



**What do I get for my levy?**  
An overview of how the potato levy is  
invested and the services available to you

# Voting in the Potatoes ballot

**A ballot on the continuation of the statutory potato levy will open on Wednesday 17 February and be centred on a single yes/no question on whether the statutory levy should continue.**

The ballot will be delivered by UK Engage, an independent election services provider that will issue papers and count all the votes. You can find out more about them at [www.uk-engage.org](http://www.uk-engage.org)

UK Engage will issue voting papers to levy-payer businesses in the week commencing 15 February 2021.

## Who can vote?

If you have paid potato levy to AHDB in the 12 months preceding the end of this ballot on 17 March 2021, you are eligible to vote. If you pay more than one levy, then you will receive one vote per unique levy-payer number. Votes will all be verified against levy payment records.

More on eligibility criteria can be found at: [ahdb.org.uk/potato-ballot-faqs](http://ahdb.org.uk/potato-ballot-faqs)

## How to vote

Voting will be via post or online. Business owners of all levy-paying businesses will receive a pack through the post that will provide the detail on how to cast a vote.

## When does the ballot close?

The ballot will be open from Wednesday 17 February to midnight on Wednesday 17 March.

## Contents

- |           |  |           |  |
|-----------|--|-----------|--|
| <b>3</b>  | <b>Have your say – make sure you vote</b>                | <b>14</b> | <b>Consumer marketing campaigns</b>  |
| <b>4</b>  | <b>AHDB Chair's introduction</b>                         | <b>16</b> | <b>Potato agronomy and crop protection</b>                                   |
| <b>5</b>  | <b>Potato Chair's introduction</b>                       | <b>19</b> | <b>Case study: protecting the industry from a changing blight population</b> |
| <b>6</b>  | <b>How your levy is invested</b>                         | <b>20</b> | <b>Strategic Potato Farms</b>  |
| <b>8</b>  | <b>Investing £500,000 each year on storage research</b>  | <b>23</b> | <b>Case study: SPot hosts on target for £65 per hectare savings</b>          |
| <b>10</b> | <b>Case study: DMN emergency approval</b>                |           |  |
| <b>11</b> | <b>Robust, impartial market information and analysis</b> |           |  |
| <b>12</b> | <b>Export market development</b>                         |           |  |
| <b>13</b> | <b>Education</b>   |           |  |

### Photography credits:

All images are copyright of AHDB, except the below, which are copyright to the following:  
Page 10 and 16 © Gary Naylor Photography

# Have your say – make sure you vote

Have your voice heard. Should the potatoes levy continue?

## A 'Yes' vote means:

- KEEPING independent storage research, agronomy and crop protection work
- MORE levy-payer say on what we deliver for you and reduced costs
- NEW proposed changes to the potato levy system, including flood relief on levy payments
- YOU get to vote on the levy every five years



## A 'No' vote:

- STOPS – £1.8m a year of independent research on storage, agronomy and crop protection
- STOPS – Consumer marketing campaigns and export market development
- STOPS – Educating 420,000 children a year with Grow Your Own Potatoes
- STOPS – SPot Farms, Fight Against Blight and one-to-one store visits



**A 'Yes' vote is a vote for change!**



## Tell us what you think

We're committed to putting you at the heart of what we deliver. If you have ideas about what we do, please join one of our online 'Town Hall' meetings (see dates on back page), or give me a call. Have your say. Make sure you vote.

**Rob Clayton**, Strategy Director Potatoes

**E:** [rob.clayton@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:rob.clayton@ahdb.org.uk)

**T:** 07771 817083

For more information: [ahdb.org.uk/potato-levy](https://ahdb.org.uk/potato-levy)



# AHDB Chair's introduction

## Levy payers must drive what we do

When I was appointed chair of AHDB last year, it was to deliver the change levy payers had requested through Defra's request for views.

You must control where your levy is invested, and to make that possible we must get better at communicating with you and listening to the challenges you face.

There are no shortages of challenges facing the potato industry. In my view, there has never been a time when the industry has more needed a central organisation able to deliver a collective response. Through the levy, we are able to deliver a broad range of services, from research on crop protection, storage and soil health to marketing campaigns, Grow Your Own Potatoes and exports. An important part of our role is reacting to the pressures you face.

The recent emergency approval (EA) granted for sprout suppressant DMN is a good example of this work. It is not typical for EAs to be granted for products that have never been approved in the UK. Our expertise, research evidence and work with government, trade associations and industry were absolutely vital in securing that approval at a critical hour for the industry.

## A 'Yes' vote in the ballot is a vote for change

We know that growers want AHDB to be a lean, efficient and transparent organisation and we are committed to making that happen. Our new strategy sets out how we will reduce bureaucracy, focus on key activities and improve the way we engage with levy payers.

A different approach to AHDB's planning and budgeting – starting with what you want us to deliver – means you will be at the heart of deciding what we spend and where. A 'Yes' vote is a vote to deliver this change.

This document outlines in more detail what you get for your levy, as well as what you may lose if the levy was to go.

**Nicholas Saphir**  
AHDB Chair



## Our five commitments to you

- We will communicate regularly on how your levy has been spent and the benefits – engaging with levy payers to determine priorities
- We are working with growers and the supply chain to design a modern levy system
- We will focus on farm performance, marketing and exports, driven by independent evidence
- We will develop a board and advisory structure that reduces both bureaucracy and costs
- We will hold a regular ballot on the future of the levy – so you can express your views on the value of AHDB to your business

To see the strategy, go to: [ahdb.org.uk/strategy](https://ahdb.org.uk/strategy)

# Potato Chair's introduction

The potato industry and especially growers are facing unprecedented levels of pressure. It is therefore not surprising that every cost is coming under scrutiny, including whether to continue paying a levy.

I am passionate about the change that AHDB wants to deliver. We have committed to a complete overhaul of costs to reduce overheads and operate more efficiently and transparently.

As announced in July, we are reviewing the levy-collection mechanism, which for potatoes includes the introduction of claw-back relief for unsold crop.

## Protecting your crop

Crop protection matters to everyone. Here, AHDB will continue to provide independent and unbiased research, taking a balanced approach to testing alternative actives, as well as environmentally sustainable options.

Much of this work is delivered through our Strategic Potato (SPot) Farm network. This unique network is an ideal forum for an ambitious programme of work, as growers can see research in action at a real farm and speak to the grower, agronomist and researcher at one event. At our host farms, we have conducted research on everything from protecting seed from virus to using the natural properties of varieties to improve storage practices.

Storage research remains a big priority in our new strategy, and we will continue to invest in an independent centre of storage excellence and experienced scientists.

UK consumers love potatoes in all their various guises, but we have a job to do to modernise perceptions. We will continue to invest in recipe-led marketing to communicate messages about nutrition, speed, flexibility – starting with our new campaign this February.

As a final note, please be aware that a 'No' vote could mean the end of the levy and the end of all the work programmes described in the following pages. A 'Yes' vote is a vote for change and a continuation of independent evidence and support.

### **Alison Levett**

Interim Potatoes Sector Chair



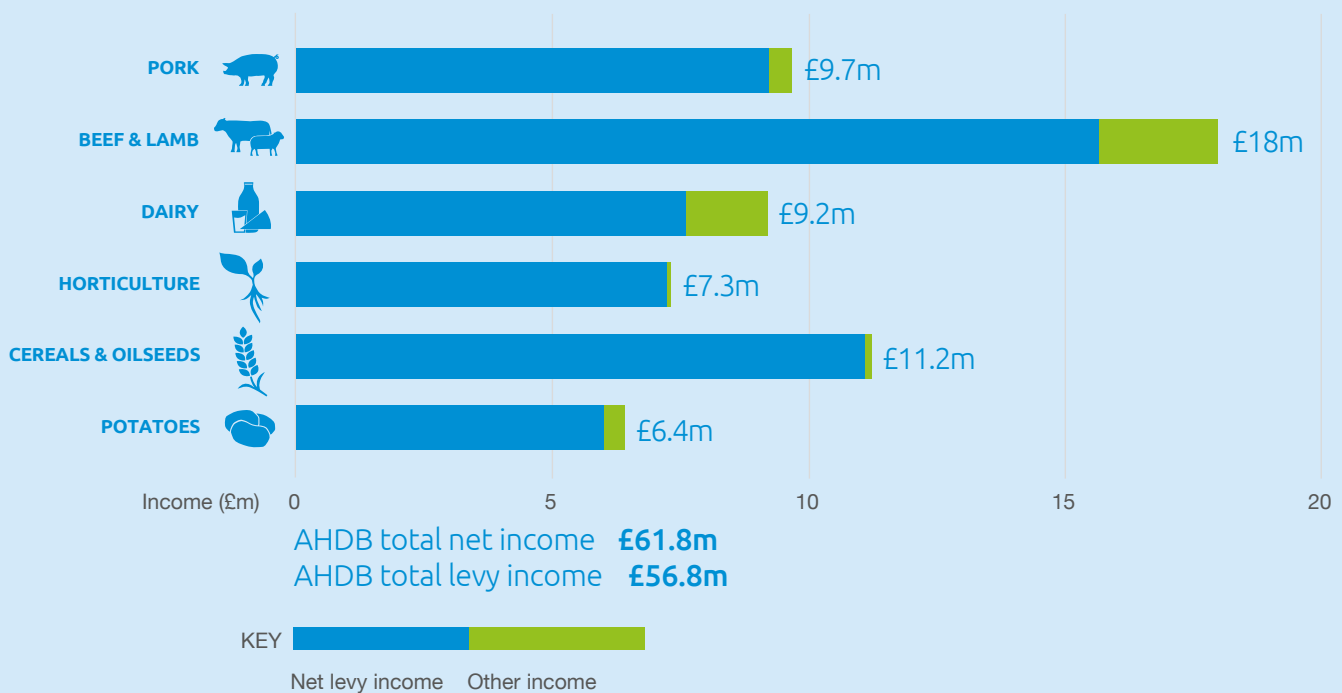
“ I am passionate about the change that AHDB wants to deliver. We are reviewing the levy-collection mechanism, which includes the introduction of claw-back relief for unsold crop ”

To see more from AHDB Potatoes: [ahdb.org.uk/potatoes](https://ahdb.org.uk/potatoes)

# How your levy is invested

## Income

Potato income (levy and non-levy) for the financial year 2020/21 is estimated to be £6.4 million. In the context of AHDB's total estimated income, this compares as follows:



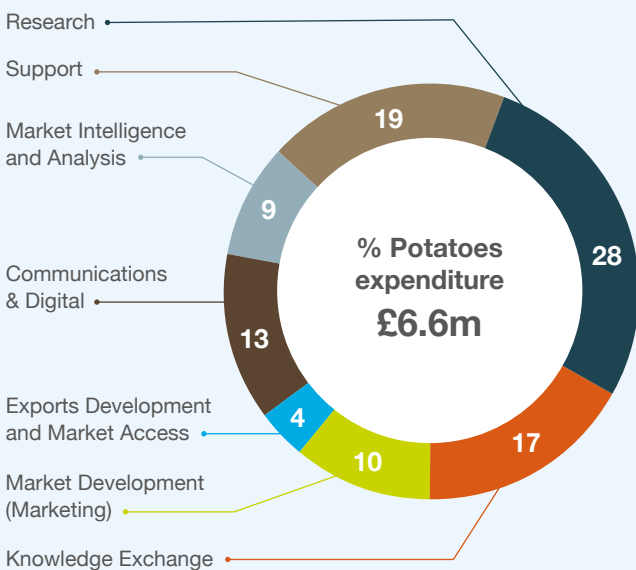
\*The majority of Potatoes non-levy income is related to commercial research projects completed at Sutton Bridge Crop Storage Research.

“We are committed to becoming more efficient across all parts of the organisation. The first step will be to streamline AHDB to deliver savings in staff and support costs”



## Expenditure

Our planned expenditure in Potatoes for this financial year (2020/21) is £6.6 million. This is slightly higher than estimated income for the 2020/21 financial year, as agreed with the AHDB Potatoes Board.



### Research (28%) & Knowledge Exchange (17%)

We invest in applied research, focused on providing practical outcomes for levy payers. This includes our leading independent storage projects that have provided practical advice on how to store potatoes without CIPC.

Our research work also includes projects on soil health, nutrient management, crop protection, desiccation and more. This work leads to publications such as our *RB209 Nutrient Management Guide*, which is used in 76% of potato and horticulture nutrition plans.

Our knowledge exchange programme includes the field trials delivered via our Strategic Potato Farm network – where 92% of levy payers who have been to events say they improved their technical knowledge and 86% say they gained something to improve productivity or efficiency.

### Market Development (10%) and Exports Development & Market Access (4%)

AHDB market development activities include both our consumer marketing and education work in schools.

Our successful potato marketing campaigns are powered by the consumer insight funded by your levy – we are able to identify the most cost-effective target audiences to maximise impact. Recent campaigns have seen gains of 12% more consumers agreeing potatoes are healthy and 17% more recognising potatoes are fat-free.

Through our continuing Grow Your Own Potatoes project in primary schools, we've helped over five million children learn where their food comes from since 2005.

We are working with the governments of Egypt, Morocco, Thailand, Canary Islands and Israel, which are our top five export markets. Representing 70% of seed export trade, our work is to ensure these markets and customers retain confidence in UK seed post-Brexit.

### Market Intelligence & Analysis (9%)

Our robust data-validation processes ensure the prices we quote, via our emails and *Farmers Weekly* and *Farmers Guardian*, are representative of the market – we cover over 1.5 million tonnes of first-purchase potatoes through our weekly calls. We also provide vital analysis on changes in policy, legislation and consumer behaviour.

### Communications & Digital (13%)

Our Communications & Digital teams work closely with colleagues across the organisation to create and deliver a wide range of tools and resources for levy payers. This includes the face-to-face and online events like the SPot Farm meetings, publications such as *Arable Focus*, and websites, apps and articles to ensure that research output and knowledge is relevant and accessible.

### Support (19%)

Potatoes make a proportionate contribution to AHDB's back-office functions supporting delivery. This includes a share of Finance, HR, Facilities and IT costs. The cost of running the AHDB Potatoes Board and sector-specific function is also included.

As outlined in the new AHDB strategy, we are committed to be more efficient across all parts of the organisation. The first step will be to streamline AHDB to deliver savings in staff and support costs.

Note: Staff costs are included in each area of spend, e.g. Research and Knowledge Exchange, Market Development, etc.

To find out more, go to: [ahdb.org.uk/potato-levy](https://ahdb.org.uk/potato-levy)

# Investing £500,000 each year on storage research

**We invest in independent storage research, to help protect the circa 3.2m tonnes of potatoes that enter British stores each year. These potatoes have an estimated value of between £550–600m at farmgate prices, and storage losses in any year can cost levy payers as much as a combined £65m.**

Our aim through our storage research, advice and support is to help you reduce these losses – a 25% reduction could result in over £15m per year of savings for levy payers.

## Independent research you can trust

The levy funds research to identify how best to store potatoes without CIPC, optimise the performance and cost-effectiveness of your store and improve disease control.

In the last three years, your has levy helped to:

- Deliver research and trials on how to get the best from alternatives to CIPC like maleic hydrazide, mint oil, ethylene and DMN
- Build industry knowledge of the natural dormancy of 40 of the most popular varieties in Britain
- Produce the universally used step-by-step guidance on store cleaning and removal of CIPC residue

The levy has funded our storage experts to deliver a total of 18 storage projects, most over three years, since 2018.

## What will a 'No' vote mean?

- Ongoing research projects developing new sprout suppression solutions would stop
- There would be no British centre of excellence for potato storage research
- The provision of independent advice and best-practice guidance would cease
- The independent research data and technical experts that contribute to emergency approval applications would be lost
- The production line of expertise and best-practice training that has benefitted the majority of storage experts in this country would be cut
- The evidence source relied on by trade associations and lobbyists would no longer exist

## One-to-one support from established experts

We are committed to providing one-to-one support to levy payers who store. Your levy funds:

- Our Storage Network, providing free face-to-face advice in your store
- A freephone storage advice line, to help you quickly assess developing situations in your store
- Over 40 regional and digital storage events in three years, plus publications including our Store managers' guide, articles, online tools, video and podcasts

## Storage Network – independent advice in your store

We will send an independent expert to visit your store to provide practical advice bespoke to your situation. We provided over 100 visits, covering more than 300,000 tonnes of stored potatoes, in 2020.

## What levy payers say:

Tom MacFarlane, Farm Manager at Ward Farming Ltd, Lincolnshire, said, "The Storage Network visit was very useful. Having an independent professional in my own store, I got some good tips on improving airflow to help sprout suppressants work at their best."

**Levy payers can book a free visit from the AHDB Storage Network on 01406 359419.**

## Working for British industry where it counts

AHDB's storage research team provides a wide range of 'behind the scenes' work on behalf of the industry, including:

- Running the industry stewardship programmes that are essential for your access to chemistry, such as the Potato Industry CIPC Stewardship Group, as we move to the new temporary maximum residue level
- Providing data and technical input to national or international protocols, including the Europe-wide guidance on cleaning potato stores to remove CIPC residue
- Providing evidence to secure emergency-use authorisations, for example with the recent DMN approval



## What levy payers say

“ AHDB’s storage team are experts who will give us the right information. We’ve got to use it if we want to get better ”

Mark Means, J.S. Means Ltd, Norfolk



## Meet the team

### **Adrian Cunnington, Head of Sutton Bridge Crop Storage Research (CSR)**

Adrian has worked at Sutton Bridge CSR since the mid-1980s. He has been in charge at the Sutton Bridge site for over 30 years, overseeing the research team and, as a BASIS-qualified trainer, delivering advice to producers and suppliers.

**E: [adrian.cunnington@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:adrian.cunnington@ahdb.org.uk)**



### **Adrian Briddon, Crop Storage Senior Scientist**

Adrian joined Sutton Bridge CSR in 1989. He has developed specialist knowledge on sprout control after working on projects over several years and is a qualified BASIS trainer. He is also secretary of the CIPC Stewardship Group.

**E: [adrian.briddon@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:adrian.briddon@ahdb.org.uk)**



### **Glyn Harper, Crop Storage Senior Scientist**

Glyn joined the team at Sutton Bridge CSR in 2008 from the John Innes Centre at Norwich. He leads trials on pathology and currently also works on dormancy, CO<sub>2</sub> and the use of ethylene sprout suppressant. He is a co-chair of the Post-Harvest section of the European Association for Potato Research.

**E: [glyn.harper@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:glyn.harper@ahdb.org.uk)**



Find out more at: [ahdb.org.uk/storage-hub](http://ahdb.org.uk/storage-hub)



# Case study: DMN emergency approval

## Ensuring £20m worth of processing crops could be supplied by British farms

In November, we secured an emergency authorisation (EA) for the use of as-yet-unapproved sprout suppressant 1,4 dimethylnaphthalene (DMN), marketed as 1,4 SIGHT®.

The successful application for some processing varieties was the end of a long and complex journey, which began in the summer, when we received contact from approval holder DormFresh to say that they would not be able to complete an application for full approval of DMN in time for the 2020 storage season.

An initial application for an EA to allow use for the whole industry was rejected by the Chemical Regulations Division (CRD) of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This was on the grounds that we would need to prove why other alternatives, like mint oil and ethylene, could not work in any sector that received approval, and as the product is not yet approved, we had to demonstrate that waste potatoes could be segregated and not fed to livestock.

Will Shakeshaft, Managing Director, Spearhead, said, “Without an organisation like AHDB, this EA would not have happened. Success relied on a unique combination of knowledgeable individuals who could tease out what was needed, provision of independent evidence to prove the need for DMN by individual variety and a track record of delivering stewardship programmes.”

It is hoped that an application for full use of DMN for the whole industry will be completed by September and that there will not be the need for waste segregation.

### DMN EA timeline

May: News that DMN would not get full approval for 2020



June: Initial application for industry-wide use made by AHDB. Rejected by CRD



July: Evidence gathering; working with industry and trade associations to support application; stewardship planning



August: Revised application submitted by AHDB



September–October: Further information requests and consideration by CRD



November: Application successful – emergency use granted based on certain varieties’ need and supply-chain assurances around waste management

# Robust, impartial market information and analysis

## Weekly market prices

No other provider has as robust data-validation processes to ensure the prices we quote are representative of the market.

We produce a weekly average price on a Tuesday, and a breakdown by market sector in *Potato Weekly* on a Friday – they're viewed over 20,000 times each month. We also provide the prices you see in *Farmers Weekly* and *Farmers Guardian*.



**1.5m**  
tonnes of  
first-purchase potatoes

Covered in our weekly trade survey to deliver average price reports

## National data based on solid evidence

Our reports are based on the information you submit to us when paying the levy, or from surveying our over 400-strong grower panel. The way we deliver our information and assemble the panel follows ISO 9001 processes to ensure quality and impartiality of information.

### Our data:

- Planted area by region, market and variety
- Production by region and market
- Lifting progress with yield and quality reports
- In-season stock reports by region and subsector

## What will a 'No' vote mean?

- No independent price information, anywhere
- A loss of the largest independent data and analysis source as we leave the EU
- Levy-paying businesses lose access to detailed information about the market, consumers and potatoes

## Evidence when it is needed

During times of crisis, like the coronavirus pandemic, we have provided robust evidence that officials and the Government trust.

For example, we identified that 188,576 tonnes of fresh chipping and bag market potatoes were in stock when the first lockdown started in March gave context and detail to the industry. More importantly, it gave accurate data that supported changes to marketing strategies, contingency planning and promotional activity.

## EU exit – navigating the storm

We produce regular articles and reports that look in depth at the policy and trade issues facing levy payers. There is also a business impact calculator and other tools at [ahdb.org.uk/eu-exit](http://ahdb.org.uk/eu-exit)

On that page you will find recordings of our recent briefings, or you can email the team on [brexit.questions@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:brexit.questions@ahdb.org.uk)

## Meet the team

### David Eudall, Head of Market Specialists (Arable)

David spent five years as a grain trader following his Economics degree. He joined AHDB, via the Home-Grown Cereals Authority, in 2009.

E: [david.eudall@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:david.eudall@ahdb.org.uk)



### Alice Bailey, Senior Analyst Potatoes

Alice worked for Charles Jackson & Co. Ltd and Wellpak (UK) Ltd following her Agriculture and Crop Management degree from Harper Adams. She joined AHDB in 2019.

E: [alice.bailey@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:alice.bailey@ahdb.org.uk)



### David Swales, Head of Strategic Insight

David has authored a number of AHDB's Brexit reports. He has provided evidence on this topic to parliamentary select committees, ministers, civil servants and levy payers.

E: [david.swales@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:david.swales@ahdb.org.uk)





# Export market development

## Your levy helps us work with the governments of top export destinations to keep markets open post-EU exit.

We have worked with the governments of Egypt, Morocco, Thailand, Canary Islands and Israel, our top five destinations, which account for 70% of the estimated £55m annual seed export trade, to ensure these markets and customers retain confidence in UK seed post-Brexit.

In 2019, we visited Egypt, with partners from Scottish Government, and received assurances that legislation was in place to allow the continued supply of British seed potatoes post-Brexit, paving the way for the trade deals that followed.

## Keeping market access and 'opening' new countries

We work with Science and Advice for Scottish Agriculture (SASA) and with the UK's Department of International Trade to liaise with overseas plant health authorities on an official government-to-government level.

We run official inward and outward missions with key markets, both existing and new.

## Future trade with the EU

AHDB is working with government to ensure that sufficient evidence is presented to the EU Standing Committee on Plant Health in the anticipation of a quick resolution and the awarding of third-country equivalence for GB seed potatoes. The next EU Standing Committee on Plant Health was on 28 January.

## Safe Haven and protecting the national crop

Safe Haven was set up by AHDB and the British seed industry in 2005 to provide additional protection for the British potato industry and its customers from bacterial ring rot. The scheme uses scientifically robust protocols to ensure best practice for seed growing and handling and requires businesses that are members of the scheme to be audited annually to ensure compliance.

## What will a 'No' vote mean?

- No funding for export trade missions
- A loss of the funding and people available to fight the next industry-threatening disease via Safe Haven
- Withdrawal of representation and support for British Seed potatoes on a global platform

Gerry Sadler, Chief Plant Health Officer for Scotland and Head of SASA, said, "AHDB Potatoes funding was instrumental in ensuring *Dickeya solani* was kept out of Scotland, which ultimately benefitted the whole GB industry and led to the elimination of this threat from our production system. I would be concerned should there be no AHDB Potatoes funding in future as this may ultimately damage our industry and make us less resilient to face the constant challenges posed by pests and diseases."



“ AHDB’s investment in potato exports is essential. It provides the platform for exporters, AHDB and SASA to conduct official inward and outward missions with key existing and potential new markets. We also value the practical benefits funded through AHDB, such as the SPot Farms, agronomy research and marketing. AHDB is an intrinsic help to our industry ”

Robert Doig – Director, Caledonia Potatoes

# Education

## Educating over five million primary-school children with Grow Your Own Potatoes (GYOP).

We've helped over five million children learn where their food comes from since 2005 through our GYOP project in primary schools.

Over 10,000 schools take part each year – that's over half the primaries in Britain!

The seed for the project is donated by the industry, making it a fantastic example of industry cooperation, as well as a success.

## What teachers say about Grow Your Own Potatoes

Kaylee Hopkins, Head of Year 3, Leader of Science, DT and STEM at Beavers Community School, Hounslow, said, "GYOP was the perfect project to provide valuable teaching and learning experiences in possibly the most challenging time in school!

"The children became potato farmers for a short time after planting the seeds to harvesting our winning produce. After harvesting the bumper crop, the children made chips with them and there were even enough to take some home."

“ We are so grateful for GYOP and delighted that our hard work paid off and we won an awesome prize for the school. Thank you! ”

Kaylee Hopkins, Beavers Community School, Hounslow

## What levy payers say about Grow Your Own Potatoes

"I have been involved in supporting GYOP since I joined Branston 13 years ago and I have seen it really grow and gather momentum over that time," said Jackie Baker, Communications Manager, Branston Limited (seed supplier).

"It's so great to see just how much the children get out of growing their own potatoes and it really helps to connect them with where their food comes from. I am so pleased that so many schools still managed to grow their own potatoes this season despite all the challenges of 2020. I think it really shows that it's seen as a valuable and worthwhile project for schools to take part in."



## What will a 'No' vote mean?

- A loss of dedicated potato education expertise
- Losing the funding for Grow Your Own Potatoes
- No potato voice in the Food – a fact of life programme

## Working with the British Nutrition Foundation throughout the national lockdown

Levy from all sectors funds a programme of work with the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) called 'Food – a fact of life'. It aims to promote knowledge and skills about where food comes from, as well as cooking and healthy eating, among young people.

A remote-learning portal was available throughout the national coronavirus lockdowns.

## Meet the teams

### Patrick Hughes, Head of Export Trade Development – Potatoes

Patrick works with GB potato exporters to explore further opportunities overseas. Previously, Patrick was the Head of Seafood Scotland, which markets, promotes and develops market opportunities for the Scottish seafood industry, and has spent over 20 years working across the agri-food sector.

E: [patrick.hughes@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:patrick.hughes@ahdb.org.uk)



### Sue Lawton, Education Manager

Sue started working for AHDB in 1998. She is now part of the AHDB education team working on the 'Food – a fact of life' programme in partnership with the British Nutrition Foundation (BNF) and has successfully managed GYOP since 2007, reaching over 50% of all primary schools in GB with positive messages about potatoes.

E: [sue.lawton@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:sue.lawton@ahdb.org.uk)





# Consumer marketing campaigns

**Promoting the benefits and protecting the reputation of one of Britain's favourite foods.**

## Potatoes: more than a bit on the side (2015–2018)

Budget: €4.6m – half from levy collected in Britain by AHDB and Ireland by Bord Bia, and half from EU matched funding.

Consumption increased during each of the three years of the campaign, while we delivered gains of 12% more consumers agreeing potatoes are healthy and 17% more recognising potatoes are fat-free.

The campaign was aimed at women aged 25–44 – a group selected as most valuable to the future of the sector due to the influence they have over new families' eating habits.

## Summer lockdown campaign (May–July 2020)

Our campaign was revived in 2020 to ensure potatoes stayed front and centre while people had more time at home. We even ran our advertising on catch-up TV for the first time, as ads played on ITV catch-up during *Britain's Got Talent* and *Who Wants to Be a Millionaire*.

We also advertised on social media and outside supermarkets. Overall, the ads were seen over five million times.

## Busting the myths and placing positive PR

### Reputational support, website and social media

We have created and fund the Food Advisory Board (FAB) – a group of independent, media-friendly scientists and nutritionists that are on hand to squash potato myths before or after they make the press.

### What will a 'No' vote mean?

- No marketing campaigns promoting the health benefits of potatoes
- No independent body fighting myths about potatoes in the mainstream media
- lovepotatoes.co.uk and social media accounts shut down

FAB also writes stories for the press; their first piece in 2019 was about Britain's 'perfect chip'.

Our [lovepotatoes.co.uk](http://lovepotatoes.co.uk) website gets over 75K page views a month, while the social media accounts on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter have over 276K active followers.



'The perfect chip' feature was seen 1.7 billion times in the UK and got coverage across 44 national and regional press titles, including *The Daily Express*, *Mirror*, *MailOnline*, *Independent* and *Metro*, along with a brilliant feature on *BBC Breakfast* on TV.





## Winter/Spring 2021 – New campaign, new creative designs!

### Promoting jacket potatoes with a targeted approach

This winter, we are launching a new campaign with a £150,000 budget. Taking advantage of more people being at home during the day, we will be promoting jacket potatoes as a versatile, hot, filling lunch.

Our consumer insight work has shown that potato sales overall this year are up circa 5%, but we need to ensure potatoes stay relevant, particularly to younger consumers. We think there is a great opportunity to promote all the great features of potatoes, like: versatility, health, taste, value, convenience and sustainability.

Look out for the new videos in February, which provide great recipe ideas to suit a variety of tastes. You can get involved in the campaign by sharing them on social media!

### Consumers are changing, how do we keep up?

We invest your levy in detailed research about British consumers – meaning we go deeper than basic levels of knowledge, like age and gender, when we talk about who is buying potatoes more and who is buying them less. For example, we can match the needs and tastes of the parents who have to feed a growing family while juggling full-time work against the media they view.

This means identifying the best opportunities for potatoes, as well as the biggest threats. This work fuels our marketing, like this winter's baked potato campaign, and it is also available to you at [ahdb.org.uk/retail-and-consumer-insight](http://ahdb.org.uk/retail-and-consumer-insight)

**73%** of levy payers who attended a recent potatoes consumer insight online event **said they would make a business change based on what they learned**



#### Q: Why don't I see your campaigns?

The power behind our campaigns is our consumer research. This is what makes them a success, but it is also the reason that you might not see them so much. We spend your money where it is needed most, making sure potatoes stay in favour with those who don't eat as many potatoes, especially young people in urban communities – so our ads feature in places and publications that you might not visit.

Find out more at:  
[ahdb.org.uk/potato-levy-marketing](http://ahdb.org.uk/potato-levy-marketing)



# Potato agronomy and crop protection



**£2.3m of levy funding a year supports the potato agronomy and crop protection technical programmes that help you grow potatoes.**

Our work is underpinned by a knowledge exchange programme delivered through our regional KE team and a network of Strategic Potato (SPot) Farms (see pages 20–23).

As well as being accessible to all levy payers, our work is used by a large proportion of agronomists, with 524 attending the potato sessions of our online Agronomy Week in December.

## Crop protection forecasting and monitoring

Growers face an increasing challenge when it comes to protecting the British potato crop. An ever-decreasing chemical armoury, changing disease pressures and challenging weather conditions mean accuracy is important. We have invested your levy into producing tools and reports that can help, such as:

- AHDB's new potato variety comparison tool can compare resistance scores across multiple pests and diseases before you plant or plan your crop protection programme
- PCN tolerance has now been listed across 20 varieties, providing you with better information to fight the pest
- Aphid monitoring allowing you to track flights and gauge the virus threat in your area
- Blightwatch and Fight Against Blight so you can monitor both the weather conditions needed for blight and if you have blight spores in your area

The fight continues, and we now fund blight strain results in-season so that you know what you're dealing with in real time (see case study on page 19).

## Organising the national response to the threat from virus

We have worked closely with the NFU to respond to the growing threat from aphid-transmitted viruses in recent years – jointly hosting a national forum to get the views of growers, agronomists and experts. As a result, we have launched two research projects and two sets of field trials at Strategic Potato Farms on aphid control – results from these are available now.

### What will a 'No' vote mean?

- No independent crop protection research results available to all
- No major body funding research to reduce reliance on chemistry, like IPM or soil health
- Your agronomist would lose a major source of impartial information
- An increased reliance on commercial organisations for information

## PCN: from mapping to trapping

Our work on potato cyst nematode (PCN) covers the full spectrum, from investing in surveying British potato land, to producing publications on control, sampling and testing, to running innovative trials on biofumigation and trap cropping. To find out more, go to [ahdb.org.uk/PCN](http://ahdb.org.uk/PCN)

## AHDB RB209: The power behind your nutrient management programme

3,000 FACTS-qualified advisers use RB209 to create nutrient management plans each year.

**76%**  
approx.



of horticultural and potato  
nutrient management plans  
use **RB209** from **AHDB**

## Soil health and water management

We have delivered several events helping growers manage soil and water more effectively.

Highlights include:

- Research through our SPot Farm network that has produced four categories by variety for common scab control
- SPot trials that showed that an overwinter cover crop (fodder radish) reduced fuel usage by 12 L/ha and increased the work rate by up to 3.35 ha/hr
- One of our SPot hosts saved £65 per hectare and increased marketable yield by reducing nitrogen inputs and cultivation depths (see page 23)





# Meet the team

## **Don Pendergrast, Head of Crop Health and IPM**

A crop scientist with research, commercial and policy experience, Don worked at NIAB for over a decade managing variety and commercial field trials. More recently, before joining AHDB in late 2020, he focused on crop protection at NFU then for the last 6 years in commercial research developing plant protection products.

**E: don.pendergrast@ahdb.org.uk**



## **Sue Cowgill, Crop Protection Senior Scientist: Pests**

Sue has a PhD in applied entomology and worked as a researcher for 10 years before joining AHDB as a research manager.

**E: sue.cowgill@ahdb.org.uk**



## **Alice Sin, Resource Management Scientist**

Alice oversees AHDB-funded research on soils and crop nutrient management that has a potato focus. She is also involved in revising the *Nutrient Management Guide (RB209)* and oversees the PhD studentships scheme for the potatoes sector. Her background is in environmental management and data analysis.

**E: alice.sin@ahdb.org.uk**



## **Antonia Walker, Senior Knowledge Transfer Manager**

Antonia is a BASIS-qualified agronomist, who joined AHDB from Fera Science, where she supported growers from all sectors via Fera's Plant Clinic.

**E: antonia.walker@ahdb.org.uk**



## **Anne Stone, Knowledge Transfer Manager**

Anne has experience of growing crops across the globe, including running a small horticulture holding in Northern Ireland for over 10 years. She joined AHDB in 2013 after completing a PhD in crop physiology and agronomy.

**E: anne.stone@ahdb.org.uk**



Find out more at  
[ahdb.org.uk/how-the-potato-levy-funds-agronomy-research](https://ahdb.org.uk/how-the-potato-levy-funds-agronomy-research)

# Case study: protecting the industry from a changing blight population

**Your levy allows us, and the researchers it funds, to react quickly to emerging threats.**

A great example of this was as new hugely damaging blight strains entered Britain in 2018, we were able to quickly and efficiently inform agronomists, allowing them to save crop across the country.

## Fight Against Blight – how it works

Potato late blight causes losses of £55m per year, even with fungicide use at current levels. If there were to be a major outbreak that could not be controlled by standard spray patterns, the losses could be many times more than this.

We fund and organise a network of ‘blight scouts’ across the country – most are agronomists who send in samples of potato plants with blight.

**FIGHT AGAINST BLIGHT**  
tracking blight strains  
thanks to **300**  
samples a year

Once results are confirmed in the lab, we publish where the blight was found and what strain it is on an interactive map. This allows agronomists to know if there is blight in their area and if there are any variants of the disease that need treating differently.

## Did Fight Against Blight save your crop in 2018?

In a normal year, Fight Against Blight is a helpful tool for your agronomist; in 2018, it saved huge areas of the national crop.

We tracked two new blight strains that arrived from Europe: one that was resistant to fluazinam, and one with an aggressive cycle that needed spraying more frequently than standard practice. Samples were found in Kent, Yorkshire and Shropshire – wiping out whole crops.

Through the Fight Against Blight network, we were able to inform agronomists, who, by changing products or spray routines, were able to save huge areas of crop from destruction.

### What will a ‘No’ vote mean?

- The end of the Fight Against Blight programme – the only method for tracking the spread of blight strains
- A loss of protection against the next emerging disease threat

Find out more at  
[ahdb.org.uk/late-blight](https://ahdb.org.uk/late-blight)

### What agronomists say

“ The in-season genotyping from Fight Against Blight allows me to make well-informed decisions regarding what actives to use and when. This is particularly important for anti-resistance strategies due to the ever-changing blight population and the non-renewal of active ingredients ”

John Sarup, SPUD Agronomy & Consultancy Ltd





# Strategic Potato Farms

**Strategic Potato (SPot) Farms improve productivity, costs or profitability for 92% of attendees.**

We have provided over 60 regional and digital potato-focused Farm Excellence events over the last three years, where 94% of levy payers surveyed say they improved their technical knowledge and 86% picked up something to improve productivity or efficiency.

**92%** of Farm Excellence event attendees say they've improved productivity, costs or profitability



## What the hosts say

“ It’s the field trials that we learn from the most. AHDB’s Knowledge Exchange Managers are highly experienced and offer practical advice and support to help us trial different methods to address the key challenges we are faced with, such as the loss of diquat, and help us improve the way we farm ”

Jim Reid (right), Milton of Mathers, Montrose

## What will a 'No' vote mean?

- The end of ongoing SPot Farm work like desiccation and aphid control
- Growers would have a significantly reduced ability to visit ongoing trials and meet researchers
- A vital link between research and farm practice is lost

Highlights include:

- Trials and demonstrations have taken place on alternatives to linuron and diquat, PCN control, nutrition, irrigation, cultivations and more
- Since 2018, we have delivered annual field trials on desiccation, providing clear guidance on haulm destruction without diquat
- Through our programmes, one grower was able to count £65 per hectare of savings while increasing marketable yield (see page 23)

We have also helped growers avoid waste when switching to new programmes after losing actives by researching, modelling, costing and demonstrating the most efficient use of alternatives.

**OVER £100,000**  
invested in  
desiccation  
field trials



### What the visitors say

In 2019, there were over 1,000 visits to SPot Farms and over 90% of visitors said they learned something that would help them with costs, productivity or efficiency.

David Murdie, Potato Manager, Grampian Growers, said, “I always come away from SPot events with three or four ideas that we can use at Grampian Growers. I would absolutely encourage anybody to come along – all these things increase the quality of what we produce.”

Trials and demonstrations have continued safely throughout the coronavirus pandemic, with around 1,500 attending live digital events in 2020, and a further 2,000+ views of event recordings.

Andrew Webster, from A W & M A Webster Ltd, said, “We attend many AHDB events, both in person and online. At the technical SPot Farm sessions, and having hosted events ourselves, we have gained knowledge that we can test and often put into practice, leading to improved yields, quality and return on investment.”

### What the hosts say

“ We’ve been cutting back on nitrogen across the board as a result of work through AHDB’s SPot Farm network. There are some varieties where the reduction will be significant ”

Will Gagg, RJ and AE Godfrey, North Lincolnshire



“ There have been some real take-home messages from the work we did as AHDB SPot Farm South – for example, we’ve improved our control of water volumes while spraying ”

Ollie Blackburn, Dillington Farms, Somerset





# Meet the team

## **Graham Bannister, Regional Knowledge Exchange Manager – North West and North East**

Graham worked as a farm manager, and as a buyer for Greenvale for over 10 years before joining AHDB in 2017, covering the North of England from his Yorkshire home.

**E: [graham.bannister@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:graham.bannister@ahdb.org.uk)**



## **Amber Barton, Regional Knowledge Exchange Manager – East Midlands**

Amber completed a degree from Harper Adams, before joining Branston's graduate scheme. She originally joined AHDB's markets team, before moving to Knowledge Exchange to cover the East Midlands from her Lincolnshire farm.

**E: [amber.barton@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:amber.barton@ahdb.org.uk)**



## **Claire Hodge, Regional Knowledge Exchange Manager – Scotland**

Claire worked on farms in New Zealand and Scotland after gaining her Agriculture degree from Newcastle in 2005. She joined AHDB after working for Greenvale AP for five years.

**E: [claire.hodge@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:claire.hodge@ahdb.org.uk)**



## **Alex Wade, Regional Knowledge Exchange Manager – Wales, West Midlands and South West**

Alex is a BASIS- and FACTS-qualified agronomist and brings experience of field trial work to his role at AHDB. He joined us in 2020, having previously done trials work at Harper Adams.

**E: [alex.wade@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:alex.wade@ahdb.org.uk)**



## **David Wilson, Regional Knowledge Exchange Manager – East Anglia and South East**

David has worked as a farm manager, agronomist and for McCain. He joined AHDB from Syngenta, where he was an area manager and potato specialist.

**E: [david.wilson@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:david.wilson@ahdb.org.uk)**



Find out more at [ahdb.org.uk/strategic-potato-farms](https://ahdb.org.uk/strategic-potato-farms)



# Case study: SPot hosts on target for £65 per hectare savings

“Our nutrition trials have shown that we can cut our nitrogen use in our Maris Piper crops. By reducing the amount of nitrogen, we have gained better crops, maintained yield and pack and saved money”

Kerr Howatson, Bruce Farms, Perthshire



Potato growers Bruce Farms were able to identify potential reductions in production costs of over £65 a hectare, while increasing marketable yield by over 3 tonnes. The improvements were a result of a three-year programme of trials as SPot Farm hosts.

Following a successful final year, Kerr Howatson, Farm Manager at Bruce Farms, said: “We became host of SPot Farm Scotland in 2016 in a quest for knowledge. We wanted to trial ways to reduce costs and improve yields and then share this valuable information with the wider industry. We have identified clear processes to follow that demonstrate cost savings and improved packable yield.

“We have learned that by reducing our cultivation processes, both the number of passes and cultivation depth, we have saved money and time and become more efficient. Our nutrition trials have shown that we can cut our nitrogen use in our Maris Piper crops. By reducing the amount of nitrogen, we have gained better crops, maintained yield and pack and saved money.”

The new targeted approach, moving away from whole-field treatments, is now embedded in standard farm practice at the Perthshire farm, saving £31 per hectare on fertiliser (nitrogen) use and £36 per hectare on fuel and labour.

Dr Mark Stalham, former Head of the National Institute of Agricultural Botany Cambridge University Farm

(NIAB CUF), said: “Cultivation, spacing and nitrogen nutrition were our key themes over the last four years of trials on crops of Maris Piper.

“Overall, there is a 2.6 tonne per hectare advantage from removing the bed-tilling operation compared with bed tilling at 12 inches depth over the last four years. We included a preliminary cultivation trial to give us ‘year zero’.

“The overall result of 0.5 tonnes per hectare increase over three years, from reducing the application rate of nitrogen by 32 kilos per hectare, is small, but there was a saving in costs of £31 per hectare and this was combined with no loss in quality.”

Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager for AHDB Claire Hodge added: “On-farm demonstrations allow us to take research recommendations and test how best to apply them in a commercial setting, which offers genuine difference to potato growers. We want to continue to support growers as the industry evolves, and we believe the strategic SPot Farm network is the ideal forum to do so.”

AHDB Strategic Potato Farms form part of the Farm Excellence programme – a network of over 100 farms across the UK. Farm Excellence provides a channel for integrating farmers and their businesses into the wider AHDB research and knowledge exchange programmes.



# Town Hall meetings



## Have your say

Join us for an opportunity to ask questions, meet members of our team and Potatoes Board and hear more about AHDB.

## Events to be held online

You'll have the opportunity to submit questions beforehand or join our 'virtual stage' and speak directly with the team. Each session is open to all levy payers but will focus on the elements of our work that benefits the subsector in question.

**To book, visit: [ahdb.org.uk/potatoes-town-hall](https://ahdb.org.uk/potatoes-town-hall)**

## What do I get for my levy?

Helping British potato growers to grow. Find out more about how we invest your levy.

Thursday 4 February

4:30pm Seed sector

6:30pm Salads and earlyies

Thursday 11 February

4:30pm Processing – fries

6:30pm Processing – crisps

Thursday 18 February

4:30pm Pre-pack sector

6:30pm Bag trade and fresh chipping

Thursday 25 February

4:30pm Merchants and buyers

Produced for you by:

### AHDB Potatoes

Stoneleigh Park  
Kenilworth  
Warwickshire  
CV8 2TL

**T** 024 7669 2051

**E** [comms@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:comms@ahdb.org.uk)

**W** [potatoes@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:potatoes@ahdb.org.uk)

**T** @AHDB\_potatoes

If you no longer wish to receive this information, please email us on [comms@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:comms@ahdb.org.uk)

AHDB is a statutory levy board, funded by farmers, growers and others in the supply chain. We equip the industry with easy-to-use practical know-how which they can apply straight away to make better decisions and improve their performance. For further information, please visit [ahdb.org.uk](https://ahdb.org.uk)

While the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board seeks to ensure that the information contained within this document is accurate at the time of printing, no warranty is given in respect thereof and, to the maximum extent permitted by law, the Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board accepts no liability for loss, damage or injury howsoever caused (including that caused by negligence) or suffered directly or indirectly in relation to information and opinions contained in or omitted from this document.

© Agriculture and Horticulture Development Board 2021.  
All rights reserved.

**AHDB**