

Welcome to the first issue of the Potatoes NZ e-newsletter; a source for regular updates on Potatoes NZ activities and events, for growers and the wider potato industry. Please email feedback or story ideas to kate.shannon@hortnz.co.nz

Stories included in this newsletter include:

A word from New Zealand Potatoes Chair Terry Olsen

Psyllid – Dr John Munyaneza visit's New Zealand's organic crops

Psyllid research; voluntary contribution

Malaysia worth a further look

How do potatoes stack up?

Potato promotion

A word from the Chair Terry Olsen...

Conditions have been particularly favourable for growth this year in the Manawatu/Horowhenua region. There has been abundant rainfall so far; sometimes too much, and grassland farmers are recording unsurpassed growth for this time of year. I also sense that the rural sector is becoming more positive about the economic conditions.

It appears that psyllid activity is not as intense as this time last year however time will tell.

The recent visit of Dr Joe Munyaneza generated some very good discussions which can only benefit growers. Joe was approachable and generous in sharing his knowledge and the resulting discussions were very necessary in helping New Zealand's growers to find solutions to the psyllid issue.

Joe was complimentary about the activities we are involved with in the potato industry. He was also quite mindful of the other disease pressures that potato crops are exposed to, and our need to be aware of these too. I would hope that the industry sees our investment in Joe's visit to be very worthwhile exercise indeed.

Psyllid – Dr Joe Munyaneza visit's New Zealand's organic crops

The field meetings and discussions with Dr Joe Munyaneza proved to be very popular with around 240 attending the six seminars. A scientist from the United States Department of Agriculture's Agricultural Research service, and based in Yakima, Washington, Dr Joe's visit was funded by Potatoes New Zealand.

As well as meeting with growers Dr Munyaneza or Joe as he likes to be called, also found time to be interviewed by two TV channels, visit tomato crops, organic potato crops, and spend two days with Plant and Food Research. Those meetings have resulted in proposals for three cooperative research projects between our scientists and Joe's laboratory in Washington; we will keep you updated on the developments over the coming months.

Psyllid research: voluntary contribution

A reminder that the first voluntary contribution for the period from 1 January to 31 March is due 31 March. Payments should be made to the Potatoes New Zealand Charitable Trust or by direct credit to the Trust at account number **02 0500 0966434 000**. As the payments are to the Potatoes NZ Charitable trust, payments are tax deductible.

The whole of industry is encouraged to participate, with the voluntary contribution set at \$1 per tonne of potatoes harvested and sold.

We have received some early contributions, which we are very grateful for. We will publish the total contribution collected to 31 March, together with the names of individual contributors, on www.potatoesnz.co.nz.

Malaysia worth a further look

A recent country evaluation study prepared for Potatoes New Zealand's Export Market Development Group identified Malaysia as the most promising market for fresh table potato exports.

The next three most desirable markets were Malaysia, Singapore, United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia.

The report reviewed the potential of selected ASEAN markets (Singapore, Malaysia, Indonesia, Philippines Thailand and Vietnam) and countries making up the Gulf Co-operation Council (Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Bahrain, UAE, Oman, Qatar).

Each country was evaluated on the estimated demand for table potatoes and feasibility criteria including regulatory barriers, accessibility, competitors and modern trade development.

How do potatoes stack up?

A stunning new potato nutrition booklet is to be added to our range of resources. Based entirely on the robust research summary compiled by Dr Carolyn Lister of Plant and Food Research we have updated one of our most popular nutrition resources.

Converting the research paper into layman's terms, this highly readable booklet intends to continue the process of clarifying the nutritional status of potatoes as we continue to shed the humble spud reputation in favour of a super-food one.

This publication will be widely distributed amongst media and key influencers. Both the complete Plant and Food Research paper and the new publication will be available off www.potatoes.co.nz within the next 2 weeks.

Potato Promotion

At this week's Potato Promotion meeting, strategies for the next twelve months were confirmed. Consumer research and maintaining a strong media presence were seen as the priorities. Details of new strategies will be presented in upcoming newsletters. If you would like more information please contact Glenda Gourley on gourley@xtra.co.nz