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## Broad-spectrum antibiotic found in potatoes

The growing threat of antimicrobial resistance has led researchers to search for new compounds everywhere. A multinational team of researchers in Europe recently reported the discovery of a new antifungal antibiotic named *solanimycin*.

The compound, initially isolated from a pathogenic bacterium that infects potatoes, appears to be produced by a broad spectrum of related plant pathogenic bacteria. *Solanimycin* acts against a wide range of fungi known to infect and wreak havoc on agricultural crops, according to the researchers. In lab studies, the compound also acted against *Candida albicans*, a fungus that occurs naturally in the body but can cause dangerous infections. The results suggest that *solanimycin* and related compounds could be useful in both agricultural and clinical settings.

The pathogenic potato bacterium *Dickeya solani*, which produces *solanimycin*, was first identified more than 15 years ago. Researchers in the lab of molecular microbiologist, George Salmond (PhD), at the University of Cambridge, began investigating its antibiotic potential about a decade ago. – *Potato News Today*

## Potato farming in Scotland under threat

Experts have warned that potatoes may stop growing in Scottish soil within the next few years due to climate change. Farmers in parts of the country have experienced the worst drought in decades. As farms struggle to meet their quotas, it is predicted that the cost of potatoes could double in the coming months.

Experts have warned that this year's weather was not a one-off, but a sign of things to come. The Scottish government said tackling climate change was one of its key priorities.

Over the summer, officials have been working closely with the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) to monitor the water scarcity situation. Multiple rivers reached a level of 'significant scarcity' due to the dry conditions. In line with the National Water Scarcity Plan, SEPA took action to temporarily suspend abstraction licences within the affected catchment to protect the water environment.

This is the first time in Scotland that abstraction licences had to be suspended due to water scarcity, and shows the seriousness of the situation. – *STV News*

## Meet the World Potato Congress' new director

The World Potato Congress president, John Griffin, recently welcomed new incoming executive director, Ellen Kouwenberg, who will be replacing the outgoing general manager, Brian Douglas.

Kouwenberg brings experience to the World Potato Congress through her global connections, facilitating incoming and outgoing agricultural missions and trade shows involving countries in North Africa, Central and South America, the Philippines, the United States, and the Middle East. – *Potato News Today*



Ellen Kouwenberg, newly appointed executive director of the World Potato Congress.

## Teton Russet now on McDonald's list

The Teton Russet potato variety has now been added to the list used for McDonald's World Famous Fries. It is the ninth variety of potatoes to be used by McDonald's in North America.

Teton Russet (experimental designation A0008-1TE) is the product of a 14-year research co-operative between the Northwest (Tri-State) Potato Variety Development Programme comprised of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA-ARS), the University of Idaho, Oregon State University, and Washington State University's potato breeding programmes.

It resulted from a cross between Blazer Russet and Classic Russet in 2000 by the USDA-ARS at Aberdeen, Idaho, with its release as a new potato variety in 2011, following multiple years in public and industry trials in the Western United States. The tubers are oblong with moderate russet, good skin and shallow eyes. The variety has a consistent specific gravity of 1.082 and is resistant to dry rot. – *Potato News Today*

## Potato price doubles in Kenya

The adverse effect of drought in Kenya has resulted in the rise of various foodstuffs, including the price of potatoes, which has increased by almost 50%. Traders maintain that the shortage of potatoes has been caused by the prolonged drought that has hit most parts of the country.

The acute shortage of the commodity has pushed prices through the roof. A 50 kg bag of potatoes is now retailing for Ksh4,200, up from Ksh2,800 between June and September.

Retailers are also complaining that the increase has resulted in huge losses as they try to break down quantities of potatoes as per the customers' needs. – *Kenya News*

**Potato spindle tuber viroid: New tests at ARC**

Potato spindle tuber viroid (PSTVd) of potatoes can cause up to 40% loss in yield. Affected potato tubers are deformed with a typical elongated and cylindrical appearance, whereas foliage can be spindly and upright, with leaflets rolling upwards and the plants being stunted.

There is no chemical biological control available against PSTVd; therefore it is important to certify that propagation material is free of this viroid. A single report on the occurrence of PSTVd in South Africa was published in 1985, but the viroid has subsequently not been reported. It is, however, important to note that this viroid is a European Union (EU) listed quarantine pathogen, and material being exported to the EU may have to be tested for PSTVd prior to export.

A quantitative reverse transcription polymerase chain reaction, or RT-qPCR, has been optimised by the Agricultural Research Council-Tropical and Subtropical Crops (ARC-TSC) for the detection of PSTVd, according to the guidelines published by Naktuinbouw. For more information on sample submission and pricing, contact Dr Ronel Roberts at ViljoenR@arc.agric.za. – ARC-TSC

**Irrigation needed for future UK potato crops**

An exceptionally dry summer for much of the United Kingdom this year came on the back of a dry growing season in 2018, which has led some potato growers to question which fields might continue to be fit for future potato planting.

Potatoes on lighter soils without irrigation suffered poor yields this year in many parts of Great Britain. It seems likely that all but heavy soils will need access to irrigation for successful cropping, as extreme weather patterns seem to become more common.

Taking into consideration the failure of farmgate prices to keep pace with costs, role-players say it seems probable that the overall planted area will reduce in the short term, saying they are looking at a smaller area of potatoes planted in the future.

The extreme heat during the summer caused many growing crops to shut down. Much of England saw the mercury edge towards 40°C, which stops the plant from growing. Other countries such as Spain or Egypt, which also experience similar temperatures, tend to harvest by spring before temperatures get too high. – *The Scottish Farmer*

**Potato market size to expand until 2028**

The global frozen potatoes market in 2018 was valued at US\$41,25 billion and is expected to grow at a compound annual growth rate of 4.1% between 2019 to 2028. The market's growth is largely due to the increasing global population.

The growing population leads to an increase in demand for food and the cultivation of grains and food crops. Potato is also a popular food item in India, Pakistan and Bangladesh. The market may be affected by rising obesity rates and increased heart disease due to excessive consumption of junk food. It will be challenged by high costs and the availability of healthier options on a large scale in the 2022 to 2031 forecast period.

High-cost storage, transportation and product recall costs can severely impede target market growth. In developed and developing countries there is a greater focus on health and higher consumption of healthy foods like fruits and vegetables. This can also reduce the demand for frozen potato products. The high cost of frozen potato products and the low temperatures required to keep them frozen will also limit their growth. – *EIN News*

**Potato prices surge in Poland**

October brought a further rise in the wholesale price of potatoes in Poland. This means that, despite the ongoing harvesting and the associated increase in current supply, the demand for potatoes is still high, EastFruit project analysts report with reference to the fresh-market website. If this continues, the average price of potatoes in Poland may soon reach its highest level in recent years.

The main factors contributing to the rapid increase in potato prices on the Polish market are low supply on the one hand and good demand on the other. Poland's 2022 potato harvest will only amount to 6.1 million tons, the lowest level since at least 2010.

The fact is that low harvests do not mean record prices, as the 2015/16 season showed, but this year's price growth is supported by high demand, especially from exporters. Thus, importers from Hungary, Lithuania and Romania are already showing interest in Polish potatoes. In addition, Polish potatoes are most likely to be exported to Ukraine. – *EastFruit*



Mondstuk van die Suid-Afrikaanse aartappelbedryf • Mouthpiece of the South African potato industry

# CHIPS

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**SANDSPLEET, SPLEETSKURF  
OF ANDER OORSAKE:  
OORSIG VAN AARTAPPELKRAKE**

**SANDVELD KULTIVARPROEF  
ONDER BESPROEING  
OP AURORA IN 2021/22**

Improving diversity  
in potato plantings

Use of lime in soil:  
Acidity is no longer visible

Reviewed and updated  
ARC irrigation manual