

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

CHIPS

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**BASELINE AND MARKET
DYNAMICS FOR THE
COMING SEASON**

Growing tomorrow's
producers, today

**OOS-VRYSTAATSE
DROËLANDKULTIVARPROEF
OP WARDEN 2019/2020**

Importation of French
fries takes a nosedive

Waarde van navorsing
oor blaarsiektebeheer

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Advice on minimising tuber bruising

During the annual online Idaho Potato Conference, Prof Nora Olsen of the University of Idaho gave a presentation on factors that impact the development of bruises in potatoes. According to Prof Olsen, evaluating quality losses over the past several years pointed to the primary association with either a direct impact, blackspot bruise, or shadow bruise.

"We must move potatoes around on several pieces of equipment, and physical impact is unfortunately inevitable," Prof Olsen said. "One option to identify those physical impact risks, is to use some sort of detection method, such as an impact recording device as a management tool, which allows you to identify the force and velocity of a physical impact. It then allows you to modify equipment and lessen the risk of bruising." – *Potato News Today*

Sale of unwashed potatoes to cut food waste

British retailer, Tesco, is trailing the sale of unwashed potatoes for the first time in 40 years in a bid to reduce food wastage. Experts say potatoes last longer if they are kept dry and in a dark cupboard, as both light and moisture can result in rotting on the skin, which will shorten shelf life. The logic behind selling potatoes with soil, is that it helps to block out light and slow down decay, and could extend usability dates.

Rob Hooper of Tesco told British newspaper and news site, *The Sunday Times*: "Up until about 50 years ago, potatoes would generally be sold unwashed, and having a natural film of soil around them would help keep them fresher for longer. At the end of the 1970s, supermarkets and greengrocers moved towards selling more cosmetically perfect produce, and as a result, potatoes were washed before being put out on display." – *Potato Business*

Online fresh produce trading takes root in SA

Online marketing platforms for the fresh produce industry have increasingly been adopted during the Covid-19 pandemic. This trend was highlighted by Louis de Kok, founder of the online fresh produce marketing platform, *Nile.ag*, in a Beanstalk Global monthly broadcast hosted in partnership with the Produce Marketing Association (PMA) in Southern Africa.

Nile.ag has quickly made a name for itself in the fresh produce market as a major role-player. De Kok said he was surprised that the platform was adopted so quickly and attributes this increase to the 'new normal' that consumers are getting accustomed to.

"We see that existing customers continue to use the platform and the value in monetary terms and size increases. Clients can be confident that the country's big producers are already using the platform. We are actually experiencing supply constraints," says De Kok. – *Ursula Human, Plaas Media*

New potato varieties released in Malawi

The newly released varieties of potatoes in Malawi are expected to respond to the needs of stakeholders in the potato value chain, including high yield per unit area, early maturing, and tolerance to major pests and diseases amid growing changes in climatic conditions.

The Department of Agricultural Research Services in the Ministry of Agriculture, in collaboration with the International Potato Centre, announced that the agricultural technology clearing committee had approved the new varieties for production and utilisation in Malawi.

The new varieties, Mpatasa, Mtukulapakhomo, Ufulu, and Kaso, have been produced under the five-year Root and Tuber Crops for Agricultural Transformation in Malawi project funded by Irish Aid. – *The Times Group*

Trial highlights seed-borne diseases

The Washington Commercial Potato Seed Lot Trial in the United States (US), has been ongoing for 56 years. It observes the performance of seed lots grown in commercial potato fields across Washington State on an annual basis.

The trial also helps individual growers diagnose seed-borne issues. Personnel at Washington State University (WSU) organise the seed lot trial and usually receive and plant 200 to 300 seed lot samples every year, each consisting of approximately 300 seed tubers.

Once the plants emerge, pathologists inspect them visually and flag those that show seed-borne disease symptoms or other issues, such as herbicide injury. At the end of June, a field day is facilitated to view the seed lots and discuss the results.

Some of the production problems identified in the trial over the years, include bacterial ring rot, potato virus Y (PVY), and herbicide carryover. The bacterial ring rot incidences highlighted by the seed lot trial in 1961, led to a larger investigation and cleanup effort in potato seed production regions.

In addition, PVY is the reason for most potato seed lot rejections by seed certification agencies in the US today. This disease has become increasingly difficult for seed producers to deal with due to the rapid spread of recombinant PVY strains that produce milder symptoms than the ordinary strain. Mild symptoms make it difficult to spot PVY-infected plants in the field and remove them before the virus spreads. The potato seed lot trial in Washington has helped document the PVY strain shift that has been occurring in North America over the past decade, and it is helping growers and seed inspectors learn to recognise the less obvious symptoms of PVY that are now predominant. – *Growing Produce*