

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

CHIPS

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ONDER BESPROEING
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PSA small grower development
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Finding the perfect potato for small-scale farmers

By Louis Pretorius

A need for blight-resistant cultivars to be used in rural regions was recently identified. These cultivars would enhance the success of small-scale farmers who mainly produce potatoes for food security and to develop new skills to generate income. These producers focus on alleviating poverty and creating job opportunities.

In the past, the cultivar Electra was frequently used due to its strong resistance against blight in the rural regions of KwaZulu-Natal and the Eastern Cape. Sadly, this cultivar is no longer available and a quest to find new cultivars for these regions, was undertaken. This led to a joint venture between Potatoes South Africa (PSA), the Department

of Agriculture, Rural Development and Land Administration (DARDLA) in Cedara, KwaZulu-Natal, and four potato seed companies.

Cultivars are put to the test

The trials were planted on 18 May 2021 at the Makhathini Research Station, situated in the very northern part of KwaZulu-Natal in proximity to the Jozini Dam, not too far from Pongola. This region experiences very hot summers – far too hot for potato production – but is ideal for winter planting.

The results of these trials will also prove useful for other areas that are mainly winter regions, such as Limpopo. Fifteen cultivars were planted at each trial and repeated three times. One trial will receive all fungicides needed throughout



A joint venture between PSA, DARDLA in Cedara in KwaZulu-Natal, and four potato seed companies was launched to find new cultivars for the rural regions.



These small-scale farmers work to alleviate poverty and create job opportunities in their communities.



The trials were planted at the Makhathini Research Station, situated in the northern part of KwaZulu-Natal near Pongola.

the growing process. The other identical trials will receive no fungicides at all. The results will determine the natural resilience against blight between the cultivars.

The cultivars that show the most resistance against blight, will be selected for use in future small-scale farmer development projects in rural regions. In these areas, spraying is not always as good as it is on commercial farms, due to the very high cost of systemic fungicides in particular.

This is the second year that this project has been conducted. Next year, the final repetition of the project will take place in order to have three years' data for a more reliable conclusion of results. 🍅

For more information on PSA's transformation projects, contact the author at email louis@potatoes.co.za.