

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

CHIPS

VOL 37 NO 2 • MARCH / APRIL 2023



**SIRKEL-N-LANDGOED:
GESONDE MOERE VIR
VOLHOUBARE AARTAPPELPRODUKSIE**

**SATELLITE-DERIVED CROP
GROWTH INDICES FOR
MANAGEMENT OF POTATO CROPS**

Alternatiewe kragbronne
vir jou plaas

KZN small growers
hold farmers' day

Limpopo-kultivarproef
op Dendron, 2022

Insights gained from the World Potato Congress

By Willie Jacobs, CEO Potatoes SA

As a close to our 2022 activities, and to align the discovery or awareness process on the activities that had an influence on shaping the view on the future of potato production, I deemed it worthwhile to reflect on the insights obtained from Potato SA's participation in the World Potato Congress (WPC) which was hosted by the Irish Potato Industry in Dublin.

With 57 exhibitors from across the globe and more than 300 attendees, this was a clear indication of the hunger for personal interaction after the gap that Covid-19 and its restrictions left in collaboration efforts. It needs to be noted that China, which was supposed to second more than 50 attendees to the WPC, was still in lockdown and thus not represented.

An added benefit for attendees was being exposed to local Irish potato production enterprises, and noteworthy was the clear drive towards vertical integration. Quite a number of farms are capacitated, through support from the Irish government, with specialised packaging and value addition such as starch processing and the like.

Matters kept below the radar

- Economic viability was not given sufficient representation.
- Seed quality and storage took a back seat as most mentions made related to the slow progress of potato cultivar development measured against other seed crops.
- There was no real focus on actual plant improvement.
- No clear breakthroughs were alluded to that can enhance the sustainability of the industry as a whole.
- Very localised and specialised solutions, which are difficult to apply across the globe, were mentioned.

Key elements addressed at the WPC

Adoption of earth-friendly principles

- Carbon footprint.
- Chemical footprint.
- Biological farming practices.
- Precision farming practices, with a focus on mechanisation and application practices.
- Storage, sorting and packaging technology, including the use of optical instruments.

Adopting technology in improvement of efficiencies in the entire value chain

- **Input use:** Improvement of accuracy of application of seed, fertiliser and chemicals.
- **Waste management:** Combined with reduced wastage of the same throughout the growing season.
- **Monitoring:** Proper monitoring of the complete process from input to sales.
- **Reporting:** In-time reporting to create proactive initiatives or automation to effect above.

Interesting consumer trend

A major trend receiving significant airtime was the general consumer move towards processed product. A key presenter highlighted studies, supported by the European Union, stating that consumers are losing the know-how to produce meals from fresh potatoes. Even vegetables in general were cited to be difficult to convert to proper meals. It appears as though recent generations are losing the knowledge transfer gained from their parents and older generations in how to prepare meals from fresh potatoes and vegetables.

It needs to be noted that this trend is less visible in South Africa, but through the logic of understanding the dual-income household requirement for financial survival, it is clear that South Africa needs to prepare for this. A key take-out will certainly be to look at our local processing capacity and expansion plans. These actions are already in the pipeline through various conversations with industry role-players. 📍

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