Potato Trade Topics

The Newsletter of the British Potato Trade Association

July 2013

Welcome ...

... to this the second issue of *Potato Trade Topics* — the new irregular e-newsletter for members of the British Potato Trade Association!

I am now into my second year as President of the Association and on 25th June I presided over the Association's 7th AGM. You can read a short report on the proceedings below.

Also included inside is a brief reprise of the Europatat Congress 2013 in Karlovy Vary (Carlsbad) in the Czech Republic which I attended earlier this summer.

I am sure that you will be interested in the introductions to the 3 new members of Council who took their places at the AGM. The BPTA Council and Secretariat would welcome feedback from members on the content of the newsletter. Please contact the BPTA Secretariat.

Andrew Skea
BPTA President

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BPTA AGM 2013

The 7th AGM of the Association took place on 25th June 2013. Once again we are indebted to SASA for making available free of charge its excellent lecture theatre with its first-rate IT services.

16 individuals representing 13 BPTA member companies attended and witnessed Andrew Skea, commencing his 2nd year as the 4th President of the BPTA Council, deliver his Report (a transcript of which has been sent to those on the BPTA email distribution list).

Andrew welcomed no less than 3 new Council members — see page 3 for pen pictures and paid tribute to the work of their predecessors - Ross Haynes (Pseedco Ltd), Alasdair MacLennan (Cygnet PB Ltd) David Murdie (Grampian Growers Ltd).

Maureen McCreath (SASA) guides members around the plots

The meeting carried unanimously motions to adopt the Association's Accounts for the year to 31st March 2013, appoint Henderson Loggie as the Association's accountants for the year to 31st March 2014 and set membership subscriptions for 2013-14.

The AGM was preceded by lunch and concluded with a guided tour of the world-renowned potato plots at SASA's Gogarbank Farm. Check out the BPTA Facebook page for some photographs of the day.

Highlights:

- Report on Europatat Congress 2013.
- Developments with Russia, Croatia and The Lebanon.
- Seed potato harmonization closer still!
- Pembrokeshire bid for protected geographical status.
- Europatat Activity Report.
- UK Plant Health Risk Register under development.
- Graham Bennett, David Chalmers and Jim McCreight join Council.
- Potatoes and the Marx Brothers.

Europatat Congress 2013

Andrew Skea was the sole BPTA representative at the 65th Europatat Congress hosted by the Ústřední bramborářský svaz – the Czech potato association in Karlsbad, Czech Republic, from 30th May til 1st June 2013.

The associated conference was themed: "EU enlargement after 2004 and its influence on the European potato trade" and there were presentations on the 'Current potato trade in the Czech Republic and Slovakia', 'Changing consumer buying attitudes in Central Europe' and the 'Development of the potato to market in the Eastern Europe and impact on production in the dominant countries'. Representatives attended from 19 different countries.

The formal Europatat business comprised the General Assembly and meetings of the 6 Commissions. Despite simultaneous timetabling Andrew managed to attend the Seed, Packers, Technical & Regulatory and RUCIP Commission meetings where the topics covered included Russian Market Access, Epitrix, consumption trends, school schemes, labeling, waste, potatoes and the CAP, review of Plant Health Directive, Polish Ring Rot and EU Review of Organic legislation issues.

Your Council remains committed to the BPTA playing a full part in Europatat. It is unwavering in its belief that influence in Brussels, where the important legislative decisions are taken, is of paramount importance to the future well-being of the UK potato industry.

Brussels Briefing ....

Despite intensive lobbying on several fronts the Russian phytosanitary authority - Rosselkhoznadzor - went ahead with its import restrictions on 1st July 2013. All potatoes are affected except ware packaged for retail sale. Negotiations continue in the hope that matters can be resolved in time for the next export season.

On a positive note the proposed rewrite of the EU Seed Potato Marketing Directive Annexes I and II have proceeded to a draft legal text and at last we seem to be on course for harmonisation of seed potato classes across Europe. Dr John Kerr of SASA - the UK representative on the Experts Working Group - deserves our gratitude for helping deliver this expected outcome.

Welcome to Croatia, the 28th member country of the European Union with effect from 1st July 2013. Croatia adds a further 200,000 tonnes of annual potato production to the EU total.

An application has been made to enter "Pembrokeshire Early Potatoes" in the EU register of protected geographical indications. Please visit the EU Commission´s website for more information.

Lebanese ware potatoes may soon be on the menu across the EU following a decision of the EC Standing Committee on Plant Health to grant market access for potatoes that satisfy certain plant health requirements and are grown in defined areas of Lebanon that are known to be free from potato ring rot - *Clavibacter michiganensis* ssp. *sepedonicus*. The legislation is expected to be in place by September 2013 and will require that the imported potatoes be subject to a rigorous inspection regime on arrival in the EU.

Want to know more about Europatat - our European Umbrella body? Download its Activity Report 2012-13.

... and back in Blighty!

Defra has embarked on a major initiative to catalogue a UK Plant Health Risk Register. This is one of the key recommendations of the Tree Health and Plant Biosecurity Expert Taskforce which was set up in the wake of the Chalara dieback of ash (*Chalara fraxinea*) outbreak.

Representatives of the BPTA participated in a potato plant health stakeholder workshop on 3rd July as part of a fortnight programme of such workshops to produce a comprehensive prioritised register of risks to plant health across the UK.

The aim is to populate the risk register by September 2013 with the near 800 pests/diseases listed in EU plant health legislation, and those recommended for regulation by EPPO (the European and Mediterranean Plant Protection Organisation). Defra will then move onto a second phase of work including valuation of plants, quantification of probabilities and impacts, timescales of spread, evaluation of mitigation measures, regionalisation and managing uncertainty.

Meet the new Council members!

Graham Bennett — Director at Wolds Produce Ltd since 2012. Wolds market over 70,000 tonnes of potatoes each season from the processing to the packing market. Graham was previously Seed Development Manager and helped Wolds grow its seed potato portfolio to around 450 acres of high grade seed from mini tuber to commercial grade. On leaving school Graham served an apprenticeship as an Agricultural Engineer for an International Harvester dealership before finding a sure footing in sales.

He lives in his native North Yorkshire with his wife Beck and their 3 sons: George - 13, Harry - 12 and Charlie - 7 where he enjoys mountain biking particularly in the North Yorkshire Moors National Park.

Graham Bennett

David Chalmers

David Chalmers - General Manager (Scotland) at Higgins Agriculture Ltd for the last year. David obtained his BSc Agric at Aberdeen University in1985 and a Masters in Human Resource Management at Robert Gordon University in 2005.

He has a background in farming at Northburn, Turriff between1985-2002, growing up to 240 acres of seed potatoes. He successfully switched career to become the Scottish Enterprise Client Manager advising new and high growth businesses across Grampian before moving on to Higgins first as Seed Production Manager before taking up his current position.

David is married to Maretta, a midwife at Banff and they have two sons and a daughter ages 24, 21 and 19. When not growing potatoes he enjoys coaching, playing and watching cricket, squash, swimming and Munro-bagging.

Jim McCreight — has grown potatoes for over 30 years supplying the processing industry and other contract growers. Since forming S J McCreight (Potatoes) Ltd in 1983 the emphasis has been on producing certified seed potatoes for the Irish, UK & export markets.

S J McCreight (Potatoes) Ltd exports seed and ware potatoes worldwide, trading in both protected and free varieties. Based in the heart of Co. Down, an area widely renowned for growing healthy seed and close to ports, the company has its own refrigerated box stores and grading station.

Jim is a director in Potato Partners NI (PPNI), a consortium of N.Ireland potato breeders and seed exporting merchants. The group is the commercial partner of AFBI (Agri-food and Biosciences Institute) for the world wide marketing for AFBI bred varieties. PPNI also represent New Zealand Plant and Food varieties in the EU.

Jim McCreight

BPTA Council 2013–14

BPTA Council 2013 From left to right Colin Herron, Charlie Greenslade (Secretary) Gerard Croft, Tony Barnes, Vincent Lumb, Jim McCreight, Andrew Skea, John Addams-Williams, Philip Burgess, Graham Bennett, Paul Wood, David Chalmers and Martin Cockerill. Not in photograph Nigel Allam, Russ Kelsey and Graeme Prentice.

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The Newsletter of the British Potato Trade Association

The British Potato Trade Association (BPTA) was created from the merger of the National Association of Seed Potato Merchants (NASPM) and the Scottish Potato Trade Association (SPTA) in July 2006. This union has resulted in an Association with the widest UK potato industry representation possible.

The bulk of the tonnage of seed potatoes traded in Great Britain for both the home and export markets (between 250,000 & 300,000 tonnes annually) is handled by the 120 members of the new Association. This gives the Association greater negotiating power on behalf of its members. The BPTA covers all aspects of potato production and sales, both at home and for the export trade.

British Potato Trade Association
12 Buckstone Hill
Edinburgh
EH10 6TH

Phone: 0131 623 0183
Fax: 0131 623 5295
E-mail: charlie.greenslade@bpta.org.uk
Website: www.bpta.org.uk
Visit the BPTA on Facebook - www.facebook.com/pages/British-Potato-Trade-Association/194306840598831
The BPTA Office is open Monday-Thursday between the hours of 8.30am and 1.30pm

Charlie Greenslade
BPTA Secretary

Hello. I am Charlie Greenslade, Secretary of the British Potato Trade Association. If you have any questions about the Association or your membership then please do not hesitate to contact me at the times and address noted above.

Be Part of The Association

Potatoes and the Marx Brothers

"Such was MGM chief Irving Thalberg's hectic schedule that even VIPs were often obliged to wait many weeks for an appointment - not to mention many minutes (or hours), on the "million-dollar bench" in Thalberg's anteroom, for the actual meeting.

When the Marx Brothers moved from Paramount to MGM in 1935, they arranged to meet with Thalberg at ten o'clock one morning. They arrived on time, waited several hours, were told to come back the next day at two o'clock, and left. Though they did meet with Thalberg the next day, he was an hour late. "Now, look, Mr Thalberg," Groucho said angrily, "we've been stars in three Broadway shows, in Vaudville and in motion pictures. When we have an appointment we are accustomed to having it kept. Yesterday we waited four hours and finally left. Today we were kept waiting an hour. In the future, don't ever call us unless we can see you at the appointed hour."

Thalberg apologized and promised to be more responsible. At the Marx Brothers' next meeting, he had them ushered into his office at the appointed time but was soon called away on urgent business. "Okay, let's show him," Harpo suggested. The brothers agreed and, after pushing Thalberg's filing cabinets against the door, climbed out through the window and left.

Sure enough, at their next meeting, Thalberg was right on time but was called away on urgent business once again. This time Harpo got some potatoes from the commissary kitchen and Chico and Groucho built a roaring fire in the office fireplace. When Thalberg returned, he found his visitors sitting by the fire roasting potatoes - completely naked! "Wait a minute, boys," he playfully ordered - and promptly had the commissary deliver some butter for the potatoes. He never walked out on the Marx Brothers again."

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