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Potato NEWS

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Pakistan to produce more local potato seed

The Pakistan Agricultural Research Council (PARC) has produced 150 000 nuclear potato tubers that may help in producing over 50 000 tons of certified seed for maximising output of the crop in Pakistan. The milestone was achieved through commercialisation of potato tissue culture technology.

The availability of healthy and disease-free seed has been recognised as a single major constraint limiting potato production in the country, PARC said. According to the council, Pakistan has the capacity to produce good quality potatoes and is presently producing less than 1% of the total seed requirement of 415 000 metric tons.

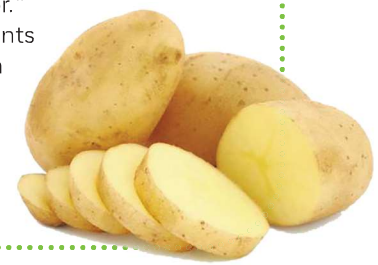
A total of 5 211 metric tons of seed was imported annually from Holland and other countries, and almost $400 million was being invested in these imports each year. – *Urdu Point*

Virtual Europatat Congress a success

The European potato community gathered virtually for the Europatat Congress 2021, under the slogan 'Stay connected – New strategies for the potato sector'. The annual event organised by Europatat focussed on the possibilities and challenges that digitalisation can offer companies of all sizes in the sector.

Opening the digital event, Gilles Fontaine, president of Europatat, emphasised: "This year's virtual edition demonstrates our sector's resilience against unexpected changes. Our annual event is an excellent opportunity to explore how to make the most of digitalisation in the potato sector."

With more than 100 participants from over 25 different European and non-European countries, the Europatat Congress 2021 has received extremely positive feedback. – *Europatat Congress*



McCain Foods to help limit global warming

McCain Foods is committed to cutting greenhouse gas emissions in half across all its global operations by the end of the decade. Consistent with its Global Sustainability Strategy and pledge to produce planet-friendly food, McCain Foods made the commitment with the release of its first sustainability report last year.

With the recent launch of the McCain Foods 2020 Global Sustainability Report Summary, it has announced that its emission reduction plan and targets have been approved by the Science Based Targets initiative. The company's commitment to implement regenerative agricultural practices across 100% of its potato production, will help cut its farming emissions by 25%.

The solar farm and biogas digester McCain is building at its production facility in Australia will yield a 39% reduction in energy and reduce carbon emissions by 27 000 tons a year. – *Potato Pro*

European grocery store implements AI tech

The Covid-19 pandemic and its disrupting effect on the retail sector has accelerated in-store technology trends. The latest emerging trend aims to find solutions to distinguish between fresh produce that tends to perish fast.

Relevance of such in-store solutions is also increasing in Europe, but basic artificial intelligence (AI) systems are not always designed for such fine distinctions. PIXEVIA – a store automation technology provider whose product recognition system now powers Europe's first cashier-less grocery store – is one of the pioneers in this field.

According to Mindaugas Eglinskas, CEO of PIXEVIA, the system issues discounts by analysing the data pertaining to the previous consumption trends as well as weather patterns. This way, the in-stock goods are kept fresh and safe to consume, and sustainable consumption is secured. – *Fresh Plaza*

Evolution of Irish potato famine pathogen traced

Researchers from North Carolina State University (NC State) continue to track the evolution of different strains of *Phytophthora infestans* (*P. infestans*), the plant pathogen that caused the Irish potato famine, or late-blight disease, in the 1840s.

NC State plant pathologists studied the genomes of about 140 pathogen samples – historic and modern – from 37 countries on six continents to track the evolution of different strains of *P. infestans*. The study showed that the historic lineage called FAM-1 was found in nearly 73% of the samples and was found on all six continents.

In 1843, FAM-1 caused potato blight outbreaks in the United States, and two years later in Great Britain and Ireland. It was also found in historic samples from Colombia, suggesting a South American origin. – *International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA)*