

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

CHIPS

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**BESPROEINGSBESTUUR VIR
OPTIMALE AARTAPPELPRODUKSIE**

Die ekonomiese
impak van 2020 op
varsproduktemarkte

**MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE
AND THE POTATO INDUSTRY**

Oranjeville en Ceres
kultivar-evaluasies
onder die vergrootglas

Sebenzangamandla
on its way to reach
commercial status

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From potato peelings to fertiliser

UK crisp firm, Walkers, has joined forces with a clean-tech firm to create low-carbon fertiliser from its waste potato peelings in a bid to reduce its carbon footprint.

The firm will use CCm Technologies' innovative carbon-capture technology to allow peelings from the firm's Leicester factory to be used for anaerobic digestion, with the low-carbon fertiliser produced as a by-product of the anaerobic digestion process, to be returned to the farms where potatoes are grown for the crisps.

Following a promising trial of the fertiliser, which was applied to potato seedbeds in 2020, Walkers now plans on installing its own equipment. Once supplied at scale, the fertiliser is expected to reduce the firm's potato-based carbon emissions by 70%.

The technology is designed to connect to Walkers' anaerobic digester, which uses food waste to generate nearly 75% of the electricity used at the plant. – *Agri Land*

Boost for Ireland's seed potato sector

Ireland's seed potato sector looks set to get a Brexit shot in the arm. Driving this development will be the fact that Scottish seed can no longer be brought on to the island of Ireland, as a result of post-Brexit phytosanitary regulations imposed by Brussels.

While many ware growers imported this year's seed before the end of 2020, it is now widely acknowledged that, in future, Irish producers will be reliant on home-produced seed to meet their needs.

Potato industry representatives are now urging ware and seed growers to come together in a co-ordinated manner in order to ensure that the overall production needs of the Irish potato industry are met in the most efficient way possible.

Significantly, it seems that the option of Irish ware growers sourcing seed from mainland Europe is not a runner, because of the disease risks associated with this practise. – *Agri Land*

Cutting-edge technology used to grow seed potatoes

A partnership between potato researchers in India and Peru has been established to produce seed potatoes using aeroponics. The collaboration between the Potato Technology Centre (PTC) and Central Potato Research Institute (CPRI) in India, with the International Potato Centre (CIP) in Peru, has started producing seed potatoes with the help of an aeroponics technique.

With this technique, there is no need for soil and other growing media such as coco peat. They claim potato seeds grown through this technology are free from soil-borne diseases.

"We have started the process of growing mini-tubers (seed potato) plants with the help of aeroponics. It is a cutting-edge technique for growing plants and potato seeds in air or mist environment," said Dr Prem Chand Sindhu, deputy director of PTC. Dr Manish Sainger, senior consultant at PTC, said through this technique, seven to ten times more mini-tubers can be obtained in comparison to conventional methods like net house or open field. – *Potato Business*

Quest for a potato-based chicken alternative

Scandi Standard, the largest producer of chicken in Nordic countries, announced its partnership and investment in Veg of Lund, which is a producer of bottled plant-based smoothies.

It seems like an unlikely duo, but Veg of Lund has patented its smoothie base of potato and rapeseed oil, which will be used to create the plant-based chicken alternative. The meat producer has invested in a two-year research project to create the chicken alternative, with the investment totalling approximately US\$460 000.

Swedish-based SweGreen and research partners have received an investment totalling US\$1,05 million from Vinnova. Research partners include Mälardalen University and RISE Research Institutes of Sweden, and the three entities will work together to continue to develop SweGreen's AI-platform for vertical farming. SweGreen additionally aims to advance the digital supply chain and achieve climate neutrality through its urban food production. – *The Spoon*

A look at wild potatoes for disease-free varieties

Wageningen University & Research (WUR) has announced it is investigating wild potato varieties for resistance to a wide range of potato diseases and pests, in a recent programme.

This broad approach makes breeding material available with which disease-free potato varieties can be developed that contribute to sustainable and circular potato production worldwide. The study is being commissioned by Holland Innovative Potato (HIP) and the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature and Food Quality in the Netherlands.

In recent years, work has been carried out to combat the major potato disease caused by phytophthora by developing resistant varieties. As a result, the use of pesticides against this disease is set to decrease significantly in the coming years. Some useful wild species have already been found in an initial analysis.

These resistant varieties are being further investigated by WUR and will be used by breeding companies affiliated with HIP to develop new varieties. – *Potato Business*

US potato sales drop with food service losses

Based on an analysis of the potatoes and potato products sold at retail and food service, and accounting for the volume of US exports and imports, there was a 5% decline in the utilisation of potatoes grown in the US during the July 2019 to June 2020 marketing year (MY20).

Despite the 9% increase in sales through retail, the decline occurred due to the 13% decrease in sales to the food service sector and 2% decrease in exports. In terms of utilisation of the US crop, the decline was further compounded by a 7% increase in imports.

Food service sales have been accounting for a greater share of total potato sales in the US, peaking at 58% in marketing year 2019. This upward trend was reversed in MY20, with the food service share dropping to 53% of the total. – *Potatoes USA*

Traces of Covid-19 on food packaging, says China

The World Health Organisation (WHO) is caught up in an escalating dispute over whether the coronavirus is spreading on frozen-food packaging, as China steps up efforts to promote the theory and the US, European Union, and others lobby against extra checks on their goods.

The WHO has been formulating new advice for the public on the issue. A draft sent to *The Wall Street Journal* warns that the virus could spread via the cold chain and be reintroduced into countries where the pandemic is under control.

WHO officials say the draft was not cleared for publication and was sent in error. Beijing has blamed frozen-food imports as one cause of a string of outbreaks, and it has introduced mandatory testing and disinfection of foreign goods, saying it found traces of the virus on packaging of products. – *The Wall Street Journal*

New CEO takes the reins at Potatoes SA

Willie Jacobs took over the leadership of Potatoes SA (PSA) as CEO after Dr André Jooste left the organisation after nine years as part of his career planning.

Initiatives established by Dr Jooste are highly regarded and supported by the industry. Under his leadership, valuable research was done not only in terms of products, but also in terms of producer concerns in specific areas. The potato industry is privileged for Jacobs to have accepted the position of CEO at PSA. He officially took up office on 18 January 2021.

Dr Jooste laid a solid foundation for entrance into the market. Now Jacobs has to optimise the farming profit of potato producers in order to utilise the financial exposure. Read more about Jacobs in this edition of *CHIPS*. – *Press release, PSA*

Omnia welcomes new AGRI finance director

Former Afgri Group Holdings (AGH) CFO, Rivasha Maharaj, has been appointed as the new AGRI finance director (FD) at Omnia, where she will be responsible for the fertiliser business within the larger company. Her portfolio will include operations across South Africa, the Southern African Development Community (SADC), Brazil, and Australia.

Maharaj had the following to say about her appointment: "I am extremely excited and happy. It feels like home already." After completing her articles of clerkship, Maharaj joined Meadow Feeds in June 2004 as a management accountant. After that she fulfilled various senior finance positions at Nampak and Tega Industries. In 2016 she was appointed FD at DivFood, a division of Nampak.

She joined AGH in May 2017 as CFO looking after grain management, equipment, retail, Unigro, and Harvest Time. In February 2018 she was appointed as group CFO at AGH. – *CFO South Africa*

No World Potato Congress for 2021

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic and for the safety of participants, it is with great reluctance that the three organisations, World Potato Congress Inc, Europatat, and the Irish Potato Federation, jointly announce the postponement of the World Potato Congress (WPC) and the Europatat Congress planned for May/June in Dublin in 2021.

Originally scheduled for 31 May to 3 June 2021, the WPC will now take place from 30 May to 2 June 2022. As previously planned, the WPC will be preceded by the Europatat Congress that will take place from 29 to 30 May 2022.

In collaboration with its partners WPC Inc and Europatat, the local organising committee is determined to make the best use of the extra year to host even bigger and better events in 2022.

Make sure you do not miss out – check out the updated website, www.wpc2022ireland.com to keep abreast of developments. – *Europatat* 

