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## UK potato supply tightens

The Mintec Benchmark price for English white potatoes hit an all-time high of £570/metric tonnes (MT) during mid-April, marking a 90% year-on-year (y-o-y) increase. Market sources anticipate a continued upward price trend due to tightening supply in the coming months, as Harry Campbell reports for Mintec.

Meanwhile, Maris Piper potatoes are priced at £610/MT, reflecting a 144% y-o-y rise. However, trade for Maris Piper remains minimal across the United Kingdom (UK) due to limited availability. Market players speculate that the price of white potatoes may surpass the Maris Piper price before the 2024 harvest, with growers holding back stocks in anticipation of further price hikes.

Import activity into the UK persists, with ongoing shipments entering from the European Union (EU), Israel, and Egypt. This follows the decision by some supermarkets to remove the Union Jack from packaging.

Planting operations are underway in regions of England, predominantly on lighter soils. However, Scotland has yet to commence planting activities. Further delays would likely impact the timing of the 2024 harvest. – *Mintec*

## Taters for the taking

A mound of potatoes unloaded from ten semitrucks by the Hutterite community just west of Airway Heights in Washington, sparked a free-food frenzy, with droves of people bringing trailers and buckets to get their free taters.

Ed Gross, a livestock manager and Hutterite member, said more than 900 people came throughout the weekend to get their share, making the road “look like a little freeway” – a totally unexpected result of the oversupplied potato industry. They would have stored them, but “you can’t keep them in storage forever,” said Denise Bennett, a local resident. None of the food processors could take extra, either.

Potato buyers had cut contracts with seed growers this year, which meant they could only sell 60% of their entire crop and have to count the rest as a loss. – *The Spokesman-Review*

## InteliSeed integration

InteliGro recently announced further strengthening of its value proposition through the integration of InteliSeed into their business. This decision was taken to align and consolidate business structures, and simplify channels to ensure optimal and focussed functions.

The seed portfolios will be offered to growers through a countrywide network of seed specialists and selected crop advisors. The InteliGro seed division will be headed by Barry Erasmus as commercial manager of seed, supported by Lenie Venter as operational manager of seed. The portfolios include vegetable seed, oilseeds (sunflower, soya beans and canola) maize, pastures, wheat and cover crops. – *Press release, InteliGro*

## Biofumigation: New mustard hybrid

In a significant development for the potato industry, a newly registered mustard hybrid, known as AAC Guard, is showing promise as an effective biofumigant against *Verticillium* wilt and certain nematode species. This breakthrough comes at a crucial time as the agricultural sector has been grappling with the deregistration of several chemical pesticides in recent years, challenging growers to seek alternative solutions.

Historically, mustard has been used as a biofumigant before the advent of many chemical products. With the phasing out of these chemicals, research and private sector efforts have intensified to rediscover and optimise natural methods for managing crop diseases. AAC Guard, previously known as MSH85, is a male sterile mustard hybrid developed through conventional breeding techniques, without the use of genetic modification.

The effectiveness of AAC Guard lies in its high glucosinolate content, a chemical that transforms into isothiocyanate when it interacts with water and certain enzymes. This compound is known for its ability to suppress not only *Verticillium* wilt but also other formidable pathogens such as *Fusarium* and *Sclerotinia*, which can devastate potato crops. – *Manitoba co-operator*

## Protein biofactory in a potato

PoLoPo, a molecular farming pioneer, recently announced its SuperAA platform, the first step to producing proteins in common plant crops. The platform is currently deployed in potatoes at greenhouse scale to generate both a native protein (patatin) as well as egg protein (ovalbumin) through proprietary metabolic engineering techniques.

The cutting-edge SuperAA platform turns the potato plant into a micro-biofactory that manufactures the target amino acids in the plant and stores them in the tuber. Tubers will be harvested when they reach sufficient size, and their proteins are extracted and dried into powder. The resulting powders will seamlessly integrate into current food processing lines and formulations.

The SuperAA platform is being used to develop increased patatin and ovalbumin. Ovalbumin is widely used in packaged foods for its functional properties, including texture and stability, as well as for enhancing nutritional value and increasing shelf life. – *Press release, PoLoPo*

## PRM legislation questioned

In a pressing call to action, the European Potato Trade Association (Europatat), alongside a coalition of major agricultural stakeholders, has voiced significant concerns over proposed amendments to the Plant Reproductive Material (PRM) legislation.

The contentious amendments, embedded within a draft report by the parliament's Committee on Agriculture and Rural Development, are feared to potentially destabilise the EU's PRM market. Critically, the proposed changes could permit a significant portion of PRM to circulate throughout the EU without sufficient oversight from competent authorities or necessary plant health inspections.

The proposed legislative overhaul has rallied a broad alliance of organisations representing the PRM sector and its users, including Copa-Cogeca, Euroseeds, Europatat, Coceral, the European Beet Growers, and CEPM Maiz'Europe. Together, they have issued a joint statement underscoring the necessity to maintain the equilibrium outlined in the original proposal from the European Commission. – *Press release, Europatat*

## Kennis kry wile

In 2022 en 2023 het Syngenta groot sukses gehad met sy Knowledge Hubs-geleenthede in Napier en Bethlehem. Die konsep was om kennis meer toeganklik te maak vir produsente deur inligting te deel wat hulle sal help om presisieboerdery en gewasbeskerming sodanig toe te pas, dat hul boerderye volhoubaar is en in alle opsigte floreer.

Die Knowledge Hubs on the Move-voertuie is toegerus met 'n spuitstukbad waarmee prakties gedemonstreer kan word hoe verskillende spuitstukke werk. Daar is ook sitplek vir lekker gesels oor 'n beker koffie. Vanjaar se Knowledge Hubs fokus steeds op gewasbeskerming en toedieningspraktieke, maar produsente word ook voorgestel aan die digitale landbou-oplossings wat CropWise bied. – *Persverklaring, Syngenta*



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## International Day of Potato

As the world prepares to celebrate the first-ever International Day of Potato on 30 May, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) is shining a spotlight on the enormous importance of this crop.

The FAO recently published an 11-page guide to the new International Day, with the theme of "Harvesting diversity, feeding hope". FAO's work on the potato encompasses support to producers and indigenous people to build capacity in managing common diseases such as late blight, fostering innovative solutions to grow potatoes with minimal resources and promoting co-operation with diverse actors along the crop's value chain.

Among the various actions, governments and international bodies can create an enabling environment, support research and strengthen the crop's value chain through the development of cold storage and quality seed multiplication and distribution. – *FAO*

## Potato variety survey initiated

In a significant move to bolster food security in the Global South, the International Potato Centre (CIP), under the aegis of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR), has initiated an extensive survey targeting market segments crucial for the development of resilient and adaptable potato varieties.

The survey is designed to gather invaluable data from diverse agricultural stakeholders ranging from smallholder producers to large agribusiness entities. The objective is to tailor potato breeding programmes more closely to the needs and challenges specific to these regions, thereby enhancing yield, sustainability and nutritional outcomes.

The Global South, a region that faces unique agricultural challenges including variable climates, limited water resources, and diverse socio-economic conditions, stands to benefit immensely from crops that are not only high-yielding but also respond to the requirements and preferences of both smallholder producers and end-users. CIP's initiative represents a proactive approach to these challenges, leveraging CGIAR's extensive network of researchers and resources.

For each of the potato market segments, the survey focusses on several key aspects: Estimating the area allocated to each market segment in a given CGIAR sub-region; and estimating the average farm yield and farmgate price for each segment. – *CIP and CGIAR*

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