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## Extreme weather hits Europe

Extreme weather incidents are serving to rock Europe's potato industry to its very foundations. Last year was the second warmest year on record in Europe. The drought conditions resulted in a dramatic downturn in overall potato output.

Estimate figures suggest that the harvest across northern Europe, the United Kingdom (UK) and Ireland was around two million tons less than normal. That's around one third of the total UK and Ireland potato production with packers and processors now striving to supply customers from a fast-dwindling supply base.

The result was a dramatic increase in prices, particularly within the potato processing sector. Moreover, the excessive export of potatoes to other European countries has depleted the Irish and UK potato stocks to their lowest levels. Additionally, recent floods in Italy and southern Europe, and a cold, wet spring in Ireland have delayed planting activities, potentially causing a significant yield drop this year.

This crisis, further exacerbated by high input and storage costs, could stretch into 2024. – *AgriLand*

## Johann Kotzé to head Agri SA

Agri SA recently announced the appointment of Johann Kotzé as their new chief executive officer. "Kotzé is a creative leader with a passion for farming and the sustainability of the food system. He brings a wealth of experience as a former agricultural banker and a renowned leader in organised agriculture," said Jaco Minnaar, chairperson of Agri SA.

He started his career as a producer and thereafter became an agricultural banker at Absa. After working as a corporate banker in Mozambique, he became an independent business consultant. Kotzé returned to banking and oversaw Africa Agriculture for FNB. Since 2017, he has served as the chief executive officer of the South African Pork Producers' Organisation (SAPPO).

Kotzé will commence his tenure at Agri SA on 1 October 2023. – *Press release, Agri SA*



Johann Kotzé.

## Preventing acrylamides in potato chips

Frying potatoes cause the formation of harmful chemicals called acrylamides. The acrylamide content in potato chips is influenced by factors such as the potatoes themselves, storage conditions and the heat treatment process. Researchers have been looking into acrylamides together with the food packing company Produsentpakkeriet in Frosta, northeast of Trondheim, Norway.

According to the research team, this project has provided the industry with new knowledge regarding the best ways of storing potatoes to reduce food waste. "It has shown us how to achieve optimum potato chip quality and minimise the risk of acrylamide formation."

The results demonstrate that three key factors are involved, the use of the right kind of potato, achieving the correct maturity before harvesting and achieving a correct and tailored storage temperature. The team discovered that measurements of sucrose and aspartic acid contents in potatoes offered the best indicators of the acrylamide levels that chips will obtain after deep frying. So far, the method has been well received by potato growers. – *News Medical*

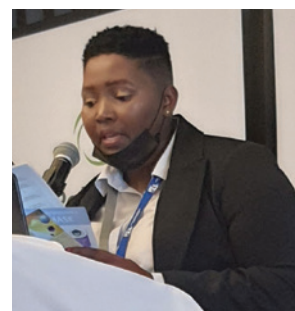
## Potatoes SA mourns death of its transformation manager

Nomvula Xaba (46), Potatoes SA's transformation manager, passed away on 29 May due to lung complications brought on by Covid 19.

"Her untimely death is a great loss, not only to her family and loved ones but also to us as her colleagues," said Willie Jacobs, CEO of Potatoes SA. "Nomvula was a pillar of strength in our team, a leader who was respected, admired and much loved."

Nomvula passed away two days before the celebration of her twelfth work anniversary at Potatoes SA. Jacobs praised her for being an excellent professional and wonderful human being.

Jacobs, on behalf of the Potatoes SA team, expressed condolences towards Nomvula's family, friends, loved ones and the potato community. – *Susan Marais, Plaas Media*



Nomvula Xaba.

**Price of frozen potatoes could increase**

There are concerns among some economists that the price of frozen potatoes may increase, adding to already high food inflation in South Africa.

The International Trade Administration Commission has introduced import duties on frozen potato chips from three countries in Europe namely Belgium, the Netherlands and Germany for the next five years.

The duties range from 8.8 to 239% to prevent further dumping. Duties were approved by the minister of trade, industry and competition, Ebrahim Patel. Potatoes SA has welcomed the anti-dumping decision as it helps protect local producers and enhances local competitiveness.

"This means the local industry will have to meet the demand that was previously imported from other countries. They have recently showed growth to the point where they are able to fill the gap. There have, however, been challenges in terms of electricity issues that have impacted the irrigation of crops and consequently production," said agricultural economist, Thabile Nkunjana. – *Potato Pro*

**Turkey anticipates potato production increase**

In 2023, a sharp increase in potato production is expected in Turkey, one of the top 15 potato exporters in the world, according to EastFruit Analysts.

Statistics confirm these expectations. In the first four months of 2023, Turkey imported 28.5 thousand tons of seed potatoes, which is a new historical record. This is also 91% more than the volume of seed imports for the same period in 2022.

The main volumes of seed potatoes, namely 79%, were supplied by the Netherlands. Another 7% of seed tubers were imported from the UK, 6% from France, 4% from Germany and 2% from Belgium.

The sharp increase in potato production in Turkey is a reaction to high table potato prices in the region and on the local market. Influenced by the rapid growth of domestic potato prices, the Turkish government banned its exports in early 2023. – *Potato Pro*

**White packing potato prices increase in UK**

The recent rise in UK packing potato prices has been weighing on demand from retailers, with supermarkets utilising contracted supplies as much as possible to reduce exposure to high prices in the free-buy market.

The Mintec Benchmark Prices for Grade 1 white packing potatoes EXW England were assessed at £400/mt in early June 2023, up £25/mt on the week and an increase of 321% year-on-year.

"There isn't any margin on free-buy potatoes at these price levels, so we have only been buying to ensure continuity of supply and where possible are relying on contracted stocks to offset the high prices," a UK supermarket buyer disclosed to Mintec.

Consumer demand for fresh potatoes has also eased in line with the arrival of warmer weather in both the UK and the EU. The shift has led to growers requiring increased irrigation to offset the lack of precipitation in recent weeks. – *Potato News Today*

**Transforming long-term potato storage**

Carrot Ventures in Canada recently announced the launch of Cellar Insights, an AgTech startup. It is built around a sophisticated suite of sensors and cloud-based algorithms that remotely monitor potato health in long-term storage. The solution includes predictive models and offers management insights to optimise returns.


Millions of potatoes are stored for up to 11 months in massive climate-controlled facilities in North America. During such long storage periods, producers face an escalating risk of loss due to shrinkage, reductions in quality, disease, sprouting or spoilage.

Reducing food loss and optimising the quality of crops post-harvest is an issue of worldwide importance. Potatoes are the world's third most important food crop, produced in over 100 countries. It is an essential and nutritious food staple, which has led to soaring cultivation rates in India and China. In North America, production value exceeds US\$4 billion annually, with retail sales approaching US\$14 billion. – *Potato News Today*

**Pepsico launches monitor application**

FMCG giant, PepsiCo, partnered with agriculture cloud company Cropin and launched a crop intelligence platform for monitoring potato yields using mobile app-compatible dashboards.

As part of its precision agriculture model, PepsiCo launched the pilot at demo farms based in India. Blight disease can cause up to 80% damage to potato crops, while ground frost is also an issue that potato producers grapple with in North India. Moreover, Indian cultivators have small landholdings and often lack the resources to monitor optimal resource utilisation such as water and fertilisers.

The platform offers a simple solution for managing these resources as well as evaluating pesticide use. It combines satellite imagery and remote sensing data to guide producers through the crop cycle. Producers can generate up to ten-day advance forecasts and monitor crops for health and potential disease warnings using the application. – *News nine* 

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# CHIPS

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of moths

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LIMPOPO, KWAZULU-NATAL  
EN OOS-VRYSTAAT**

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in context