

# Inta-Ag Mag

MAY 2022



**FREE BEANIE  
WITH PLANT START**  
*Page 2*

**Inta-Ag** 

**WORLD POTATO  
CONGRESS COUNTDOWN**  
*Page 4*





# BRANDT PLANT START

BRANDT PLANT START is a concentrated liquid plant food enriched with seaweed extract, formulated to promote early growth and healthy root systems. This product is recommended for use as a supplement to a well balanced fertiliser programme. The recommended use rate for vegetable crops is 2.5 ltr/ha and is compatible with most commonly used fungicides and insecticides.



(until stocks last)



# Opinion

THE VEGETABLE FARMER UK | MARCH 2022

Rising costs and inflationary pressures are affecting almost every aspect of daily life, and farmers and growers are at the forefront. Caught between unprecedented rises in input prices for fuel, fertiliser, packaging, labour, imported items and transport, growers are desperate for price rises from their customers.

On the other hand, multiple retailers (who often set price trends across the wider market) are resisting significant increases as food remains a key element of their competitive price war. In addition, the general media increasingly focuses on the 'cost of living crisis' and campaigners such as food blogger Jack Monroe, highlight the effects rising food prices have on some of the poorest in society. To be fair, many retailers have responded to requests for higher prices and have offered what, in other circumstances, would be generous price rises. However, faced with the huge increases seen in the costs of energy, fertiliser and labour, for many producers they are simply not enough.

There is a certain irony in highlighting the part that food plays in the rising cost of living. Farm gate prices for many products barely covered the cost of production before recent cost rises, and the proportion of national income spent on food in the UK is amongst the lowest in Europe. Even with recent rises, the retail price of many food products is still less than 30 years ago when adjusted for inflation over that period. There is a problem with poverty in the UK, but good simple food has never been cheaper in real terms.

The Groceries Code Adjudicator comments that retailers are receiving an "unprecedented level of requests for cost price increases from suppliers," and says he is "conscious of the pressure that the scale of such requests creates for both suppliers and retailers." However, with the best will in the world, the effects of the price squeeze are already being felt. Glasshouses in the Lea Valley which would normally be filled with growing crops are sitting empty, and East of Scotland Growers is to cut its acreage by 25 per cent because of rising costs which are not covered by price rises.

These will not be isolated examples and the proportion of self-sufficiency in fresh produce, particularly salads and vegetables, looks set to fall further over the coming season. The Covid pandemic and the current unrest over Ukraine have highlighted the fragility of international food supply chains. At a time when the global agricultural outlook is increasingly uncertain due to political and environmental factors, such as climate change, exporting fresh produce production from the UK, where so many factors such as climate are ideal, will strike many as madness.


Not only that, but the uncertainties over weather that we have seen in previous years is likely to further reduce availability in stores and increase consumer prices even more.



# World Potato Congress 2022

## set to take place in Ireland

POTATO WORLD 2022



After editions in China and Peru, the 11-th edition of the World Potato Congress (WPC) will take place in Europe again this year. From 30 May to 2 June, the Irish capital of Dublin will be at the centre of information exchange within the global potato industry. Moreover, now after the corona intermezzo, potato professionals from all over the world will once again have the opportunity to get to know each other and, of course, the Irish sector.

'Ireland's early potato history is different from the rest of Europe', says Liam Glennon, spokesman of the Irish Local Organising Committee, straight away when we ask him why Ireland is interesting as the organising country for the 11-th World Potato Congress. 'As early as the year 1600, Sir Walter Raleigh introduced the crop to Ireland, after which the Irish immediately embraced it as their staple food. In the early nineteenth century, the population already ate 14 pounds (6 kilograms) of potatoes per capita per day. This great source of nutrition led to an enormous increase in the population. In the year 1780, Ireland had 4 million inhabitants, which had doubled to 8.15 million by 1831. The potato area expanded to 2 million acres, about 800,000 hectares. The mono-culture of the Lumper variety, a yellow-fleshed variety that did well, even on poor soils in Ireland, and which was not at all *Phytophthora* resistant, led to the disaster in 1845. In that year, *Phytophthora* – which had been brought in from North America with seed potatoes – not

only destroyed a large part of the potato crop, but also caused great losses in the storehouses. As many people were poor and depended on potatoes for their livelihood, the plague had catastrophic consequences, including food riots and mass deaths from starvation. This outbreak was called "The Great Irish Famine" and led to over 1 million deaths and caused a further 3 million people emigrating within a single generation', Liam Glennon said. To keep this dramatic event alive, a moving work of art has been created on the quay where many ships left for new countries, illustrating the harsh cruelty of Potato Blight. 'In addition the Famine also had a huge impact on the demographics and social history of many other countries. In the period from 1847 to 1981, 47 percent of all immigrants in the United States were of Irish descent. To date, the United States had had 46 Presidents and exactly half of these claimed Irish ancestry, including well-known names such as Kennedy, Bush, Reagan and the current President Joe Biden.





All of this has involved heavy investment, whereby the institute also works closely together with local businesses. One example is the breeding work, which has been carried out in collaboration with the Irish seed potato company IPM since 1962. One of the most successful varieties is Rooster, which dominates the table potato market in Ireland. 'As in all potato growing countries, the future has many challenges here, too.

Markets will continue to change, consumers will demand more sustainable products, and climate change will bring many challenges', points out the researcher in the greenhouse where various clones with possible successors for Rooster are growing. 'Besides Rooster, the Cara variety is a well-known international variety from Teagasc and IPM. Currently, the focus is on finding varieties with a broader resistance to *Phytophthora* and nematodes', Griffin explains. Looking at developments in potato breeding, the Irish specialist points out that this has been based on visual selection for many years, which he thinks is out of date now.

'Together with our researcher Dr Dan Milbourne, we've been developing new techniques for twenty years now. At the moment we're having success with the Buster variety', Griffin says. In the search for new varieties with new methods, Milbourne has used the stacking of R (resistance) genes. 'The process of variety breeding takes about 12 to 15 years. With the Marker Assisted Selection (MAS) technique, we can accelerate this process, because we can determine early in the cycle whether the resistance is present or not. This means that we can develop a variety with a high resistance level in a third of the time', Milbourne says with satisfaction. Despite this acceleration in the development of new varieties, he believes that traditional trial fields will continue to be used. 'Market suitability will have to be tested in practice, in the various regions where our varieties are cultivated. The Teagasc researchers expect a lot from new breeding techniques such as CRISPR/Cas9. 'With CRISPR/Cas9 you have an extra tool box available with which you can introduce new characteristics into a new variety in an even more targeted way. Hopefully the European Commission will soon release this new breeding technique, so that we can use it and make potato cultivation even more sustainable', the Teagasc researchers emphasise unanimously.



Many Irish immigrated to Liverpool, and it is no surprise that 3 members of the famous band The Beatles with John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison have Irish roots', says Glennon about the influence of the potato on global history. 'Today, the Irish potato growing area fluctuates around 9,000 hectares, and its approximately 5 million inhabitants consume around 87 kilograms of potatoes per capita annually. The Irish Rooster variety is by far the most important, with about a 65 percent market share', he estimates. To give you an impression of what that potato sector is all about, PotatoWorld travelled to Ireland last year for a preliminary exploration. Conversations with people from potato companies, but also with consumers underline the feeling that Ireland is a country where the potato is in the DNA of the population. In addition to various small packaging companies, the country also boasts local crisps and potato starch producers. Brexit, which has made it impossible to import seed potatoes from Scotland, has forced the country to import more seed potatoes from mainland Europe and to grow more of them within its borders.

#### VARIETY DEVELOPMENT CONTINUES

As in many Western countries, the potato production in Ireland is under pressure. As a result of changing eating habits, decreasing consumption, improved agronomy and higher yielding varieties, less area is needed. 'Throughout this period, there has been a continuous development of varieties in Ireland', Denis Griffin of the Teagasc Oak Park Research Institute tells us. In addition to research, important tasks of this research institute also include education and consultancy.





*'Currently, the focus is on finding varieties with a broader resistance to Phytophthora and nematodes', Dennis Griffin explains.*

### THE CHANGING WORLD OF THE POTATO

The manager also sees the WPC as a means of promoting the role of potatoes in initiating food security in developing countries. This, he thinks, also tackles the subject of 'hunger in the world'. 'We've been active in this for years, together with the Irish business world and the local Vita NGO. As Ireland, we support the WPC initiative to launch an International Potato Day on 30 May and are delighted that Dr Qu Dongyu, Director General of FAO, will be giving a keynote speech', Bourke emphasises. Following Bourke, spokesman Glennon of the Local Organising Committee announced that the overall theme of this year's conference is "The changing world of the Potato" where five sub-themes, namely Business, Health and Nutrition, Innovation, Development and Sustainability, have a central place. 'In the rapidly changing world, where chain costs are constantly rising worldwide, it's a question of continuing to fill the consumer's plate with potatoes. An important goal of WPC 2022 is to inspire people to put more potatoes on their plates. Here it's important to emphasise the strong health and nutritional and sustainable credentials of the potato. Professor Katherine Beals will give an interesting introduction on this subject. Another important trend is Sustainability and speakers will use this theme to highlight new developments, such as the Green Deal and the Farm to Fork strategy. Naturally, innovation will be an important part of that. For example, Professor Damien McLoughlin will present the new concept of the Smart Supermarket and perhaps he will explain what the potato sector can learn from this', Glennon names some of the many speakers and subjects at the Congress. The actual programme can be found on the WPC website in Ireland, [www.wpc2022ireland.com](http://www.wpc2022ireland.com).

Decreasing potato area in Ireland Major supermarket chains in Ireland are the local companies, namely Supervalu and Dunnes stores, each with a 20 per cent market share. In addition, foreign chains such as Tesco, Aldi and Lidl are also well represented. In order to supply these supermarkets with fresh potatoes, a total of about 700 potato growers are active in the country, 300 of which operate on a professional scale. This resulted in a total production of 294,370 tons in 2020, with a value of 82 million euros. 'The counties of Leinster and the hinterland around Cork are home to most professional farms. Counties such as Meath, Louth and Northern Dublin have traditionally been good for most potato farms, while Wexford and North Dublin grow the most early potatoes, mainly varieties such as Première and Queens. Rooster is now the dominant variety for the production and packaging of fresh table potatoes, with a market share of approximately 64 percent of household purchases in 2021 (Source: Kantar World Panel) and approximately 59 percent of the cultivation (Source: 2021 IFA crop survey), Bourke calculates. He goes on to say that the growers supply their potatoes to about ten central companies, which focus on grading and packaging potatoes on a large scale. Most of these companies focus on supplying the major retail supermarkets and food service channels. There are also a few companies that produce and sell crisps. The early potato market is different as it is limited to growers with "early land" and is active in the milder climates of the country. The growers in Ireland mainly focus on the cultivation of varieties with a relatively high dry-matter content for the Irish consumer, according to Bourke. 'The floury potato varieties with a high dry-matter content have traditionally complemented the historically strong butter culture and the dairy heritage', explains Bourke.



*'With the Marker Assisted Selection (MAS) technique, we can speed up the breeding process', says researcher Dan Milbourne with satisfaction.*



*'As Bord Bia, we also want to use the World Potato Congress to inform the Irish consumer about the benefits of the sustainable potato', Lorcan Bourke emphasises.*



*Spokesman Liam Glennon of the local organising committee announced that the overall theme of this year's conference is 'The changing world of the Potato'.*

#### Estimated production value on Irish farms. (DAFM Horticulture estimates)

Year	2019	2020
Production in tons	336.095	294.370
Average price in € /ton	330.000	280.000
Total value in €.000	110.911	82.424
Total potato area	8.043	8.614

#### Potato area (hectare) per farm, in the years 2011- 2021. (source: DAFM SFP)

SFP-listing	2011	2016	2021
Seed Potatoes	310	221	281
Main harvest	8.780	7.979	7.995
Early harvest	1.146	742	698
Total	10.236	8.942	8.974

#### Average potato yields of Kerr's Pink and Rooster varieties during the period 2013-2021 (tons per hectare)

Year	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021
Kerr's Pink	34.9	35.4	37.7	36.9	37.00	28.3	34.9	28.0	39.1
Rooster	36.6	40.8	45.5	42.9	48.11	33.1	45.8	36.1	48.6

#### LOOKING FOR CONVENIENCE PRODUCTS

To be able to offer fresh potatoes all year round, Ireland imports an additional quantity of potatoes each year. According to Bourke, about 75,000 tons of potatoes with a total value of 35 million euros were imported in 2020 (Source: CSO). He says that Ireland mainly imports potatoes for fresh French fries, early potatoes from Mediterranean areas and waxy salad potatoes. Consumers are also increasingly looking for convenience potato products. This, he argues, creates market opportunities. Ireland currently has no manufacturer of frozen potato products and imports substantial quantities of frozen French fries and other potato products, mainly from large-scale factories in Great Britain, Belgium and the Netherlands.



## SMALL CROP BIG RESULTS

The following caption shows how small a cover crop needs to be to gain long sturdy roots. This crop has only been planted 3 weeks.

### COMPETITION:

WHOSE HAND IS THIS – First to be right wins a tasty bottle of wine or a pack of beer

Email your answers to [enquiries@inta-ag.co.nz](mailto:enquiries@inta-ag.co.nz)

# For Sale

1 AVAILABLE IN OUR STORE  
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### Micron Varidome Inter-Row Sprayer



Horticulture sprayers from Micron Group can help growers improve weed control, reduce their dependence on the use of selective products and cut herbicide cost by offering a highly targeted and accurate spraying solution.

Employing innovative application technology, Varidome incorporates a fully shielded design for vegetables which can safely eradicate weeds growing in between rows of crops and in wheelings. With proven 95% drift reduction,

Varidome awards users improved chemical placement and enables the use of a wider range of herbicides, including non-selective products, allowing for effective removal of persistent weeds such as black grass.



Spray width can be adjusted on each individual shield enabling users to treat the desired bands in different crops and varying growth stages. Varidome Shields are mounted on individual carriages with ground following wheels for independent operation. This enables Varidome to follow the contours of the terrain keeping each shield in close contact with the ground to further minimise spray drift.

- Suitable for a wide range of crops
- Over 95% drift reduction
- Significantly reduced chemical and water usage
- Adjustable spray width to suit the crop
- Improved chemical targeting

For further information call Shane 021 806 565