. Leafroll is the major issue that we find in the pre basic stocks. But it's been much easier to control, and that surprised me on the back of last year. Certainly, the lower aphid numbers will help us going forward as well, I would hope."

Jamie said this season's traps had yielded some interesting results.

"Our low is a 107 index while our high end field is a 160. We've also been looking at isolation beds. Last year, we did some trial work with a pot of nectar mix in our isolation beds versus bare land. We've done the same exercise this year.

"With climate change, hotter summers and milder winters, this aphid problem is not going to go away."

Jamie Harrison, Norfolk



Chairman of the Potato Sub-Committee for the Scottish Society for Crop Research (SSCR), Andy Steven, chaired the session on this year's virus challenges.



A large audience was drawn to the debate about increasing virus incidents.

“I think by us keeping generations short, hopefully we’re eliminating the risk of multiplication taking place.”

Alistair Melrose, Perth

“We hand sewed last year and this year we’ve made up an on-farm small single-bed drill to drill the cover crop mixture in. Unfortunately, because it’s that dry, we didn’t establish any of that mix. But interestingly, in the index, you’re looking from bare land at an index score of 573 cumulative for the season, versus the cover crop 273, versus the crop in field 160. So the range of difference is evident across the field and just the bare land.”

This brought into question the need for having isolation beds on bare land, he said – something others in the industry have also questioned.

Mitigation

Ryan said various methods of mitigation had been tried this year.

“This year, I think we were more successful than we have been previously in establishing a kind of companion crop on our highest grade to try and cut out how much bare land there is within those crops. We were reasonably successful in establishing a barley crop but unfortunately the herbicide mix didn’t knock it back as much as I was expecting.

“There was still a bit of cover there just on emergence which was the kind of vulnerable stage when I was trying to protect it. I still think, looking down on that field, it would be quite a confusing picture for an aphid. As with the straw mulches and other methods we’ve tried in the past, it’s just something to try and creates a more even colour.”

Alastair said he too had previously tried using straw but described the effects as “a bit erratic”.

“It was very difficult to get the straw in the right place and then, if there was a wind like we’ve had this year, and we move it very very quickly, it didn’t serve much of a purpose. I think what we have seen this year is by accident more than good practice.”

Alistair said there had been “a perfect storm” over the past few years in terms of climate, deregulation of pesticides, and market demand, and industry needed to work together over the next couple of years to stay on top of the issue.

“I think there’s a lot of evidence to say that potentially the leafroll problem that we’re seeing in Aberdeenshire, certainly compared to other parts, could be down to the amount of certain varieties being grown - because they’ve been in demand for a certain market and perhaps not been grown at appropriate field generation as well. While we can’t downplay our own responsibilities, I think the whole industry has a responsibility to try and improve the situation for everyone, and that also includes the certification scheme.”

Staying on top of groundkeeper removal

Groundkeepers, i.e. unwanted volunteer potato plants that grow from tubers left in the soil during a previous harvest, provide a safe home for pests and diseases, and Agronomist Eric Anderson was keen to learn more

about the level of “potentially lethal” viruses accumulating in these across the rotational landscape, particularly with rented land.

The Scottish government could learn from the Netherlands in terms of the importance of bare areas in mitigation, he added.

“We’ve got different pressure than we had historically. We need to move with the times,” he said, adding that the pressure was on for rogues removing groundkeepers within seed crops. “If they are accumulating virus when they emerge, then the vectors only need to move it to the next plant to have transmitted leafroll so that’s another context that I think we should bear in mind - how frequently we are removing groundkeepers in seed crops.” **BPR**



Agronomist Eric Anderson said more needs to be known about the level of “potentially lethal” viruses accumulating in groundkeepers across rotations, particularly on rented land.

Panellists Alistair Melrose, Ryan Torrie, Jamie Harrison, and Andy Steven.



An alarm signal to attract predators

New aphid control product comes at a time when the pests are increasing virus outbreaks – and turns the tables on their defences.

BASF has launched an innovative biological product designed to amplify natural aphid control.

By acting as an attractant for beneficial predators and parasitoids, the product, Apthema, is designed to support farmers when adopting Integrated Pest Management (IPM) strategies. It contains (E)- β -farnesene (EBF), a natural pheromone that aphids release as an alarm signal when disturbed. Natural enemies such as ladybirds and lacewings have learnt to use this scent to locate their prey.

By optimising this insect behaviour, Apthema can help growers to reduce their reliance on pesticides, according to the manufacturer.

Professor of Applied Entomology at Harper Adams University, Tom Pope, has welcomed the new introduction. He said: “Aphids pose a massive threat to global crops, causing billions in damage annually through direct nutrient extraction and virus transmission.”

Demonstrating aphids’ phenomenal ability to reproduce, Tom cited Dr Richard Harrington’s calculation that without natural limits, aphids could cover the Earth in a layer 149 kilometres deep in a single year.

However, the number of insecticides growers can use is shrinking. With fewer products available, the selection pressure from remaining conventional products is rising, further increasing the risk of resistance. This is why Tom says IPM is essential.

“Apthema is a really exciting new tool within the toolbox. It is an enabler and fits alongside other tactics that draw beneficial insects into crops.”

Tom is particularly excited about the launch of Apthema because of its synergistic effects.

A beneficial midge, aphidoletes, that predate aphids.



Business Development Manager for BASF Biologicals, Rob Storer said the active ingredient is encapsulated to control its release over an extended period of 20–30 days.

“For me, the future of crop protection is the intelligent selection of IPM tools, understanding interactions between them and harnessing synergistic effects.”

The active ingredient in Apthema was first identified in the 1970s, but its application has been revolutionised by advanced encapsulation technology.

Business Development Manager for BASF Biologicals, Rob Storer, said: “While (E)- β -farnesene is the principal component of aphid alarm pheromone, it is volatile and degrades rapidly. What makes Apthema unique is its proprietary formulation. The active ingredient is encapsulated to control its release over an extended period of 20–30 days.”

The micro-capsules are formulated using natural and inert ingredients and are free of microplastics.

Field efficacy and implementation

BASF has demonstrated strong performance of Apthema in trials. In standardised Y-tube choice tests, ladybirds exhibited a significant

An aphid infected by a tiny, beneficial parasitoid wasp.



Professor of Applied Entomology at Harper Adams University, Tom Pope, has welcomed the new introduction.

preference for vessels emitting air with Apthema, opting to travel down the pheromone gradient far more frequently than controls.

Field assessments confirm its effectiveness on-farm. In peas, Apthema increased the number of plants containing beneficial insects by 18%, and in sugar beet, the presence of aphids was significantly reduced from an average of 2% to 0.5%.

“Given it is rainfast within 24 hours, and requires no buffer zone or maximum application limit, it offers flexibility for growers,” Rob said.

BASF recommends applying Apthema at intervals of 14 days, using a rate of 0.3 – 0.5 L/Ha with water rates of 100–300 L/Ha. Although its aim is to keep pest populations below an economic threshold, where needed, it is compatible with other approved crop protection products.

“Ultimately, Apthema serves as a powerful tool designed for synergy,” adds Rob. “It is built to seamlessly integrate with existing IPM strategies, helping farmers effectively manage pests.” **BPR**

Peach-potato aphids (Myzus persicae) damage potato crops primarily by acting as vectors for destructive plant viruses rather than through direct feeding.



Collaboration continues apace as virus pressure mounts

Albert Bartlett and Fera strengthen partnership to tackle rising aphid pressures in Scottish seed potatoes.

A MAJOR aphid monitoring effort is underway across Scotland to support Scotland's seed potato sector during the 2026/27 growing season.

As aphid populations continue to pose a major threat to potato health and yields, a collaboration between research organisation Fera Science Ltd and family-owned potato supplier Albert Bartlett is delivering critical data, improved decision-making tools, and enhanced protection for growers across Scotland.

Aphids, small sap-sucking insects such as greenfly and blackfly, are among the most destructive pests affecting temperate agricultural systems. Beyond weakening plants by ingesting sap, they act as key vectors for potato viruses, including Potato Virus Y (PVY), Potato Leaf roll Virus (PLRV) and Potato Virus A (PVA), which cost the UK potato industry millions of pounds annually. Their rapid reproductive cycle and ability to colonise new plants quickly make them particularly challenging to control.

For the 2026 season, Albert Bartlett has funded 43 monitoring trap sites across Scotland and two in Jersey, supporting Fera's long-running national programme, which dates back to 2004 and typically processes around 850 samples from 100 UK sites annually.

Across the 48 Scottish sites in 2025, 443 samples were processed, with an average of 9.4 samples per trap, and 35 growers participated in running traps across key seed-growing regions.

Regional sample totals included: North Scotland 147, Grampian 98, Angus & Perthshire 133 and the Borders 56.

All growers were supplied with specialist monitoring kits, equipped to collect aphid samples throughout the season. Fera managed kit distribution, grower onboarding, grid reference verification, data permissions, and all laboratory identification work.

Real-time reporting and decision support

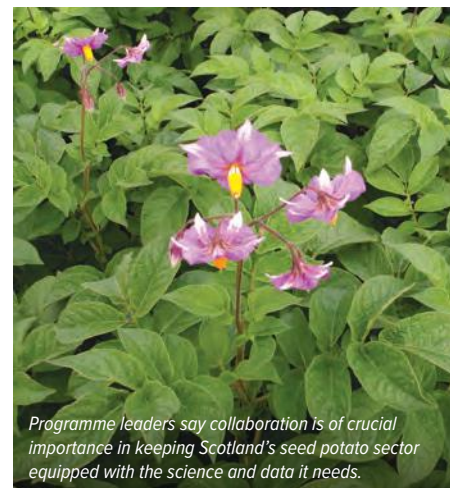
Fera provides growers and agronomists with twice-daily website updates, immediate individual sample results, and automatic text/email alerts, including first regional capture of *Myzus persicae* (peach-potato aphid), alerts when regional virus-risk thresholds are reached and weekly regional summaries throughout the season.

These tools help growers decide whether and when to apply insecticides, which insecticide to use based on species-specific virus-vectoring risk and resistance considerations, and when to desiccate haulms to reduce late-season virus spread.

It also enables them to make an informed decision on whether home-saved seed remains viable and safe to use, as well as supporting resistance management and encouraging integrated pest management (IPM) by helping growers minimise unnecessary treatments while protecting quality.

Analysis from the 2025 Scottish monitoring programme shows significantly-elevated virus pressure. Key findings include:

- Virus pressure peaked early, with the first major spike occurring one week earlier than in 2024 and two weeks earlier than typical years.



Programme leaders say collaboration is of crucial importance in keeping Scotland's seed potato sector equipped with the science and data it needs.

- In some regions virus pressure climbed to five or six times the all-year average, particularly in late May and mid-June.
 - Many regions experienced multiple peaks, with some lasting several weeks.
 - Even non-potato-colonising aphids contributed to elevated virus pressure due to their role in non-persistent virus spread.
- In North Scotland there were two major peaks, with *Myzus persicae* (peach potato aphid), *Macrosiphum euphorbiae* (potato aphid), driving high pressure early and mid-season.

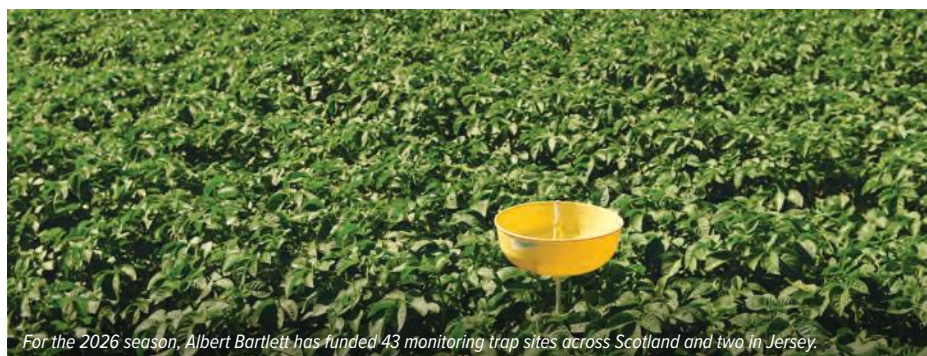
There was a sustained peak that was six times the all-year average in the Grampian area, with peach-potato aphid and potato aphid the key contributors.

In Angus and Perthshire, there were multiple strong peaks with both colonising and non-colonising species responsible. VP remained above average through much of the season.

A notable early-season detection of *Rhopalosiphoninus latysiphon* (bulb & potato aphid) was found in the Borders three weeks earlier than usual and contributed to June peaks.

Lisa Blackburn and Larissa Collins, who are leading the programme at Fera, emphasised the value of robust science and collaboration:

In a joint statement, they said: "Aphid pressure in 2025 has been exceptionally high, and the rapid reporting enabled by this monitoring network has been crucial in helping growers act quickly and confidently. Our work with Albert Bartlett ensures Scotland's seed potato sector is equipped with the science and data it needs to manage virus risk effectively." 



For the 2026 season, Albert Bartlett has funded 43 monitoring trap sites across Scotland and two in Jersey.

Correct interpretation is key

Future-proofing PCN control starts with understanding pressure today.

GROWERS are being reminded that effective potato cyst nematode management for next season starts with accurate soil testing and careful interpretation of data.

With weather conditions having been so dry this season, many growers will be later testing soils, and before any decisions on controlling the pest can be made, growers need to know what is in the ground.

PCN remains one of the most persistent challenges facing UK potato production. Managing it always requires a joined-up approach, combining accurate soil testing, variety choice, rotation, crop management and, where justified, the responsible use of granular nematicides as part of an integrated pest management strategy (IPM).

Independent Agronomist and Nematicide Stewardship Programme group member Simon Alexander, explains.

“Soil testing gives you the information needed to make informed decisions, but it is important not to interpret figures too literally.”

Reading the results

Soil sample results will usually indicate PCN cyst numbers per 100g of soil and egg numbers per gram of soil.

Simon explained why the distinction is important.

“The egg count is the figure that tells you the current burden, while the cyst is the protective casing that contains the eggs, and because cysts can survive in the soil for a long time, they show historical PCN activity.

Misinterpretation can also occur, particularly when results vary across a field or return as ‘none found’ in some sampled areas. Simon stresses that none found does not mean none present.



Knowing which species of PCN is present influences the most appropriate next steps.

“Remember the soil sample result is based on a very small amount of soil compared with the size of a hectare,” says Simon.

“A 200g sample per hectare is only a handful of soil, so the chance of missing eggs or a PCN hotspot in the sampling is significant.”

Knowing the species

As well as understanding pressure, growers should pay close attention to the species identified in the analysis.

Knowing whether *Globodera pallida* or *Globodera rostochiensis* is present will influence the most appropriate next steps, particularly when choosing resistant and tolerant varieties.

“PCN species identification is becoming an increasingly important management tool,” says Simon.

“Knowing what you are dealing with helps growers build the right IPM plan and get the best out of resistant varieties.”

This is especially important where growers are relying on variety choice as part of a long-term PCN strategy. Resistance can help reduce multiplication, while tolerance helps protect yield under pressure, so understanding both the field result and the variety profile is essential.

Improving sampling accuracy

Soil sampling gives growers the best available picture of PCN pressure, but at very low levels, PCN can still be missed.

The more soil sampled, the more reliable the result is likely to be. However, this has to be balanced against the cost and practicality of sampling.

Simon says growers looking to improve monitoring accuracy should consider reducing the size of the sampled area, increasing the number of samples taken and increasing the overall sample size.

“It is important to know where your hotspots are,” he says. “The more detailed your sampling, the better your understanding of how PCN is distributed across the field.”

He also advises growers to think carefully about timing.

“Sampling two years ahead rather than just before the potatoes are planted can be advantageous because it gives a more up-to-date picture of the field and allows you to be more proactive,” he says.

“This way you have time to make better decisions, but it is still close enough to planting to give a more useful picture of current pressure.”

Turning results into action

Once soil sample results have been interpreted, and species identified, the next step is to decide on the most appropriate IPM strategy and where to use products containing fosthiazate, such as Syngenta’s Nemathorin, which is an established option where nematicide use is justified within an IPM plan.

Sampling early enough gives growers more opportunity to consider cultural control options, including trap cropping and biofumigation, both of which can play a role in control, but differ in how easily they fit into commercial rotations.

Trap crops often require a full growing season, typically from June to October. Whereas, biofumigant crops can be drilled in late July or early August and incorporated before October.

“The more detailed your sampling, the better your understanding of how PCN is distributed across the field.”

Where growers want to use these tools, decisions need to be made early enough to secure seed, plan field operations, irrigation if necessary and fit the crop into the rotation.

For fields with very low PCN pressure, decisions may be more nuanced. Simon says granular nematicides may not always be required where pressure is low and a necessary and resistant variety is being grown, but this will depend on a range of factors.

“When deciding what to do next, growers need to consider soil type, the variety, their experience of growing that variety and the field history,” he says.

“Soil type makes a big difference to PCN levels per unit area, so decisions need to vary depending on bulk density. For example, a count of five eggs/g in an organic soil may equate to around 20 eggs/g in a mineral soil.

“Also, if you are trying a new variety, make sure you interrogate the breeder or their agent for any information as to how it will respond to different levels of pressure. Many of the processors and packers will have information from their own trials as well.”

Where pressure is very high, the decision may be more fundamental he adds.

“If PCN levels are very high, it is worth asking whether potatoes should be grown in that area at all.”

Best practice remains essential

If soil sampling leads to a control strategy which includes granular nematicides, growers should seek advice from a BASIS-qualified agronomist first.

Simon says the aim should be to make decisions based on evidence, rather than habit.

“Understanding your PCN pressure has never been more important,” he says.

“The growers in the strongest position will be those who know the challenge they are dealing with and know how to use the range of management options available.”

That means using soil sampling as the starting point, interpreting the results with care, identifying the species present and planning early enough to use the most appropriate combination of tools.

For growers looking to protect land for future potato crops, PCN control is not simply a planting-season decision. It starts with knowing what is in the soil today and using that information to build a more resilient plan for the years ahead.

What to expect from soil sampling reports

NSP group member and crop production specialist Reuben Morris of Frontier Agriculture said optimal accuracy in soil



Independent agronomist Simon Alexander shared some practical advice on soil sampling interpretation.

sampling is necessary as PCN is difficult to detect because of its uneven and unpredictable distribution across fields.

“Often introduced at a single point, it can be spread by machinery, creating random hotspots that make traditional sampling methods unreliable,” said Reuben. “To address this challenge, we at Frontier Agriculture use a systematic and precise approach. Our soil sampling service divides each field into 1-ha blocks, ensuring full coverage rather than relying on limited sampling patterns.

“Within each hectare, we take 50 soil cores to a depth of 25 cm, which are then combined into one representative sample where a minimum 200gm is per sample is inspected. This method significantly increases the likelihood of detecting PCN wherever it may be present.

“By using this grid-based sampling strategy, we provide growers with a more accurate picture of infestation levels across their land. This enables better-informed decisions on crop planning, management, and treatment, ultimately helping to protect yields and reduce long-term risk.” 

Before planting begins, growers are encouraged to visit the NSP website to update their knowledge on best practices for application of granular nematicide for the control of PCN. Find the Code of Good Practice for the application of nematicides on <https://nspstewardship.co.uk/>



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If crops are planted into less-than-ideal soil conditions, they lack the root system and biomass to reduce the effect of pests.

‘Get the balance right’

Growers need to weigh up agronomic traits alongside customer specifications when choosing varieties.

OPTING for a variety that is the next step up from one you already know works well is a good strategy for those potato growers looking for new options, according to Andrew Goodinson, who says the main question they should ask themselves is ‘Does this variety produce better quality tubers than the ones we are currently growing?’.

Ultimately, growers are always looking to maximise the profitability per hectare of their crop, so they need to think in terms of yield and quality – and getting the specification their customers want, he stressed.

“Decisions on which varieties to grow need to strike a balance between the different

traits demanded by customers and the agronomic needs of the fields and systems you use. Getting it right is key to success. We really need to build closer links between the customer, breeder and grower. For example, if growing for the processing market, many of your customers are under pressure to look further at sustainability criteria and environmental impact.

“Building dialogue and closer relationships can make a real difference to outcomes.”

When visiting variety trials, after checking the tuber specification (size) and traits such as tolerance and resistance, Andrew suggests looking at how well varieties are coping with weather conditions.

“It is also a good idea to check how well they fit with your soil type and your farm history – for example, if you have fields at risk of very dry soils, or high numbers of FLN or PCN.”

There is a large pool of potentially-suitable varieties for the fresh sector, he observes, but notes that growers in Britain tend to be limited to growing the same few, because their visual and culinary attributes have already won acceptance with consumers, and therefore supermarkets.

“As a result, it’s difficult to get the fresh sector to accept varieties with agronomic and environmental benefits that also have good culinary attributes.” →

“We need more discussions between growers, buyers and marketers in the fresh sector.”

SEASONAL FOCUS

Uniform growth key to yield

Andrew looks for varieties capable of uniform growth and yield, even when the season is challenging.

“A good root system is able to scavenge for nutrients and water and reduce the impact of potential stresses, so the crop can perform better even in difficult seasons.”

He notes that an extensive root system helps plants cope with disorders such as foliar diseases and damage caused by free-living nematodes (FLN) and potato cyst nematodes (PCN). Ideally, the variety should also be tolerant and/or resistant to these pests.

“In addition, good roots can help us manage the amount of inorganic fertiliser needed, helping to keep input costs down.”

As yield remains crucial, he recommends looking for optimum eye and stem numbers, as these help ensure a more uniform crop.

“We prefer each seed to have three stems. We also need varieties capable of reaching full canopy as quickly as possible, to make a large foliage ‘solar panel’ that increases photosynthesis and helps the crop reach its yield potential.”

Haulm longevity also plays a role: The longer the haulm grows, the better the potential yield. It is good, however, to see some senescence before making harvesting decisions, as this indicates

the crop is reaching its natural conclusion.

Other quality attributes include breeding to reduce tuber defects such as internal rust spot, and ensuring even distribution of sugars, carbohydrates and dry matter through the tuber.

He also highlights that tubers need good skin characteristics, able to withstand harvesting conditions and store well.

“Each specific market sector has its own criteria for tuber shape – for example, the roundness of tubers for the crisp market – so we need to aim for uniformity within these criteria for the markets we’re supplying.”

He goes on to say that work still needs to be done to develop varieties with tolerance and resistance to soil-borne and foliar pests and diseases.

“We need to look harder at genetics to find new varieties with tolerance to viruses such as Potato Leaf Roll Virus (PLRV), a persistent virus transmitted by aphids. We also need varieties with resistance and tolerance to pests such as potato cyst nematode (PCN) and free-living nematode (FLN).

“The amount of land infested with PCN and/or FLN is increasing, so varietal tolerance and resistance is becoming critical.

“This is even more important in years where crops are planted into less-than-ideal soil conditions, leaving them without the root system

or biomass to reduce the effect of these pests.”

Some processors are encouraging their growers to plant varieties which can be planted and lifted earlier, and which are resistant to some strains of the PCN genotype *Globodera pallida*, compared with other varieties in the sector.

Seed efficiency is also important, he observes, noting that varieties with more eyes per tuber can potentially be cut in half – in a similar way to Shepody – increasing the number of seed pieces per tuber.

Storage remains an important aspect of the industry, and with high energy costs alongside the need to reduce carbon footprint, long dormancy has become another important trait for the future.

Fresh sector acceptance

While new varieties are the future for the industry, convincing customers of the benefits of agronomic advantages is key, said Andrew.

Processors appear to be aware of the challenges growers face in the field, and of the need to address them alongside the drive for better sustainability and a lower carbon footprint, but getting the fresh potato sector to accept and adopt new varieties is proving more challenging.

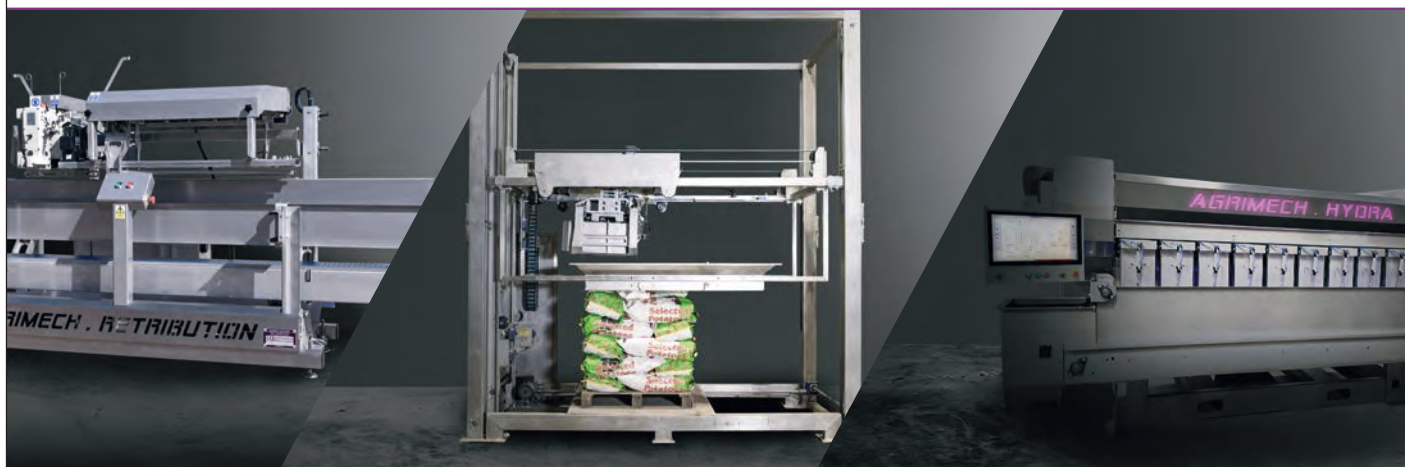
“We need more discussions between growers, buyers and marketers in the fresh sector to bring this about. We need to build awareness of the potential advantages of new varieties with agronomic qualities – such as disease resistance – and the resulting need to use fewer plant protection products. These benefits should be promoted at the point of sale.”

Looking to the future, he reflects on whether the sector should look to plant genetics rather than inputs, taking advantage of precision breeding to develop varieties with the same culinary characteristics but greater agronomic benefits and lower input needs.

“Changes this year include more growers opting for placement fertilisers, particularly in the western counties of England, where soil phosphate levels are high.”

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Varieties capable of reaching full canopy as quickly as possible make a large foliage 'solar panel' that increases photosynthesis and helps the crop reach its yield potential.



View varieties in the field or in store

Prior to making decisions on which varieties to grow, Andrew recommends visiting the seed supplier to view the crop in-field or in-store.

"It's often easier to choose seed that meets your specifications if you can go and see it growing in the field. Building better communication with the seed grower also provides an opportunity to discuss potential seed treatments, and whether they can be applied before transport."

Top tips for variety choice

- Consider the attributes and traits demanded by customers and the end market
- Assess the variety's suitability for the particular field to be used – altitude and aspect can both affect crop potential
- Assess the pest and disease profile of the land and the variety's suitability
- Treat variety choice as a critical input for maximising profit margins

2026 season challenges

Potato crops were looking good in July, with many receiving micronutrients and biostimulants to

keep them going and reduce stress. However, biostimulants can only do so much, and crops still need sufficient water, Andrew emphasises.

"If we're thirsty, we often don't want food – and likewise, if there's a water deficit, the crop is unable to take up nutrients. Not all potatoes are irrigated, and for those that are, if there are further long periods without rain, some water authorities will issue irrigation restrictions."

This year, crops in the west have tended to have higher tuber numbers than in the past three years. "As the plants are healthy, they're better able to look after their tubers, and we need to maintain this by ensuring they have sufficient moisture."

He notes that most potato crops this year have a good canopy that meets between the rows, helping to hold on to moisture and keep soil temperatures lower. This has been crucial during the heatwaves of May, June and July.

"Although the top leaves are suffering from scorch, the underside of the plant is still green, and this is helping the plants cope better with the heat. Where the canopy opens up, or doesn't meet across the row, the lower leaves appear more susceptible to damage."

So far, he adds, it has been a low-blight season, partly because there was little inoculum, thanks

to the dry conditions last year.

Looking back to the start of the season, he notes that the way seed potatoes were grown in 2025 has had an impact on the 2026 crop.

"The dry conditions last year, alongside the very warm autumn, resulted in lower tuber numbers and a higher physiological age in seed potato crops, and we found a lot of instances of skin disease, including black dot and silver scurf."

In 2026 soil conditions at planting were good, although temperatures were still low, so emergence was slow, and Andrew has seen cases of little potato disease, rhizoctonia and chain tuberisation.

"Many growers found themselves constrained by cash flow as fuel and fertiliser prices rose in response to the conflict in the Middle East. This made them think hard about cultivations, and in many cases the soil was cultivated less than in other years, which is a positive outcome."

"Other changes this year include more growers opting for placement fertilisers, particularly in the western counties of England, where soil phosphate levels are high. Seed potato prices also rose, so in many cases more attention was paid to getting spacings and populations right." →

Ongoing biostimulant trials

Andrew has been trialling microbial products, seaweed extracts and biostimulants in potato crops over a number of seasons, looking at their role in helping crops cope with both biotic and abiotic stress through the growing season.

“Biostimulants work by stimulating or enhancing the crop’s natural processes, which may help improve environmental tolerance, increase nutrient-use efficiency, and enhance plant growth.

“It’s similar to giving colostrum to a new-born lamb or calf, to jump-start its immune system.”

Biostimulants work by prompting a reaction from the plant, and different products have activity at varying stages of the growth cycle – they can affect germination, root biomass, vegetative growth, flowering and fruiting.

However, he warns, they are an integral part of the whole agronomy programme and should not be viewed as a silver bullet.

Andrew also notes that biostimulants can help ameliorate abiotic stress caused by weather conditions, such as heat stress. “Some varieties don’t cope well with heat stress, but our trials showed that judicious use of an appropriate biostimulant improved yields by nearly 20% compared with the control.”

Trials exploring the effects of different strains of *Bacillus* at planting are being used to try to increase soil microbiota around the seed.

“When these are used alongside other nutritional supplements, with applications made at hook stage or tuber initiation, this can help increase the number of viable tuber sets and extend the life of the green canopy, increasing yield.

“Combining biostimulants and foliar nutrient programmes can also significantly reduce the need for overall fertiliser inputs and costs, as well as cutting carbon footprint.

“Many biostimulants cost between £20–30/ha per application, and two or three applications may be made during

Prior to making decisions on which varieties to grow, Andrew recommends visiting the seed supplier to view the crop in-field or in-store.



the growing season. In terms of return on investment, each treatment costs about the same as a single blight spray.”

Combining nutrients and biostimulants

To help customers get the most from their crops, Hutchinsons has been testing fertiliser placement with microgranules on arable crops for around ten to twelve years,

and Andrew has been trialling this system on potatoes for five years.

“The aim of the trials is to see how much of the nutrients we can utilise from the soil, as this can potentially reduce the amount of purchased fertiliser we need to apply.

“In addition, because soils in the west have very high phosphate indices – over three – we’ve been replacing granular phosphate applied pre-planting with a microgranular fertiliser,” says Andrew, noting that these products provide 10% N, 40% P, 2% Mg and 2% zinc, and cost between £40–55/ha.

“These products bridge the gap between biostimulants and fertilisers, and we’ve found their application helps roots grow to find the phosphate the young plant needs.

“As always, we have plenty of phosphate ‘in the freezer’, but we need to get it to the table, and these products help improve its availability. Like all inputs, they’re part of the whole picture, and these products need to work together as building blocks.” 

“The aim of the trials is to see how much of the nutrients we can utilise from the soil, as this can potentially reduce the amount of purchased fertiliser we need to apply.”



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Industry development takes centre stage

Skills, labour and collaboration will be central to the new British Potato Confex, where visitors will be able to exchange tips and address queries on machinery use, technology, treatments and more with industry specialists.



THE British Potato Confex, which will take place at the Lincolnshire Showground on November 18th and 19th, will have a strong focus on upskilling the potato industry, encouraging more people to progress within the sector, while highlighting how machinery and technology can help them and their employers to achieve that.

A dedicated skills hub will provide information from a host of training organisations, research institutions and industry on the different types of roles and training available within the potato industry while an exhibition hall will demonstrate some of the current machinery and technical innovations designed to help make field and post harvesting jobs easier and more effective.

Tong Engineering and Wyma Solutions are key sponsors for the event, which will also include: Storage and cooling information, plant protection products, technology, field and post-harvest machinery and parts, boxing, plant nutrition and biostimulants, water usage/irrigation, agronomy services, renewable energy, and fresh produce supply advice.

Skills and training needs

Around 68% of potato growers report ongoing difficulties in recruiting and retaining seasonal and permanent farm workers, as revealed recently in a national industry survey conducted by GB Potatoes.

At the same time, higher input expenses, tight margins, weather extremes, water security, regulatory and trade disruptions have made some growers question whether it's an area they want to keep pursuing.

But the number of career opportunities within the potato industry is vast, and the importance of demonstrating that to upcoming innovators who may have the engineering skills, research acumen, agronomy or growing knowledge, is key to securing the industry's future, according to those at GB Potatoes and the British Potato Trade Association (BPTA).

GBP and the BPTA officially launched The Potato Industry Development Programme in February 2026. This professional training



Lincolnshire showground will be welcoming those in the potato industry in November

initiative is aimed at supporting new entrants and early-career professionals in the UK potato sector and is one of the schemes that will be highlighted in the Confex skills hub.

Chair of GB Potatoes, Alex Godfrey, said: "With the sector facing many challenges, not least the recent drought, it is more important than ever that we continue to invest in skills and training, so we continue to drive resilience, innovation and effective communications with our consumers."

Growing the sector

At the same time, encouraging collaboration and discussion amongst those already operating in the industry is key to helping it navigate current pressures and equip itself for the future - and that is where the British Potato Confex can help, according to organisers.

Warners Group Publications, which owns the British Potato brand that also includes British Potato Review news platforms, the industry awards and biennial Harrogate show, is organising the event.

Its Head of Events, Sally Dodds, said: "The new two-day event has been launched to provide a chance for all industry divisions to meet, mingle and pick up ideas during the years between the larger, biennial British Potato Industry Event held in Harrogate. It is less about launching new products and more about demonstrating what's already available to the market, how things integrate, and providing a platform for people to discuss how these can help their businesses or, if it's something they're already implementing, maybe look at

how things can be done slightly differently or learning from other customers' case histories."

The event combines a professional conference and a trade exhibition for the UK potato supply chain and is designed to be smaller and more agile than the British Potato Industry Event to encourage direct conversation and commercial connections.

Main stage sessions will include educational talks, panel discussions, and workshops led by industry experts. Commercial conference areas will provide an opportunity for exhibitors to book a slot within a conference area to discuss, promote and debate.

Ask the experts

The exhibition floor will provide an opportunity to browse around products, machinery and service offerings, both new and established, and talk to manufacturers, dealers and industry professionals all under one roof, with focused spaces provided for commercial talks and business debates.

In terms of networking, there will be structured and informal times for growers, agronomists, and researchers to meet.

"This format of engagement has grown in popularity because it aims to maximise potential for engagement, connection, and business relationships by merging the educational and thought-provoking aspects of a conference with the supplier showcases and networking opportunities of an exhibition," said Sally.

Registration is free and there will be food and drink available on site. 

‘Talk to your neighbours’

Communication is key to avoiding potato herbicide damage, seed growers told.

SEED potato producers have been reminded that it is important to talk to those with neighbouring land to avoid potential crop damage in future.

The advice follows a warning from specialists that avoidable herbicide damage continues to ruin seed potato crops every year. Just a small amount of herbicide can have severe consequences, with damage often remaining hidden until the harvested tubers are planted the following season.

Darren Wonnacott of Frontier Agriculture says the issue is often caused not by seed growers themselves, but by neighbouring growers as they desiccate cereal crops before harvest.

“The biggest concern is where seed growers rent fields that are surrounded by crops that require a pre-harvest glyphosate application. Seed growers must go and speak to the cereal growers when they’re spraying off their oilseed rape or their spring barley and remind them to be extra cautious about drift and the sensitivity of the crop growing next door,” said Darren.

Even when oilseed rape desiccation was complete across England, Darren warned Scottish growers to remain particularly vigilant as spring barley burn-down gathered momentum.

“I think that’s where we’re getting the majority of the issues with herbicide damage in potato seed,” he said.

Glyphosate is the biggest concern, although sulfonyleureas, aminopyralid and other hormone herbicides can also cause serious problems in potatoes.

This can be through spray drift, contaminated sprayers, contaminated manure or the persistence of some herbicides in soils and crop residues.

Kyran Maloney, senior potato consultant SAC Consulting (part of Scotland’s Rural College), describes potato crops as exceptionally sensitive to herbicide injury.

“We investigate spray drift cases every year. We also see contaminated tanks where the sprayer has not quite been washed out properly. It happens much more often than you’d like. I think people need to be aware, particularly for seed potato crops, of the potential for things to go wrong. It can be extremely costly for all involved.”

Invisible damage

One of the biggest challenges is that damage is not always immediately visible.

“If glyphosate drift occurs late into the mother crop, you might not pick it up at all. The tubers might look fine until you try and produce a crop the following year, then it’s often a mess.”

Darren is currently investigating a case in Lincolnshire where the consequences only became apparent after planting. Just 15% of plants emerged from the contaminated seed.

“At the time spring barley is being sprayed off, a potato canopy can already be senescing, so a waft of glyphosate across it might not show any obvious symptoms. But the repercussions into a ware crop can be a complete write-off. You only need a ‘snifter’ to do real damage.”

Both specialists say prevention depends largely on better communication between growers in seed producing areas and good sprayer stewardship.

“Regular conversations are important, particularly where you’ve got something obvious like oilseed rape growing next to seed potatoes.

“Most contractors are really good, but just make sure everybody is very clear where things can go wrong,” says Kyran.

Sprayer logistics

He also advises growers to think carefully about sprayer logistics, particularly in relation to damage from contaminated tanks.

“If you’ve got a lot of crops to spray, think about what the week looks like for the sprayer, when the washouts are taking place and what it’s been in before it goes into potatoes.

“Some seed potato growers even have a separate sprayer for potatoes, just to avoid the potential for grassland products or other herbicides ending up causing injury,” Kyran said.

Reduce herbicide damage risk in potatoes

- Let neighbouring growers and contractors know where seed potato crops are located before any pre-harvest herbicide applications.
- Avoid spraying when wind direction or conditions increase the risk of drift towards sensitive potato crops.
- Follow washout procedures carefully to prevent herbicide residues contaminating subsequent potato applications.
- Think ahead about sprayer movements, washouts and which products have previously been through the machine.
- Glyphosate, aminopyralid, sulfonyleureas and some hormone herbicides can all cause serious damage to potato crops.
- Herbicide damage may not become apparent until harvested seed tubers are planted the following season.
- Where practical, use a dedicated sprayer for potatoes to eliminate the risk of contamination from previous applications.
- Even very low levels of herbicide contamination can severely reduce emergence or completely write off a ware crop grown from affected seed. **BPR**



Seed growers are advised to speak to the cereal growers when they’re spraying off their oilseed rape or spring barley and remind them to be extra cautious about drift which can ruin potato seed crops.

Growers have predominantly used rain guns, or relied on natural rainfall, in Scotland, but the situation is changing.

Mapping out a drought strategy

Consultant spotlights CREW water project findings, focussing on industry resilience.

FINDINGS from the Centre of Expertise for Waters (CREW) water project and what this means for the British potato industry were recently put into the spotlight by Senior Potato Consultant within SAC Consulting, Gavin Prentice.

Speaking at a Potatoes In Practice seminar, Gavin pointed out that the climate and water availability are changing in Scotland therefore preparations need to be made to counter this.

“Traditionally, we’ve thought of ourselves as a particularly wet country, or damp perhaps, but that is certainly changing, so we have to make sure that we are looking at things ahead of time to make sure that we are resilient and prepared,” said Gavin.

His presentation focused on managing water scarcity, using research from the project, to provide an overview of water resilience and irrigation best practice specifically tailored for potato production in Scotland. Alongside this, he highlighted a video series created for Scotland’s Farm Advisory Service to help farmers assess their hazard, exposure, and vulnerability to water

The reasons behind the document’s creation were evident at the time of the seminar.

“We are facing droughts and our weather patterns are changing a lot,” said Gavin. “We’re seeing some really extreme weather, and facing drought and waterlogging conditions.”



The document was commissioned by CREW at the behest of the Scottish Government and CEPA, the Scottish Environmental Protection Agency.

“Stress in potatoes causes a whole heap of problems. If you look at the scientific literature, this gives you a bit of an indication as to where we are in terms of what the reducing effects can be in periods of high temperatures and reduced rainfall so crown cover, canopy cover reduces. There’s a little bit of debate over tuber numbers, root length, root mass, but realistically it’s all a reduction.

“Maybe you might have benefited as a seed grower but certainly not as a ware grower. Ultimately, we get to the point where it’s so dry that we can get crop canopy death for sustained periods which we do not want so in order to avoid that, what can we do?”

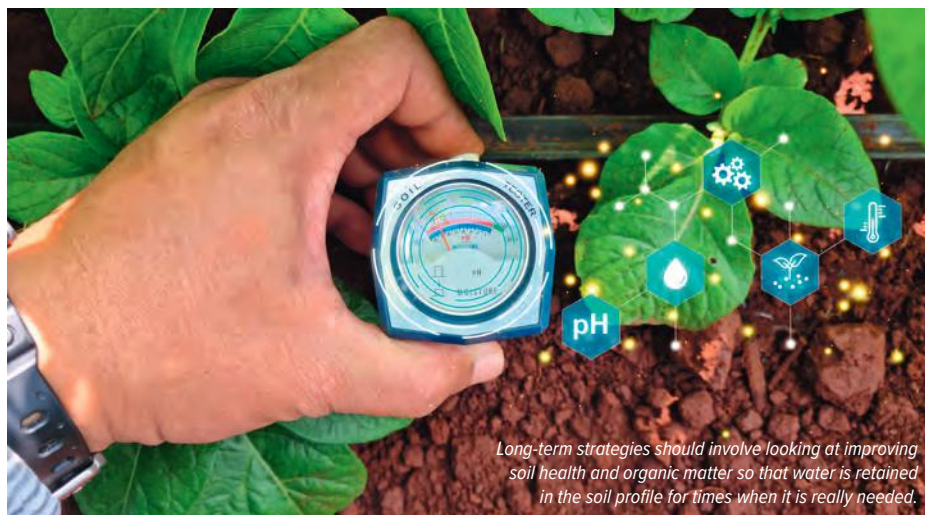
Devising a strategy

Risk assessment should be the first point of action, he stressed. “The three ways that you could potentially look at this are to first try to identify your hazard ie the likelihood of water scarcity happening in that area either because of reduced river flow rates or prolonged drought.

“Then consider your exposure. Do you know how much your crop requires and at what times is there going to be enough? Think about your vulnerability - if the tap goes off, what is your risk and what is likely to happen? As a wise man once said to me, if you can’t measure it, you can’t manage it.”

Building a baseline was the first step towards creating a hazard map, Gavin said.

Speaking at a Potatoes In Practice seminar, Gavin Prentice spoke about preparations that need to be made to counter changing climates and water availability.



Long-term strategies should involve looking at improving soil health and organic matter so that water is retained in the soil profile for times when it is really needed.

Knowing when a soil's water-holding capacity is low was the first step, he said, advising growers to look at the SEPA (Scottish Environmental Protection Agency) website for details on water scarcity indications. While it does not track climate-related water scarcity data or drought indexes directly, it addresses water resource pressures and scarcity through smart farming technologies, precision irrigation, and crop protection tools.

Gavin demonstrated a colour-coded map, showing where there was moderate water scarcity and abstraction reductions on licenses at the end of July.

"If you build a baseline, you'll know when the area, farm, location and field is going into water scarcity. You can build that picture up over time so you can map the time and the frequency that it's in scarcity, based on the map, based on in-field weather station data, and based on rainfall from the Met Office or your own weather stations too. Monthly and weekly, you can build that up."

The second consideration should be exposure, he went on to state, advising the creation of water source maps and demonstrating one featuring a farm with an irrigation pond and river courses where the grower might have a license to extract from. While the map showed that particular grower was in a good position, clearly revealing what the requirements were for his crops and how much would be required to sustain this, the challenge would be matching that in peak demand during a dry season, Gavin said.

"The last scenario to look at is your vulnerability and whether you have a plan for drought. Do you understand the soils? Do you know how much water they can hold? Obviously farms that are irrigating from smaller water courses don't bounce back as quickly, so if you know that you've only got that one source available to you, it may be that you're going to be more exposed in these scenarios when the water dries up or is less available."

Evaluating available backup at this stage was crucial, he said. "A hazard could be: How likely are your low flows to affect your business? Exposure - do you know how much water your farm needs? Vulnerability - do you have water supply if obstruction is reduced?"

Responding to vulnerabilities

Having assessed and documented the hazard, exposure and vulnerability, growers can use the CREW document to assign points or score their vulnerability or risk, before considering the suggested next steps.

"I appreciate on a season like last year where prices were low and demand was low, going into a bit of a mixed season again, investment isn't always the easiest option for people to take but there are strategies and different things you can look at for building resilience. For example, if

you're looking at your water availability or your efficiency, and you have soil moisture-monitoring in your field, you can be a lot more efficient in your application of water, safeguarding the resource. You can get onto the crop when you need it and think about infrastructure such as irrigation lagoons, looking for boreholes etc."

There are also many ways to adapt or change irrigation methods, he said.

"We're very heavily reliant on rain guns in Scotland, purely because irrigation isn't always the first port of call - we can get away with rain-fed crops quite a lot and we might only need a few pools of the irrigator in some seasons," he said, although he acknowledged that this practice was slowly changing.

He advised that long-term strategies involved looking at improving soil health and organic matter so that water was retained in the soil profile for times when it was really needed, and looking to minimise or safeguard water supplies by reviewing crop and variety choices.

"We have a lot of varieties out there and some are better at drought resistance than others so you can factor that into your thinking."

Changing patterns

In Scotland, growers had historically been "quite liberal" in their water use because there had been a plentiful supply, but that pattern had been changing over the past 10 years, Gavin pointed out.

"We have to heed the warnings of our friends on the continent and those down south because it's better to be resilient now and build for the future." **BPR**

"We have to heed the warnings of our friends on the continent and those down south because it's better to be resilient now and build for the future."



Soil and storage innovations highlighted

Groundswell showcases cost-cutting storage tech and sustainable soil strategies for potato growers.

RENEWABLE energy options, energy-efficiency technologies, and sustainable management practices designed to lower potato storage running costs were showcased recently at Groundswell's 10th anniversary show, while field recommendations for growers focused heavily on rethinking soil management, enhancing biology, and reducing artificial inputs while maintaining commercial yields.

Displays and discussions focussed on reducing the high electricity and operational costs associated with temperature-controlled potato storage while no-till field innovations demonstrated, such as zero-tillage potato trials utilising straw-spreading equipment like Spread-a-Bale to protect tubers from moisture loss, provided insight into how field-level regenerative practices affect skin finish, dirt levels, and initial crop condition entering the store.

The trials highlighted how the uniform straw blanket suppresses weeds.

Workshops and seminars also covered practical methods to minimise post-harvest losses and optimise store management under low-input or sustainable growing systems.

Soil health was also in the spotlight as practical in-field demonstrations and expert panel sessions focused on no-till and low-till maincrop potato production systems.

Exhibitors like SoilWorx showcased dense, highly-spreadable organo-mineral pellets backed by independent trial data showing significant yield boosts over standard synthetic nitrogen.

Corteva, Russell Bio Solutions, Unium Bioscience, Aiva Fertiliser featured biological seed treatments and inoculants aimed at improving root zone resilience and natural nutrient uptake in potato crops.

Key discussions focused on how kit, data and management decisions can support more resilient potato production systems.

Environment Secretary Emma Reynolds gave a speech at the event in which she outlined the government's 25-year Farming Roadmap.

"We all know that healthy soils are central to nature-friendly farming. They store more water during droughts, they support diverse habitats, they support pollinators and they support pest control. They provide cleaner water, stronger ecosystems and more efficient use of inputs," she said, going on to add: "Profitability and nature are not competing aims. They are inseparable and we need innovation to help that strategic shift set out in the roadmap to a more nature-friendly farming system."

Discussing SFI, the scheme which funds actions to directly improve soil health through actions like cover crops, herbal lays and building organic matter in the soil, she said there was strong interest in the first week applications opened.

"When we get soil right, so much else follows. It means stronger crops, lower input costs, greater resilience, so in 10, 20 years' time, the next generation can continue to run productive farm businesses, thriving landscapes, and a countryside richer in nature." **BPR**





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Global drive to speed up resilient varieties

THE National Potato Innovation Centre (NPIC) is part of a global partnership that has launched a new international research initiative to accelerate the delivery of improved crop varieties to farmers facing climate change, pests and disease pressure.

Genetic Acceleration through Artificial Intelligence for Root and Tuber Crops (GAIN-RT) combines world-leading expertise in crop breeding, artificial intelligence, gene editing and field-based research and aims to accelerate innovation from laboratory to farm. Partners include NPIC, which is hosted by The James Hutton Institute, the International Potato Centre (CIP) and key African partners, the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organisation (KALRO) and Egerton University.

Climate change, evolving pests, and emerging diseases are advancing faster than conventional crop breeding can keep up. This growing gap threatens farmer livelihoods, food security and nutrition, especially in vulnerable regions such as sub-Saharan Africa.

GAIN-RT is working to close that gap using advanced AI models to predict which crop varieties will perform best under climate stress, identify stronger, more durable disease resistance and improve breeding efficiency while reducing development timelines.



By unlocking insights from large genomic, environmental and field datasets, AI can significantly shorten the time required to develop and release improved varieties, ensuring farmers have access to better crops sooner.

Initially focused on potato, the project aims to speed up climate-resilient varieties, boost yields and reliability for smallholders, reduce chemical use through stronger resistance and enhance food and nutrition security. Building on the success of this first phase, sweet potato and other crops will follow.

Professor Ingo Hein, Principal Investigator from the Hutton and Deputy Director of the National Potato Innovation Centre, said: "This

collaboration harnesses the potential of AI and emerging technologies including gene editing to help accelerate the development of more resilient potatoes and other strategically important crops, supporting a more sustainable future and strengthening food security.

CIP Director General, Simon Heck, added: "Breeding has traditionally taken many years to deliver improved varieties. But climate change and pests do not wait. They evolve rapidly. Artificial intelligence gives us the tools to catch up, helping breeders identify better varieties faster and reduce the risks farmers face."

The strength of GAIN-RT lies in its integrated partnership. CIP brings global leadership in potato and sweet potato breeding along with strong links to farmers and national programmes. The Hutton contributes expertise in artificial intelligence, genomics, and plant science. KALRO and Egerton University provide regional knowledge, field validation and pathways for adoption in Africa.

Beyond technology, the initiative will invest in training scientists, particularly women and early-career researchers, in AI-driven breeding and gene editing to help ensure that innovation capacity is built locally and sustained over time.

UK's first precision-bred approved variety

REGULATORY approval has been given for the UK's first precision-bred potato, PiperPlus.

The Sainsbury Laboratory (TSL), an independent research institute based in Norwich, has secured landmark marketing notice approval from Defra for the potato. The laboratory focuses on plant-microbe interactions, plant immunity, and developing disease-resistant crops.

Developed by Professor Jonathan Jones' team, PiperPlus has natural resistance to late blight and major viruses such as Potato Virus Y (PVY) and Potato Leafroll Virus (PLRV). It adds innate resistance genes from wild potato relatives into the classic Maris Piper variety.

It contains stacked resistance genes (Rpi genes) that stop late blight.

DEFRA's confirmation that it officially meets the legal definition of a precision-bred organism under the UK Precision Breeding Act is a regulatory milestone for the UK. Under the legislation, a crop qualifies as precision bred only if its genetic changes could have occurred naturally or through conventional breeding.

The research work by Jonathan and his team has been funded through Biotechnology and Biological Sciences Research Council (BBSRC) grants.

Jonathan paid tribute the dedication and "extensive efforts" of his team, saying: "We believe PiperPlus will become a flagship example of what's possible through precision breeding, showing how these technologies can reduce fungicide use, improve sustainability, and deliver real benefits to the public." **BPR**



The PiperPlus potato variety was showcased next to a non-resistant Maris Piper at the Science Museum in London last year, to illustrate how modern technologies can help make agriculture more sustainable. Agnieszka Witek, a lead researcher in the project, is pictured with the exhibit.

THE NETHERLANDS

Robotic roguing possibilities demonstrated

A ROBOT designed to identify virus-infected potato plants was recently demonstrated to around 70 seed potato growers.

Three Dutch organisations who develop robotic solutions for the sector — H2L in Delft, Cromptal in Mensingeweer, and Vegniek in Emmeloord — took part in the demonstration which revealed the progress being made in autonomous potato selection technology, which is still under development. Field workers manually remove virus-infected potato plants after robotic detection and marking, and the event showed how AI technology can be integrated with traditional roguing practices.

Earlier this year, Dutch farming journalists watched a similar demonstration on three commercial farms near the town of Tiel.

Each site hosted a different robot — SpudScout from AgriTech BV, RogueRunner by GreenField Robotics, and PotatoPatrol from Van der Linde Systems. The machines scoured 12 hectares of seed potato plots, flagging diseased and off-type plants in real time.

Dutch research institutes, including Wageningen University, have been partnering with industry professionals over the past six years to develop vision-based detection systems.



Dealer network expanded

POTATO machinery manufacturer AVR has strengthened its Dutch dealer network by appointing Kamps de Wild Beilen as its official dealer. The company takes over the former Selles Agrotechniek territory.

GERMANY

Interactive member map

GERMAN Potato Trade Association DKHV has launched a redesigned website with an interactive member map giving its 160 members easier access to industry resources.

New packing plant a major investment in industry

AGRICULTURAL cooperative Heidesand Raiffeisen-Warengenossenschaft eG has officially opened a new 10,000-square-metre state-of-the-art potato packing plant in Neuenkirchen.

The new facility is amongst the organisation's largest single investments and features a hall area of approximately 10,000 square meters, technology for processing and packaging both potatoes and onions. The facility is equipped with automated sorting, washing, and packaging processes, seamlessly integrated with advanced robotics.

Board Chair Maren Schröder-Meyer said: "With the new packing facility, we are creating the conditions to process and market potatoes and onions even more efficiently and with a stronger focus on quality in the future. At the same time, we are strengthening our location, our cooperation with agricultural businesses, and our competitiveness for the coming years."

DKHV's new Managing Director Dr Illya Kolba said at the event's official opening: "The demands on quality, efficiency, logistics, delivery capacity, and flexibility are continuously increasing. Companies must find their own entrepreneurial answers to these challenges. An investment of this scale is also a clear commitment to the location and to the potato industry."

"The demands on quality, efficiency, logistics, delivery capacity, and flexibility are continuously increasing."





POLAND

Processing output expectations exceeded

A COLLABORATION involving potato starch processor cooperative Royal Avebe and its newly-acquired Polish subsidiary Solan, which produces potato flakes and granules, has exceeded output expectations.

The companies and Royal Avebe's specialised breeding subsidiary Averis worked with around 140 growers on their first joint processing campaign which combined cross-border operational efforts

Polish facility operators collaborated directly with Dutch team members to exchange technical expertise, integrate production processes, and maintain continuous, stable factory operations.

Solan's Głowno factory's dual production lines were utilised to process the raw crop into premium potato flakes and granules for snacks, mashed potatoes, bakery goods, and convenience foods.

Owing to optimal raw material quality and stable operations, the facility's daily production volumes exceeded initial target forecasts, wrapping up the processing phase by early July.

Tomasz Lorenz from Solan (left) and David Fousert from Avebe are pictured.

MONGOLIA

47.4% output increase forecast

A POTATO harvest of 168.2 thousand tons has been forecast, following a spring sowing campaign covering 580.4 thousand hectares, according to preliminary data presented by the Minister of Food, Agriculture, and Light Industry, Iderbat Tsagaanhuu.

Potato output is forecast to increase by 47.4%, or 54.1 thousand tons, compared with the previous year.

The forecast indicates that Mongolia will fully meet 100% of its domestic potato requirements through local production, while local production is expected to cover 67.7% of demand for other vegetables.

USA

Expanding retail distribution and growing supply chain

CHIPS brand Jesse & Ben's intends to expand its retail distribution, strengthen its supply chain, and grow its team after raising \$10m dollars in investment funding.

The seed-oil-free brand also intends to launch crinkle-cut varieties. The company's French fries are made with avocado oil or grass-fed beef tallow instead of conventional seed oils. Its products were first launched on retail shelves in June 2024 and are now available in more than 3,500 stores across the United States.



Anti-dumping review process challenged

The National Potato Council (NPC) has delivered a formal letter to the Canada Border Services Agency (CBSA) and the Canadian International Trade Tribunal (CITT), accusing Canadian regulators of rejecting American economic data submissions over minor technicalities and blocking US producers from meaningfully participating in the ongoing review of a 40-year-old anti-dumping order covering British Columbia.

The NPC states that Canadian authorities discard entire data packages if any single element is deemed insufficient, regardless of how comprehensive the overall submission is. "Though an extremely thorough data submission has been provided by these growers, if any small item is deemed to be insufficient by the Canadian authorities, the entirety of the submission is rejected," the NPC writes in the letter.

The council also argues that these rejections distort the official review record by creating a misleading picture of US industry engagement.

The current situation sees British Columbia growers maintaining duty-free access to all U.S. markets while American producers face substantial restrictions entering British Columbia.

INDIA

Starch recovery for processors

AGRICULTURAL technology and food processing company Siddhivinayak Agri Processing (SV AGRI) has launched a Starch Recovery Unit (SRU) for potato processors.

The unit separates and recovers high-value potato starch from wash water generated during potato processing. This can then be utilised as a secondary by-product, and the process cuts fresh water consumption by 30% to 40% by allowing treated water to be recycled back into the production line.

Potato-focused gourmet restaurant opens

THE Potato Project, India's first gourmet potato-focused quick service restaurant, has officially opened its first flagship location in Mumbai.

The restaurant uses potato as the main ingredient in its meals rather than as a side dish or filler and its menu features more than 20 signature dishes, handcrafted mocktails, and a special Jain menu. It highlights the antioxidant-rich Purple Potato for its vibrant color, unique texture, and rare commercial availability in India.

EGYPT

Research centre expands

BIOTECHNOLOGY laboratory and plant research centre EFC Plants is expanding its integrated seed potato platform in Egypt, combining first generation mini-tuber production, tissue culture, molecular diagnostics and technical support.

The biotechnology facilities in Egypt feature cold-storage capabilities for up to six million plantlets.

UKRAINE

Construction starts on major processing plant

UKRAINE has begun building its largest potato processing plant at the Biosens Industrial Park in the Cherkasy region.

The first phase, due by late 2026 or early 2027, will produce 25,000 tonnes of potato flour annually, replacing imports, with future expansion into French fries and exports.

The second phase, planned for 2027 onwards will see the plant's production expand into French fries and specialty products, with capacities scaling from 60,000 to 150,000 tonnes per year.

Initiated by Potato Agro, part of the Mais Group, a prominent Ukrainian agricultural corporation that has expanded its operations into elite seed potato production and industrial-scale potato processing, the project has received state infrastructure support for access roads and gas networks.

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STORAGE

Match crops to available storage

Adrian Cunningham of Potato Storage Insight provides some timely advice on store loading and damage assessment.

LOADING a potato store should be an activity that is planned well in advance of harvest and it is important to match crops, in terms of their quality, likely storage periods and market expectations, to the storage available, so management is effective and returns are maximised.

Crops should be lifted as free as possible from damage, soil, stones and haulm. Within an hour or two of entering store, the crop should be ventilated to remove surface moisture from tubers and from any remaining soil.

If positive ventilation is available, as in bulk stores or lateral suction (Aspire) or letterbox pallet stores, ventilation will prevent condensation forming on tubers in crops lifted in dry conditions. The airflow removes warm air produced by the rapidly respiring crop and will reduce the likelihood of the warm air condensing on the cooler potatoes above. Try to load stores within a week and absolute maximum of 14 days, especially if there is going to be a lot of field heat to remove. This ensures potatoes can be brought under optimal control and reduces the need to compromise on store management and, ultimately, crop quality.

Field sampling will identify rots, blemish disease, tuber defects or cutworm/slug damage, while warm storage (>20°C) of samples before harvest can identify potential rotting prior to loading. Crops with rots, or loads which have been rained on, should be kept out of the main store to prevent contamination. Crops with 1–2% rots should be set aside, ideally in boxes, and positively ventilated continuously for 4–6 weeks until any rots are mummified.

During store loading, the temperature of the crop already in store should, ideally, track the daytime average temperature of the crop in the ground, usually between 20°C down to 10°C, over the harvesting period.

The store should be ventilated whenever the outside air is within ±4°C of the crop



Adrian has spent more than 35 years working in applied research, knowledge transfer and best practice advice on all aspects of potato storage. Having headed up the Sutton Bridge Crop Storage Research facility from 1989 until its closure in 2021, he now runs his own consultancy and collaborates on industry initiatives and training days.

temperature to ensure all surface moisture is removed and condensation is not caused. If dew-point temperature sensing is available, it can be used instead of temperature to prevent condensation when ventilating with air warmer than the crop. Crops should be quickly blown dry to prevent disease development, which will be encouraged by the relatively warm temperatures during this period, if crops are respiring heavily.

Damage prevention at harvest will be a challenge this year after such a lengthy dry period. Of course, mechanical damage when loading should be kept to an absolute minimum. Rots and blemish diseases invade through wounds and broken skin, while bruising risk is highest in dry years and is a primary cause of rejection from premium markets.



Testing for damage should be routine so increased damage can be quickly identified. Standard methods of damage assessment are available; use 25-tuber samples and categorise damage into slight and severe and measure the proportions ideally by weight but tuber number will also work (less accurately).

Hot-boxing samples overnight will help to show any bruising. Take 25-tuber samples from known locations to identify any sources of bruising. Again, classify tubers by peeling and identifying slight (one or two peels) or severe (more than two peels) bruising percentage.

Get into a routine of repeated sampling so that you can monitor any changes resulting from a change of field, variety or machine operator. All of these factors have a potentially huge bearing on the crop going into store and it's too late to find out you've bruised the crop when it comes to trying to deliver a crop after storage.

Use an automated swinging-head elevator for systematic loading of bulk stores as it avoids the formation of soil 'cones'. Also, while most automatic box fillers are designed to minimise drops into boxes, pay attention to detail with conveyors and screens as these are often a source of bruising during loading.

Storage kit checklist

STORE managers need to be getting geared up for the new season just round the corner, according to Adrian.

Adrian recommends using the following as a checklist of kit that will be needed:

- Good, rechargeable torch
- Phone with camera & backup torch (rechargeable torches often give little notice of failing)
- Insulated, hi-visibility coat
- Overalls & gloves
- Safety boots or shoes
- Bump cap
- Earplugs or ear defenders
- Folding knife with retention cord
- Good quality hand-held thermometer with probe
- Lapel-worn carbon dioxide safety meter
- Notebook or small clipboard with pen/marker
- Sample bags/nets
- Lone working alert system (phone signals in stores are notoriously poor)
- Thermal image accessory for your phone camera
- Labels and stapler
- Sprayfoam can for repairing holes in walls or ducts **BPR**

Seed treatment demonstrated at open day

GROWERS, seed producers, agronomists and other members of the potato industry gathered to see Restrain's AccumulatR potato seed treatment at a recent open day.

The event, held in partnership with Cockerill's, Malton, brought together leading figures from across the sector to demonstrate how the treatment can improve seed efficiency and increase marketable yield.

A highlight of the day was a season update from Restrain's trials partner, Gavin Prentice of SAC Consulting, who shared observations from current field trials and discussed the challenges and opportunities facing growers this season.

AccumulatR uses a carefully-controlled combination of ethylene and temperature management during storage, applied through Restrain's treatment protocol for 120+ days prior to planting. The treatment encourages an increase in the number of stems produced per seed tuber, resulting in more tubers per plant.

In addition to increasing tuber numbers, treated seed promotes quicker and more uniform crop emergence, according to the producer, supporting a more even tuber size distribution across the crop, helping growers maximise output within target market specifications.

The combined effect of increased tuber numbers and improved size uniformity delivers higher marketable yields in both Seed Multiplication (28-55 mm) and Salad Production (28-45 mm), those present were told, which is a key factor in improving overall seed efficiency, crop value and returns per hectare.



AccumulatR is not a new concept for UK growers. The technology has been used commercially for more than 20 years, with customers located throughout the country, from the Black Isle in Scotland to Norfolk. Over that period, the treatment has demonstrated consistent results across more than 200 potato varieties, supporting both seed multiplication businesses and salad producers.

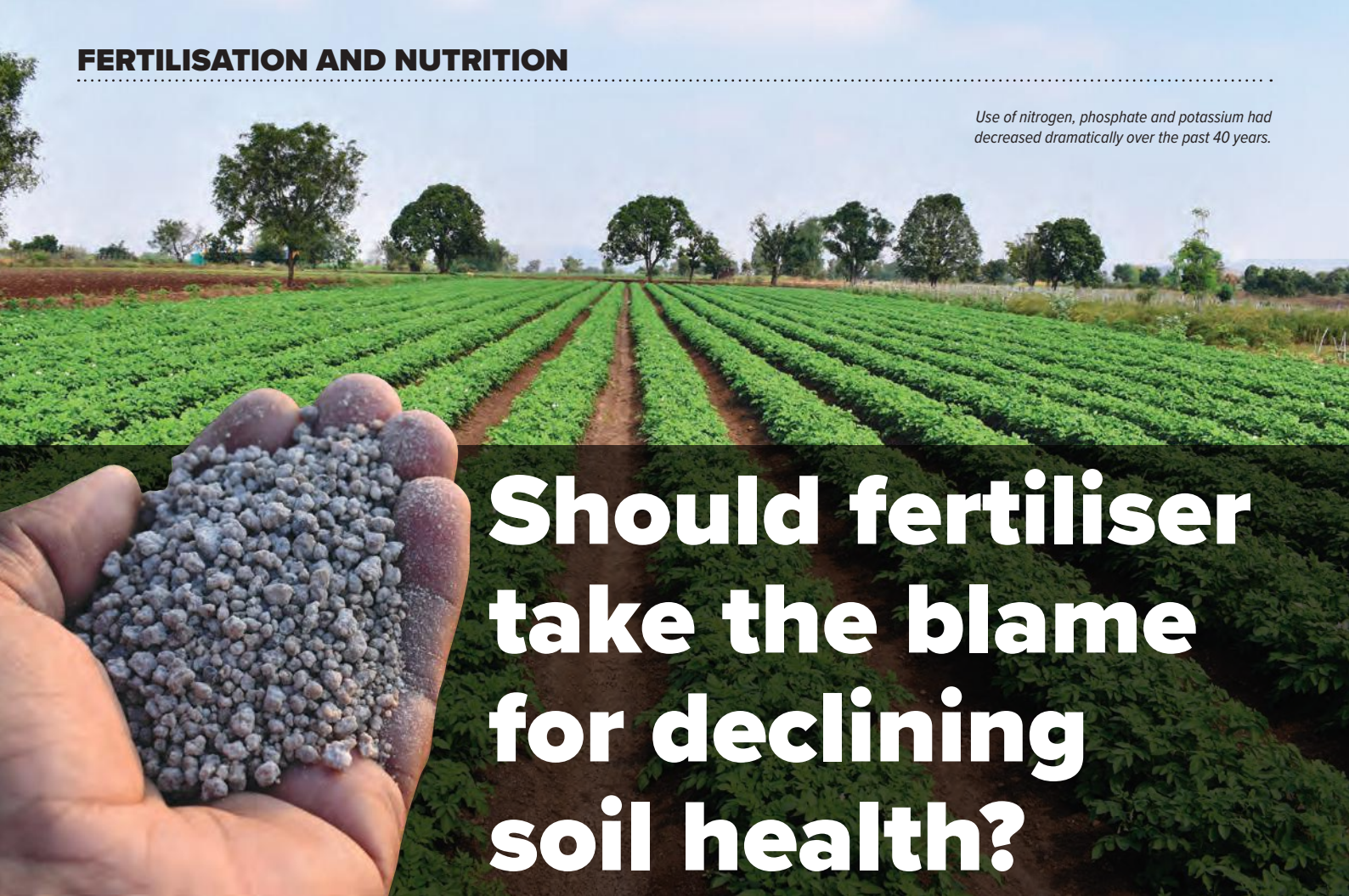
As the potato industry continues to focus on both profitability and sustainability, achieving more output from the same seed inputs remains a key priority for many businesses.

Restrain is also investigating how AccumulatR can improve seed efficiency in ware production. By increasing the number of stems produced per seed tuber, the treatment may enable growers to reduce seed rates while still achieving target stem densities, it states. Early trial work is exploring the potential to lower input seed requirements while maintaining crop performance.

Product Manager Nathan Edgar said: "With continued pressure on growers to get more value from every hectare, improving seed efficiency has never been more important." **BPR**



Use of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium had decreased dramatically over the past 40 years.



Should fertiliser take the blame for declining soil health?

Nitrogen use and soil health should be viewed as complementary, not competing, says food chain specialist.

SOIL health has become one of the potato industry's hottest topics, with the decline in organic matter often pinned on modern field practices and decades of artificial fertiliser use, particularly nitrogen.

But the reality is more complex, according to Agronomist Mark Tucker, who is also Yara's Food Chain Business Manager for Europe.

Mark argues that nitrogen use and soil health should be viewed as complementary, not competing.

"First and foremost, let's think about what soil health and quality actually is," said Mark. "It has a chemical element in terms of nutrient status, a physical aspect in terms of structure (how it's made up of sand, silt, clay and organic matter) and a biological fraction, which is very much where the definition of soil health sits

He said that while there may have been over-reliance on fertiliser decades ago, data suggests UK growers have a far more balanced use of fertiliser now, pointing out that use of nitrogen, phosphate and potassium had decreased dramatically over the past 40 years.

Mark believes the issue lies with historic farming systems rather than the nutrients themselves.

"We're now seeing a systems approach revitalised, which in some ways goes right

back to Charles Townshend and the 1730s. That's really where Regenerative Agriculture started, with everything geared towards soil health and fertility, incorporating cover crops, livestock and wider rotations."

Rebuilding organic matter is complicated, with manures and compost remaining the most effective route, but supply being limited, or in the wrong place, he said.

While sewage-derived fertilisers (biosolids) are used in UK potato farming, this is under strict timing and safety regulations, with a minimum 10-month harvest interval required between applying treated sludge and harvesting potatoes.

Anaerobic digesters are another option, but targeting use is key, he stressed. "It comes back to understanding your farm at field level,"

Mark said. "Soil analysis is the benchmark for working out where organic material will have the greatest impact, whether that's for NPK fertility or for improving soil structure."

Where manures, digestate or compost aren't available, cover crops and green manures offer a way to build organic matter from within the farming system itself, he said.

Mark stressed that quality matters too. "Check the source of any material coming onto the farm. With concerns growing around forever chemicals in sewage-derived products, it's important to look at certification and analysis, so you know exactly what you're introducing. Otherwise, you could be building up an unintended legacy issue from what was a genuinely positive plan to improve organic matter."

"Judicious nitrogen use and organic matter should be seen as complementary elements. Build organic matter through the right practices and you get a more successful, better-established crop with a bigger root system, which in turn improves nitrogen use efficiency."

Straw, tillage and cover crops

Incorporating straw brings its own short-term challenge.

“When you load the soil with fresh organic material, it gets the bugs and soil biology going, and that activity consumes some of the available nitrogen,” said Mark.

On reduced tillage, Mark points to on-farm evidence from the Allerton Project at Loddington, Leicestershire, which is researching the effects of different farming methods on wildlife and the environment. While the project’s primary commercial fields are heavy clay soils used for combinable crops like wheat, barley, and beans, its research team runs dedicated trials specifically designed to adapt potato growing to sustainable and regenerative systems

Although the Allerton Project is shifting to less and less tillage to improve organic matter, it’s had to plough occasionally to get a seedbed and establish a crop and data shows that this occasional ploughing hasn’t been detrimental to the organic matter build-up.

“Some soils tolerate zero-till easily, others are much more challenging, and growers need to stay flexible,” said Mark. “Light soils are

genuinely difficult to build organic matter in, while heavier soils offer more opportunity. The direction of travel is towards minimal or zero-till, but the occasional plough, when the season demands it, isn’t going to undo that progress.”

Cover crops require the same field-by-field thinking. “Picking the right cover crop for the soil type and the moment is essential, because establishment isn’t free – it costs time, money and labour,” Mark said. He suggests cover crops are especially valuable after a disappointing yield.

“Here there’s likely to be surplus nitrogen in the field going into a typically wet August. Cover crops mop up that nutrient, reduce the risk of leaching and keep it working within the farm.”

Complementary, not competing

Mark said the two sides of the debate need to work together. “Judicious nitrogen use and organic matter should be seen as complementary elements. Build organic matter through the right practices and you get a more successful, better-established crop with a bigger root system, which in turn improves nitrogen use efficiency.”

He also points to long-standing Rothamsted



Agronomist Mark Tucker, who is also Yara’s Food Chain Business Manager for Europe.

research showing that fertility built through organic matter is more available to an establishing crop than nutrients locked in the soil’s chemical fraction, and recommended growers develop an integrated soil fertility management plan spanning at least 10 years.

“These aren’t quick fixes. Having that plan in place really focuses the mind on how you manage fertiliser use, soil fertility and organic matter together for the benefit of soil health.” **BPR**

More support for earlies growers in west

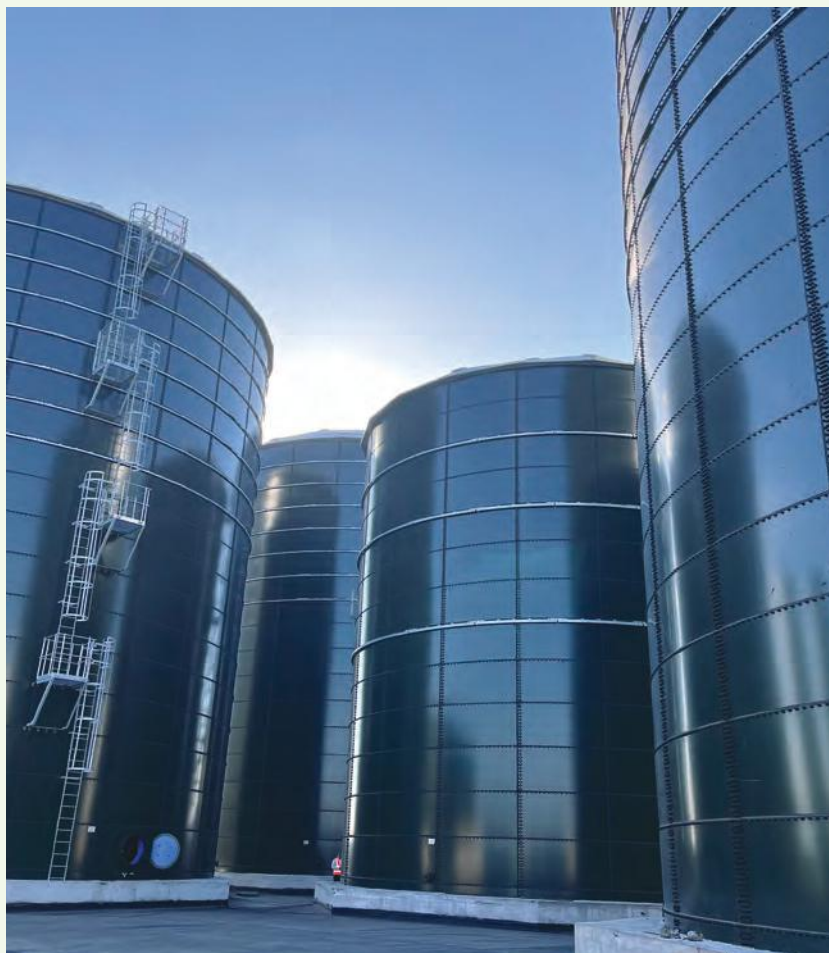
OMEX Agriculture has invested in a new purpose-built liquid fertiliser distribution facility at Portbury, Bristol, which will support potato growers in western UK, which homes key early-crop and new potato production areas.

The new multi-million-pound facility will triple storage capacity, quadruple load-out capability and provide 24-hour operational support to growers, according to the manufacturer.

The new site provides eight times daily loading capacity of the existing facility through a combination of increased load-out points and 24-hour operation, offering fertiliser when growers need it most. The new site also boasts technology capable of halving load out times and removing processes to further speed up farm delivery.

Managing Director Sam Bell said: “By increasing storage capacity, expanding load-out capability and introducing round-the-clock operations, we are investing in a more efficient and resilient supply chain that will help support the continued growth of agriculture across the region. We understand that reliability, responsiveness and security of supply are important to farmers and this investment reflects our commitment to delivering on these core principles.”

The development forms part of OMEX’s ongoing investment in its UK and Ireland distribution network. **BPR**



Soil prep and harvest range now available in Yorkshire

YORKSHIRE potato growers now have access to the complete range of Scanstone specialist root crop machinery following the appointment of a new authorised dealer.

AgVantage UK Ltd, a machinery dealer, importer, and supplier, has been appointed as an authorised Scanstone dealer for Yorkshire and will be supplying, servicing and supporting the complete range of machinery from its Beverley dealership, giving potato growers across the region access to the specialist soil preparation and harvesting equipment.

The range includes destoners, bed formers, bed tillers, windrowers and toppers. To support the new franchise, AgVantage's sales, parts and service teams are undertaking dedicated product training, while key replacement parts will be stocked locally.

Managing Director of AgVantage UK Ltd, Andy Carse, said: "We're proud to be partnering with Scanstone and adding another premium brand to our growing portfolio. Their reputation for manufacturing high-quality, dependable root crop machinery is well established, and we believe the range is an excellent fit for growers across Yorkshire."

Territory Sales Manager for Yorkshire, Gary Halliday, added that he was looking forward to demonstrating the equipment across Yorkshire. Demonstration machines were being delivered last month and growers will have an opportunity to see the equipment working in field conditions next season.

"We're proud to be partnering with Scanstone and adding another premium brand to our growing portfolio."



Application system to minimise product use

AMID rising operating costs, stricter environmental requirements and the drive for more sustainable production, many potato suppliers are continually looking for ways to minimise the use of field application machinery.

At the same time, growers and storage operators are under increasing pressure to reduce the use of liquid crop protection products without compromising treatment quality or process reliability.

Some businesses are therefore investing in application systems that minimise product use while integrating easily into existing conveying and storage lines and German manufacturer MANTIS ULV Sprühergeräte's MAFEX® Potato-system is one such machine. It uses Ultra Low Volume (ULV) technology for the precise treatment of potatoes, meeting exactly these requirements.

Using ULV technology, MAFEX® Potato delivers uniform coverage while significantly reducing the volume of liquid products required. This reduces product consumption, lowers operating costs and helps minimise environmental impact, according to the manufacturer.

The modular MAFEX® system integrates into existing conveying and storage processes and, when used in combination with a roller table, excess product can be collected for safe disposal or reuse where permitted. A crop flow monitoring system can also be added to automatically stop application whenever no potatoes are detected, preventing unnecessary product use and further reducing waste.

The MAFEX® Potato-system is available to UK businesses through the manufacturer's international distribution and dealer network.





Bigger supply of refurbished harvesters

GROWING demand for refurbished potato machinery has prompted manufacturer Grimme to build a new, modern used machinery centre in Germany.

Used machinery reconditioned at the new centre at Niedersachsenpark in Rieste can be purchased by UK growers, either directly through official channels like the Grimme Marketplace or via local dealers and Grimme UK networks.

The company has primarily refurbished self-propelled harvesters at its factory for a number of years and the new building will enable the company to extend its used products offering.

The new 5,500 square metre building features a spacious workshop area, covered washing bay and an office block. As planned, the

“We are very proud of this team, which has already accomplished a brilliant job and will continue to do so in the future.”

Damme-based family business was able to become operational in the summer of 2026 with a workforce of more than 30 employees.

Managing Director Christoph Grimme said: “The new centre is primarily used for reconditioning used machinery, but it also supports the testing and validation of our numerous prototypes, for which the capacity at the Damme site is no longer sufficient. Furthermore, our Grimme Manufaktur draws on the extensive expertise of the staff when bottlenecks arise. We are very proud of this team, which has already accomplished a brilliant job and will continue to do so in the future.”

How ‘high touch’ evolved in 30 years

FORTRESS Technology, which provides detection, inspection, and automated testing systems to help potato producers find and eliminate dangerous contaminants before and during processing, is celebrating its 30th anniversary this year, with founder and president Steve Gidman highlighting the key changes apparent today.

When Steve set up the business in 1996, he said production was predominantly “high-touch”.

“A typical packaging line often required between 10 to 15 operators to closely monitor equipment and make manual adjustments to inspection equipment settings,” he said. “In this era, metal detection was largely reactive rather than proactive. Attention was only really directed to inspection machines if an alarm sounded or the production line stopped.”

The introduction of the Food Standards Act 2000, European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) in 2002 and the US Food Safety Modernisation Act 2011 brought about key changes.

“Modern plants are defined by high-speed automation, with machines processing 200 to 300 packs per minute and requiring minimal human intervention,” Steve said.

While staff originally calibrated a machine and performed tests manually, few employees now need to manage more high-priority systems.

“On a high-speed line, asking an employee to manually insert and retrieve test pieces is a liability risk and inefficient,” Steve said, adding that the need to mitigate safety risks and minimise human errors helped shape the development of the company’s Halo automatic testing system.



The AVR Puma 4.0 is now equipped with the powerful Volvo TAD1384VE engine.

New features and upgrades unveiled

POTATO cultivation machinery specialist AVR introduced several new features to its products ahead of Potato Europe in Springe, Germany.

A new harrow combination for the AVR Ceres 400 and a presentation conveyor for the AVR Falcon hopper have been unveiled, alongside upgrades for the AVR Spirit 9200i and increased power for the AVR Puma 4.0.

The new power harrow combination consists of LSM hydraulic subsoilers, Maschio DM3000 power harrow and Ceres 440 planter. A key advantage is that the power harrow frame enables a fully independent, hydraulic depth adjustment of the soil cultivation relative to the planter. Operators can easily adjust this via the AVR joystick or the display, where the working depth is shown thanks to an angle sensor.

Suitable for stony conditions and more compact than a hook tine cultivator (–120 mm), it provides independent hydraulic depth adjustment of soil cultivation from the tractor relative to the planter. It is suitable for tractors with wide tires and ensures perfect positioning of the seed potatoes in the centre of the ridge, even on sloping terrain, according to the manufacturer.

To improve crop distribution towards the cleaning rollers, AVR has introduced a new presentation conveyor on the Falcon 24-60 receiving hopper. This new presentation conveyor can be used with both a single

and a double roller set and is hydraulically driven. Its speed can be easily adjusted manually via the valve block.

The presentation conveyor is now available. It cannot be retrofitted to existing machines.

The AVR Spirit 9200i has benefited from a range of standard updates and additional options. On the AVR Spirit 9200i CR and VW, a new levelling cylinder is now included as standard, repositioned on the chassis, extending the levelling range, and the graphical user interface of several cleaning modules has been completely redesigned. On the AVR Spirit 9200i VW, the speed of the deflecting rollers on the pintle belt can now be adjusted independently from the cross conveyor belt itself.

Additional options include for the AVR Spirit 9200i CR and VW include an automatic bunker loading update, new comfort package, digging unit update

For the AVR Spirit 9200i CR, an extra deflecting roller on the in-line pintle belt optimises potato flow, while the Spirit 9200i VW can optionally be equipped with a rotary comb module on the cross pintle belt. This module enables efficient separation of stones and clods while also contributing to optimal crop distribution across the sorting table.



The AVR Falcon with presentation belt.



The AVR Spirit 9200i has benefited from a range of standard updates and additional options.



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‘From soil to security’

James Young, Vice President of Agriculture at McCain GB&I, discusses strengthening UK food resilience through regenerative agriculture.

AS climate volatility and supply chain disruption place growing strain on food production, ensuring the resilience of the UK food system is becoming more important than ever.

But food security is not just about supply – it is about resilience. That resilience is under increasing pressure from structural changes in how we farm and produce food.

Unpredictable weather, policy uncertainty and rising costs are threatening crop yield, quality and consistency. This is putting pressure on a food system that we all depend on. What was once cyclical volatility is now a persistent structural risk. With over half of British farmers considering leaving the industry and nearly three quarters pessimistic about the future, the long-term stability of domestic food production is at risk.

This is why food security cannot be seen purely as an agricultural issue, it must be recognised as a core component of national resilience.

Analysis from the recent Sustainable Farming Dividend report by Demos, supported by McCain, reinforces the scale of the challenge: deteriorating natural systems could reduce UK GDP by 6% over the next decade, while sustainable farming has the potential to boost farm profitability by £1.6 billion annually. In other words, strengthening resilience at the farm level is not simply an environmental ambition. It is an economic and strategic imperative.

If resilience is the goal, then how we farm must be part of the solution.

Regenerative agriculture offers a practical pathway to strengthen resilience across the food system by improving soil health, enhancing biodiversity, reducing dependency on synthetic inputs and using natural resources more efficiently. At its core, it is about working in harmony with nature to build farming systems that are more adaptive, productive and sustainable over the long term.

The economic case is equally compelling. Sustainable farming practices could reduce input costs by £905 million annually and cut fertiliser imports by £449 million - critical in a system where 60% of nitrogen fertiliser is imported and many farms are already operating under financial pressure.

At McCain, we have committed to implementing regenerative agriculture practices across 100% of our global potato acreage by 2030. For McCain GB, 86% of our acreage is currently at ‘engaged’ or higher within our Regenerative Agriculture Framework. We’ve also launched our ‘Grow with Us’ to support farmers in managing rising costs and climate pressures.

Building a resilient food system requires coordinated action across the entire value chain, from farmers and businesses to policymakers and investors.

The transition to regenerative agriculture is already underway, but to accelerate progress we need broader commitment, long-term investment and supportive policy frameworks. 

Water reform and strength in numbers

GB Potatoes’ Development Manager **Graham Bannister** urges grower unity and policy overhaul after heatwave impacts on crops.

PROLONGED heat and drought have placed significant pressure on the British potato crop this season, particularly across England and in fields where irrigation has been limited or water supplies ran out.

Reports from growers point to crops shutting down and senescing early, with fewer and smaller tubers likely in the areas most severely affected. Irrigated crops have generally fared better, while the picture in Scotland and some cooler areas is more positive, although conditions continue to vary considerably from one locality to another.

It remains too early to quantify the final national yield or quality position before the crop is lifted, but it is already clear that this has been an exceptionally challenging season and that the weather will have an impact on the national crop. By the time you read this, our 2026 planted area survey will have closed.

The uncertainty surrounding this season underlines why the industry needs reliable, up-to-date data on the area in production. We intend to repeat the survey in 2027 and encourage as many growers as possible to take part. Responses are completely anonymous and will help us build the accurate national picture the industry needs.

It has been a very busy period for GB Potatoes as we continue to fulfil our role as the voice of the potato industry. Back in June we organised, in partnership with The National Potato Innovation Centre (NPIC) a Potato Industry Summit in London. This summit brought together people from across the potato industry from Government to researchers as well as growers and packers and processors.

We will be publishing a report about the conclusions from the day which you will be able to read. However, the key take away was access to water for a sustainable and secure food production system. The delegates weren’t



asking for money to be thrown at them, but more that the processes involved in managing water, be that through abstraction or storage, were not giving them the confidence to invest. Consequently, we have spent the summer focussing on water, both in the press and in our conversations with governments and regulators. We take the view that when it does start raining properly, many will forget the issues created by a lack of water and that we need to focus their minds while it is most applicable.

The consumer press has certainly been engaging in the stories, and we have received a huge number of requests for comment. We have always made it clear to the press that the potato sector is incredibly resilient and can produce crops in the most extreme of circumstance, the last thing we need is for consumers to look at other carbs if they believe that potatoes will be in short supply. Of course we can't know, at this point how many potatoes we will have after harvest, and we will only find out when the crop is lifted.

Managing the scare stories is a key part of our role, as well as promoting the benefits and good news stories. A lot of what we do goes unnoticed, but is always happening, without GB Potatoes there would be no one to inform the press of the truth about supply and the skills of the sector to supply a quality, healthy product through all the varying conditions that come our way. There will be potatoes on

the shelves. They might not look quite as good as normal, or may be a bit smaller, but they will be there.

GB Potatoes has established strong support across the seed, fresh, processing and wider supply chain. We are now focused on broadening direct grower participation so that our membership reflects the full strength and diversity of the industry. A larger and more representative grower membership will add further weight to our engagement with governments, regulators and the media, while ensuring that our priorities remain firmly grounded in the practical needs of growers.

It will also allow us to expand the work we undertake for the industry, from policy representation and media engagement to technical projects and better market information. To make it easier for growers to become involved, we have introduced a one-year introductory membership rate for new grower members, payable either monthly by direct debit or as a single payment. We are confident that the work delivered during that first year will demonstrate the value of continuing as a full member. Details of the new grower rates are available on our website, or please contact me directly.

There are various events taking place throughout the summer months and I met up with many of you at Potatoes in Practice in August. I will be at the Potato Confex in



November, busily providing the seminar programme. As the knowledge exchange partner for the event, GB Potatoes looks forward to seeing you there. Call in at the stand and have a chat with us to hear first-hand about the work being done on behalf of the industry and how you can become involved. 



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ROTATING AHEAD IN THE FIELD

Helping to build a better planet...

We here at British Potato Review, like many of our readers, are concerned about the future of our planet, so we'd like to share a few facts:

- The print house we use is certified ISO 14001, an internationally-recognised Environmental Management Standard as well as
- FSC® & PEF (Certified to Chain of Custody Standards to guarantee ethical forest management).
- Sustainable materials and vegetable-based inks are used across printing setups.
- Carbon-balanced paper and a partnership with the World Land Trust offset publication footprints.
- Paper wrapping and compostable starch wraps are used instead of single-use plastics for mailing.
- Active in-house recycling programmes are designed to target zero-to-landfill metrics.

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.



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