



Global trends in fresh potato retailing

By Lukie Pieterse, Potato News Today

Potatoes are marketed at the retail level in four key markets: the United States (US), Canada, the United Kingdom (UK), and the Netherlands. Each of these countries has a unique approach to potato marketing, influenced by cultural preferences, agricultural practices, and consumer behaviour.

Marketing strategies in the US

The marketing of fresh potatoes in the United States is a dynamic and multifaceted sector, reflecting the diverse preferences and lifestyles of American consumers. The strategies employed by retailers and producers in the US are shaped by several key factors, including consumer trends, technological advancements, and competitive market dynamics.

The emphasis is on variety. Retailers offer a wide range of potato types, including russet, red, yellow, white, purple, and fingerling potatoes, catering to diverse culinary needs and preferences.

This variety extends to organic and non-genetically modified organism (GMO) options, appealing to health-conscious consumers. The availability of assorted sizes and packaging options, from bulk purchases to small, pre-packaged quantities, allows retailers to cater to various consumer segments, from large families to single-person households.

Packaging and wellness trends

Retailers and producers invest in innovative packaging that extends shelf life and appeals aesthetically to consumers. Clear, informative labelling that includes nutritional information, cooking suggestions, and origin details is common practice.

Some brands also have resealable and environmentally friendly packaging to appeal to eco-conscious consumers.

Retailers and producers are increasingly highlighting the nutritional benefits of potatoes, such as being a reliable source of potassium and vitamin C. Marketing campaigns focus on the health aspects of potatoes, countering misconceptions labelling potatoes to be unhealthy. There is also a trend towards marketing potatoes as a versatile ingredient for healthy diets, including plant-based and gluten-free options.

Technology and loyalty programmes

Online retail platforms and grocery delivery services have become increasingly popular, especially in urban areas. Retailers leverage data analytics to understand consumer preferences and tailor their inventory and marketing strategies accordingly. Social media and digital marketing are also used extensively to engage with consumers, share recipes, and promote new potato products.

Promotional activities such as discounts, coupons, and loyalty programmes, are widely used to attract and retain customers. Seasonal promotions, especially during Thanksgiving and Christmas when potato dishes are popular, are common. Retailers collaborate with food influencers and chefs to create unique recipes and cooking demonstrations, further enhancing the appeal of potatoes.

Local and sustainable produce

There is a growing trend in the US towards locally sourced and sustainably grown produce. Retailers often source potatoes from local farms, highlighting this aspect in their

marketing to appeal to consumers who prefer to support local agriculture. Sustainability initiatives, such as reducing water usage and minimising pesticide use in potato farming, are also becoming part of the marketing narrative.

Retailers and producers are quick to adopt latest trends, whether it is offering exotic varieties, adopting new packaging technologies, or engaging in sustainability practices.

Canadian market trends

The Canadian market prefers locally sourced produce, valuing the freshness, reduced environmental impact, and support for local producers. Retailers respond to this demand by prominently labelling and marketing potatoes as locally sourced, often providing information relating to the specific region or farm of origin.

Environmental sustainability is a major concern and has led to an increased focus on eco-friendly practices in potato cultivation and marketing. Retailers and producers are adopting sustainable farming practices, such as reduced pesticide use, water conservation, and organic farming methods. Additionally, there is a growing trend towards using biodegradable or recyclable packaging for potato products.

Health and nutrition awareness

Health and nutrition play a significant role. Consumers are more aware of and interested in the nutritional value of the food they consume. Retailers and producers market potatoes as a healthy food choice, emphasising their natural, non-processed nature, and nutritional benefits such as being a good source of fibre, vitamins, and minerals.

This trend also sees the introduction of speciality potato varieties with enhanced health benefits, such as lower glycaemic index options.

Innovation and marketing

Innovation in potato products is a notable trend in Canada. This includes the introduction of value-added potato products, such as pre-washed, pre-cut, and ready-to-cook potatoes, catering to consumers seeking convenience. There is also a focus on introducing new and exotic potato varieties to the market, offering consumers a wider range of choices.

The use of digital platforms for marketing and selling potatoes is on the rise in Canada. Retailers are increasingly utilising online stores, social media, and digital advertising to reach consumers. This includes online promotions, recipe sharing, and engaging with consumers through social media platforms. The growth of online grocery shopping has also influenced the way potatoes are marketed, with a focus on ease of purchase and home delivery options.

Seasonal marketing plays a significant role. Retailers often run promotions and special offers during key seasons and holidays. This includes in-store displays, special pricing, and themed marketing campaigns.

Consumer preferences and trends

The Canadian potato market is responsive to consumer preferences and emerging trends, whether it is a shift towards organic produce, a preference for convenience, or a demand for sustainable practices.

The market for fresh potatoes is shaped by a strong preference for locally sourced and sustainably grown produce, a focus on health and nutrition, innovation in product offerings, the increasing use of digital marketing, and responsiveness to seasonal and consumer trends. These trends reflect the evolving preferences of Canadian consumers and the commitment of retailers and

producers to meet these demands sustainably and innovatively.

UK retail strategies

In the UK, there is a strong emphasis on the quality and heritage of potato varieties. British consumers often prefer traditional and locally grown varieties, such as Maris Piper, King Edward, and Jersey Royals. Retailers capitalise on this preference by marketing these varieties as premium products, often highlighting their unique taste, texture, and suitability for different British culinary uses, such as roasting or making chips.

The UK market has seen a growing demand for convenience in food products. This has led to the introduction and marketing of value-added potato products, such as pre-washed, pre-cut, and microwave-ready potatoes. These products cater to busy lifestyles, offering quick and easy meal solutions without compromising on quality.

Aligned with global trends, health and wellness are key factors in the UK. Retailers and producers emphasise the health benefits of potatoes, countering the misconception that potatoes are inherently unhealthy. This includes marketing campaigns that highlight the nutritional value of potatoes.

Packaging and E-commerce

Environmentally friendly packaging options are becoming more prevalent, responding to consumer demand for sustainable practices. Digital marketing and electronic commerce play an increasingly vital role in the UK's retail strategies. Retailers utilise online platforms, social media, and digital advertising to engage with consumers, promote products, and provide convenient shopping experiences. The rise of online grocery shopping has also influenced the marketing of potatoes, with a focus on ease of purchase and delivery options.

Seasonal promotions are a common strategy in the UK potato market. Retailers often run unique offers and marketing campaigns

during key seasons and holidays, such as Christmas and Easter, when traditional potato dishes are popular. This includes themed in-store displays, advertising campaigns, and recipe suggestions that align with seasonal culinary traditions.

Consumer insights

The market is competitive, with multiple retailers and brands vying for consumer attention. This competition drives innovation in marketing and product offerings. Retailers and producers are keen to understand consumer insights through market research, allowing them to tailor their strategies to meet changing preferences and trends effectively.

The retail strategies for marketing fresh potatoes in the UK are characterised by a focus on quality and heritage varieties, provenance and traceability, adaptation to convenience and lifestyle trends, health and wellness messaging, innovative packaging, leveraging digital platforms, seasonal promotions, and a responsive approach to a competitive market.

Dutch marketing practices

The Netherlands, renowned for its advanced agricultural practices and significant export capacity, employs distinct marketing strategies shaped by the country's innovative farming techniques, focus on sustainability, and a strong export market.

The Dutch potato market is characterised by a strong emphasis on agricultural innovation. The Netherlands is known for its high-quality potato production, achieved through advanced farming techniques, including precision agriculture, which optimises crop health and yield. Retailers and producers market these high-quality potatoes by highlighting their superior taste, texture, and versatility in cooking.

Sustainability is a cornerstone of Dutch marketing. The Netherlands has been a pioneer in sustainable agricultural practices, such as efficient water management, reduced use of

pesticides, and implementing eco-friendly farming technologies.

Focus on export markets

The Dutch potato industry is heavily oriented towards the export market. This international focus influences marketing strategies, with Dutch potatoes branded as high-quality, sustainably produced products that meet international standards. The reputation of Dutch potatoes as a premium product is leveraged in both domestic and international marketing.

Innovation extends to the product offerings in the Dutch market. There is a focus on developing and marketing new potato varieties with specific characteristics, such as improved taste, longer shelf life, or certain cooking qualities. Additionally, the market sees a range of value-added potato products, such as pre-packaged, pre-cut, and speciality potatoes, catering to diverse consumer needs.

Digital marketing plays a significant role as producers and retailers engage with consumers through online platforms, social media, and digital advertising.

Packaging and branding

Packaging is functional, preserving the quality and freshness of the potatoes, appealing and informative. This includes environmentally friendly packaging options, which align with the overall sustainability ethos of the Dutch market.

The Dutch potato market is responsive to changing consumer trends and preferences. This includes a growing demand for organic and locally sourced produce, convenience products, and health-conscious options. Retailers and producers adapt their offerings and marketing strategies to align with these trends, ensuring they meet the evolving needs of consumers.

Collaborative marketing

The Dutch industry often engages in collaborative marketing efforts, involving various stakeholders including producers, processors, retailers, and export partners. These

collaborations help in promoting Dutch potatoes as a brand.

Dutch practices in potato marketing are characterised by a focus on agricultural innovation, sustainability, a strong export orientation, innovative product offerings, digital marketing, effective packaging and branding, adaptation to consumer trends, and collaborative marketing efforts. These practices cater to the domestic market and position Dutch potatoes as a high-quality, sustainable choice in the international market.

Health and convenience

Potatoes, traditionally viewed as carbohydrate-rich foods, are being reassessed for their nutritional benefits, such as being a good source of fibre, vitamins (especially vitamin C), and minerals (such as potassium). Consumers are increasingly looking for natural, non-processed food options, and potatoes fit this preference well.

The fast-paced lifestyle of modern consumers has led to a rising demand for convenience in food preparation. This trend is evident in the growing popularity of pre-washed, pre-cut, and ready-to-cook potato products. These products save time and effort in meal preparation, appealing to busy families and individuals.

Environmental sustainability and ethical considerations are becoming increasingly important in consumer choices. This includes preferences for organically grown potatoes, eco-friendly packaging, and support for local producers.

Consumers are showing an interest in experimenting with several types of potatoes, including heritage and exotic varieties. This trend is driven by a desire for new culinary experiences and flavours.

Value for money

Price remains a significant factor in consumer decision-making. While there is a segment of consumers willing to pay a premium for high-quality or speciality potatoes, most of the market is price-sensitive and looks for value for money. Retailers often use promotional pricing, discounts,



and loyalty programmes to attract and retain these cost-conscious customers.

Brand loyalty and trust play a crucial role in consumer behaviour. Consumers tend to stick with brands that consistently deliver quality and meet their expectations. Trust is particularly important in food products, and brands that can establish a reputation for quality, safety, and reliability benefit from repeat purchases.

Digital media and social trends

Digital media and social trends significantly influence consumer behaviour. Online reviews, social media influencers, and recipe blogs can sway consumer preferences and introduce new ways of using potatoes in cooking. 🍷

For more information and references, email lukie@potatonewstoday.com.

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

CHIPS

VOL 38 NO 2 • MARCH / APRIL 2024



**WES-VRYSTAATSE KULTIVARPROEWE
BY BULTFONTEIN EN KROONSTAD
IN 2023**

**FEEDBACK REPORT ON
POTATOES SA'S 2024
TRANSFORMATION SYMPOSIUM**

Moerkwekers inspireer:
Top tien aangewys

Control strategies
for potato early dying

What we spend
on protecting potatoes