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## Irish potato prices improve

The Central Statistics Office (CSO) in Ireland has revealed that the price of outputs for potato producers have increased by 73.6% over the 12 months to April 2024.

The CSO also detailed that “the most significant” decreases in the prices paid to producers for their produce in the 12 months to April 2024 were recorded in industrial and forage crops which dropped by 26.4% and in relation to pigs which declined by 6.2%. While increases were recorded for output prices for potato growers, they were also seen for vegetables, which rose by 11.7%.

On the input side, the CSO stated that the price of fertilisers has fallen by 31.4% in the year to April, while the price of motor fuels has increased by 10.1%. On the output side, the price of cereals (including seeds) has fallen by 31.4% in the year to April 2024. – *AgriLand*

## Climate change impacts South Korea

A study published in the journal *Potato Research* presents results on the response of spring and summer potatoes to climate change in South Korea. The study, conducted by scientists from the Leibniz Centre for Agricultural Landscape Research (ZALF) and the Brandenburg University of Technology Cottbus, investigates the effects of global warming on the potato crop and presents adaptation strategies.

“Our results show that the CO<sub>2</sub> fertilisation effect can offset the negative effects of rising temperatures and increase yields of spring potatoes by up to 60% if planting times are adjusted,” explains Dr Yean-Uk Kim, the main author of the study and scientist at ZALF. The CO<sub>2</sub> fertilisation effect describes the phenomenon that higher CO<sub>2</sub> concentrations in the atmosphere can improve the photosynthetic performance of plants, leading to faster growth and higher yields.

Research shows that earlier planting is recommended for spring potatoes under mild climate change conditions. Under more severe climate change conditions, the researchers suggest breeding heat-tolerant varieties as an adaptation strategy. For summer potatoes, the focus would be on increasing tolerance to high temperatures, regardless of the climate scenario. – *Phys.org*

## Nuwe besturende direkteur vir ASD

Die Aartappelsertifiseringsdiens (ASD) het onlangs aangekondig dat dr Ansa van Vuuren vanaf 1 Julie vanjaar as besturende direkteur sal aansluit. Dr Van Vuuren het haar nagraadse kwalifikasies in plantteling aan die Universiteit van die Vrystaat verwerf en ook later 'n senior bestuurskwalifikasie aan die Universiteit van Pretoria verwerf.

Dr Van Vuuren het uitgebreide praktiese ervaring in 'n wye verskeidenheid gewasse en verskeie wetenskaplike dissiplines wat konvensionele plantteling, gewasbeskerming, die uitvoer van veldproewe en die ontwikkeling van navorsingsprotokolle insluit. Haar bestuurserfaring sluit in die operasionele bestuur van 'n weefselkultuurlaboratorium, die bestuur van plantteling- en navorsingspanne en, meer onlangs, die bestuur van die kampus vir Plantgesondheid en -beskerming by die Landbounavorsingsraad vir agt jaar.

Sy het op verskeie advies- en bestuurskomitees gedien met betrekking tot strategiese navorsing, infrastruktuur-ontwikkeling en regeerings-inisiatiewe.

– *Aartappelsertifiseringsdiens*



Dr Ansa van Vuuren, nuwe besturende direkteur van die Aartappelsertifiseringsdiens (ASD).

## Sunlight impacts Scottish yields

The potato planting season in Scotland has been sporadic as producers have seized every available moment to get tubers in the ground.

This inconsistency in planting times is likely to cause challenges for those aiming for a rolling harvest, as uneven planting leads to uneven harvesting schedules. The weather has played a significant role, with frequent rain causing start-stop planting conditions. Although the ground appeared dry on the surface, it remains soaked underneath, complicating planting efforts.

Despite these challenges, most crops were in the ground in early June. This year, more producers are planting later into the season than usual, which will extend the Scottish harvest period.

Seed potatoes have been in tight supply this year. Some producers have resorted to using farm-saved seed, although this practice is not recommended due to potential disease risks. As the weather warms up, potato growth has been promising. However, low sunlight levels suggest that a bumper crop is unlikely, potentially impacting yields and seed maturity.

There is also concern that later-planted crops may bolt due to stress from suboptimal conditions, resulting in a wider range of tuber sizes and posing challenges for the seed sector.

– *The Scottish Farmer*

## Researcher develops new potato

Michigan State University (MSU) potato breeder, Dave Douches, has genetically finessed a breed that will store longer, stay fresher and even make potato chips taste better, researchers said. This means, according to MSU researchers, a more stable spud. The potato can also reduce the environmental impact of the growing process because it does not need as many fertilisers and pesticides.

Douches, the creator of the Kal91.3 potato, is the director of MSU's potato breeding and genetics programme in the Department of Plant, Soil and Microbial Sciences. He has been looking for ways to correct the sugar imbalance in some potatoes used to make potato chips, which can make the chips brown.

"When glucose and fructose accumulate in the tubers, it gives you a brown potato chip," Douches said. "There is too much sugar. If the sugar stays at sucrose, you get a nice white chip. There are only a few people who like dark potato chips. Most people prefer a chip with a nice clean taste rather than that burnt taste."

"The new genetically modified potato has been approved by the United States Department of Agriculture's Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service for commercial use," Douches said. The Kalkaska potato was created years ago and had a lot of promise, but it was not able to handle large commercial storage conditions.

– *The Detroit News*

## Fresh leadership for IntelliGro

IntelliGro entered an exciting new chapter, as they recently welcomed AJ Griesel as their new managing director. Griesel fills the position after Gideon Hefer stepped into a new role in the WinField United South Africa Group. Griesel most recently led the South African Table Grape Industry as chief executive officer and with over 20 years of experience in the agricultural industry, brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to the team.

He emphasises leading people so that business performance, operational excellence, and profitable growth are achieved and accelerated. "I am excited to join this team of experts and innovators," says Griesel. "Together we will continue to build upon the strong foundation and seize new growth opportunities."

Griesel will be travelling across the country to meet with the respective IntelliGro teams and stakeholders.

– *IntelliGro*



*AJ Griesel, new managing director of IntelliGro.*

## Robust surge in US potato sales

In a promising start to the year, the United States (US) retail market for potatoes experienced a significant uptick, with sales volumes increasing by 5.6% in the first quarter of 2024 compared to the same period in the previous year. Dollar sales also saw a healthy rise of 4.4%, reaching nearly US\$4.6 billion, according to a recent report from Potatoes USA.

The growth was uniform across all potato categories, reflecting a robust demand from consumers. Fresh potatoes led the charge with a notable 7.6% increase in volume sales, complemented by a modest 0.6% rise in dollar sales. Frozen potatoes enjoyed a 10.5% surge in dollar sales, despite a smaller 3.3% increase in volume. The chip segment also performed well, with dollar sales up by 3.3% and volume sales by 1.7%.

Among the various categories, deli-prepared sides and fresh potatoes recorded the highest sales volume increases at 7.8 and 7.6%, respectively, underscoring their popularity among consumers.

Fresh potatoes alone accounted for nearly US\$1.1 billion in dollar sales, marking a 0.6% rise from the previous year. This growth was driven by increases in almost all types of potatoes, except for red and white varieties, which saw declines of 3.3 and 3.1%, respectively. Notably, purple potatoes led the way with an 18.9% surge in sales volume, followed by medley potatoes (11.5%), yellow potatoes (11.2%), and russet potatoes (10.8%). The significance of these increases is amplified considering that russet and yellow potatoes together constitute 79% of the fresh potato volume sales. – *Potatoes USA*

### FPMI report slams Simba's potato seed strategy

The Competition Commission's Fresh Produce Market Inquiry (FPMI) has found that at retail level, fresh produce pricing is not transparent enough, citing instances of high markups, as well as slow and very low integration of smallholder producers. The inquiry also alleges problematic potato seed hoarding by Simba, a subsidiary of PepsiCo.


The FPMI Inquiry provisional report release was held on 18 June. The inquiry was initiated on 31 March 2023, according to the *Competition Act, 1999 (Act 89 of 1999)*. It is considering if adverse effects are present in the fresh produce value chain arising from any feature or combination of features that may impede, restrict or distort competition.

"The inquiry found that the state of the national fresh produce market's infrastructure is concerning," said chairperson of the FPMI, deputy commissioner of the Competition Commission, Hardin Ratshisusu.

"The inquiry also considered the usage of plant breeders' rights (PBRs) in relation to Simba. The inquiry noted an apparent strategy by Simba, who develops its own varieties, and discontinues use of a closed variety before expiry of its PBR. It seemingly replaces that variety with its new (fully protected) variety. This strategy means that access to a variety (which will imminently be open) may be limited through the removal of the genetic material.

"The inquiry engaged Simba, which denied that it stops a variety before the expiry of PBRs. The inquiry considered Simba's submission but remains unconvinced, particularly because as it stands, there is no access to this cultivar even if producers may try to obtain it. In light of this, the inquiry makes a provisional finding that Simba's decision to discontinue the FL2006 without making this cultivar available to the market distorts competition. This is mainly because the competitors of Simba or new entrants will not have access to this variety," explained Ratshisusu.

"Linked to this is the challenge where the Agricultural Research Council (ARC) is facing funding challenges following withdrawal of some industry associations who previously played a key role in funding the organisation, particularly with the potato gene bank." The inquiry says the defunding of the ARC has "wider implications".

The inquiry has also made 29 recommendations, comprising nine remedial actions and 21 recommendations. For the full provisional report, visit [www.compcom.co.za](http://www.compcom.co.za). – *Daily Maverick* 

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# CHIPS

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