

# Tuber TALK

YOUR AHDB POTATOES UPDATE

AHDB



Summer 2019

## Coming to a field near you...

More events, a bigger regional  
team, more time with you



**Egyptian assurance on seed exports**

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**Next Gen take on Westminster**

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**Meet your regional manager**

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## Talking chit in Parliament

On the last leg of their journey, representatives from the AHDB Potatoes Next Generation ('Next Gen') programme made their final stop at Westminster on 26 March – just three days before the original 'Brexit Day', which at that point had not yet been delayed.

Amid the uncertainty, the group gathered on Parliament Square to witness MPs rushing to cast their votes, TV crews hungry for coverage and scantily clad protesters making their voices heard, before being treated to a historical tour around the Houses of Parliament.

The 15-strong group then headed to the National Farmers Union (NFU) headquarters in Westminster.

Liv Phoenix, External Affairs Manager for the NFU, gave an insightful talk on the role of the NFU, its close relationship with

the Government and advice on how to proactively interact with local government to gain maximum impact.

This prepared the group well for the afternoon session.

In an open discussion, the Next Gen group was introduced to several MPs with agriculture at their heart.

They were:

- Sir Geoffrey Clifton-Brown MP
- The Rt Hon Liz Truss MP
- John Hayes MP
- Kevin Hollinrake MP
- Alec Shelbrooke MP
- Neil Parish MP
- Julian Sturdy MP

The group was able to discuss industry challenges, including the effects of Brexit, water abstraction, plant health, agricultural science and the Great British Food and Farming Plan.

### Applications for next year

We will be opening applications for The 2020 Next Gen intake at BP2019 – join us at our event stand to find out more.

**By Stuart Baxter,**  
Marcomms Executive  
[stuart.baxter@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:stuart.baxter@ahdb.org.uk)



## Outward Egyptian mission offers reassurance on future trade

John Ellicott from SASA and I recently returned from an outward mission to Egypt where we met with the Head of CAPQ, Dr Ahmed, to discuss the past season, the coming season and issues around Brexit.

We confirmed the security of the UK's trading position with Egypt after Brexit, because legislation allows imports from all countries in continental Europe regardless of EU membership. However, the tariff situation has not yet been clarified because this will be agreed as part of a larger trade deal between the UK and Egypt.

CAPQ made it clear that it considers trade with UK to be a priority. Last season, Scotland was again the largest exporter to Egypt, with minimal rejection and very good quality.

Dr Ahmed said that CAPQ intends to discontinue the current annual decree in favour of a long term plant health order that would fix tolerances, although emergency amendments could take place if warranted by pest or disease outbreaks. The decree authorising this change will be published in the next few weeks and we will circulate it to Scottish exporters.

This season's tolerances will be the same as they were for the 2018/19 season. There will be no changes to the tolerances for black dot or silver scurf because CAPQ feels that pre-export seed treatments should prevent silver scurf from developing in transit.

While CAPQ will continue to accept all virus tolerances as per the standard UK regulations, it does intend to conduct



**Rob Burns,**  
Head of Crops Trade Export Development  
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random field inspections for viruses in crops intended for export to Egypt. However, this is unlikely to begin this year because the legislative capability to enforce this is not yet in place.

When discussing tuber size, Dr Ahmed explained that this was not part of the plant health decree, but was under the control of the certification committee, of which he is a member. It is likely that the maximum seed size will be 55 mm, which could be relaxed when supplies are short.

## Fresh Produce growers reminded of Red Tractor water testing guidance

**Red Tractor Assurance is reminding Fresh Produce scheme members of the guidance available to help them meet standards on the testing of water used in crop production.**

Growers are required to test water in response to a risk assessment and in line with a water matrix, which was introduced as part of a review of the Fresh Produce scheme back in October 2017.

The matrix enables growers to clearly identify the sampling frequency required by the standards in an easy-to-interpret format. Under the water matrix, sampling frequency is dependent on water source and the crops to which water is being applied.

Fresh Produce Technical Manager Vicky Smith said: "Testing water used in crop production helps to ensure the safety of food produced on farm. The water matrix acts as a reference tool for growers, helping them to determine their sampling regime."

Water testing is a crucial tool for reducing the risk of a food safety issue, the cost of which could be enormous in terms of both financial implications and the reputation of British food.

One of the most high-profile food scares in recent times was an outbreak of *E. coli* in German beansprouts, for which Spanish cucumbers were blamed for the contamination. Fepex, Spain's fruit and vegetable export body, reported that at the peak of the scare it was costing the industry £175 million per week.

More recently, in June 2008, an *E. coli* outbreak across several states of America resulted in five deaths and the hospitalisation of almost 100 people.

To support growers, the Red Tractor Assurance website has a practical guide on how to take a water sample. The water matrix and other supporting material is also available.



**Vicky Smith,**  
Technical Manager at Red Tractor  
[vicky.smith@redtractor.org.uk](mailto:vicky.smith@redtractor.org.uk)

## NEWS *in brief*

### Coming to a phone near you...

The AHDB podcast airs every Tuesday and Friday and will include at least one spud-specific episode per month. Subscribe now, via Apple Podcasts or the platform used by your smartphone and enjoy short programmes about the projects, tools and services your levy provides, while on the go.

### All our events, in one place

We run hundreds of events during the summer and now you can find them all at [www.ahdb.org.uk/events](http://www.ahdb.org.uk/events).

The events portal is searchable by sector or location, meaning you can find out what's going on near you with a single click of a mouse. Why not check in at your local Monitor Farm meeting? Though originally an AHDB Cereals and Oilseeds concept, many of the meetings cover business themes that are relevant to all. These events will be displayed when you search 'Potatoes' events on the portal.

### Remember to P first

You will have noticed changes in the way we collect your levy this year because

all growers have been encouraged to use the online levy portal. There has also been a minor change to all levy numbers in that the prefix 'P' has been added to your number. This is a result of the centralisation of levy collection, a process that has seen us save 40% on the cost of collecting your potato levy since the Potato Council joined AHDB.



## Meet the Knowledge Exchange team

It's been just over a year since we joined our Potatoes and Cereals Knowledge Exchange (KE) teams – expanding the number of Potatoes staff in the process. After filling some gaps and making some strong appointments, the team is suitably prepared to build on the success of previous campaigns as we head in to harvest 2019.

Following twenty years as an arable business consultant, in various guises, I joined AHDB in 2013 primarily to develop the Monitor Farm programme in East Anglia. After this, I took on responsibility for the Cereals KE team in 2016 and now the new combined Arable KE team in 2018.

Although initiated in the Cereals and Oilseeds sector, the Monitor Farm programme is about whole farm business improvement so the many local meetings across the UK are relevant to all: soils, rotations, succession, benchmarking and integrated pest management are just a few examples. Find your local meeting at [www.ahdb.org.uk/events](http://www.ahdb.org.uk/events)

We're now building on this experience with a host of exciting potato demonstrations across our Strategic Farm network and beyond, so the coming season should be another huge success.



**Tim Isaac**

Head of Knowledge Exchange – Arable  
[Tim.Isaac@ahdb.org.uk](mailto:Tim.Isaac@ahdb.org.uk)

We also have a full team of enthusiastic regional KE Managers throughout the UK. They're the ones out in the field and are the first point of contact for farmers, growers and those in the supply chain who are looking to access the wide range of services, tools and events funded by their levy, so please don't hesitate to call or email your local contact:

### Graham Bannister

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07580 704 673

Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager – Potatoes, North East and North West England



I have worked in practical farming for over 20 years, including farm management positions and experience of growing potatoes and cereals. I spent 10 years as a buyer for Greenvale AP Ltd, buying potatoes for the fresh sector in Mid Scotland.

Now, with a full team in place, I am looking forward to being able to concentrate on getting to know growers and the wider industry, particularly those in the North West and my other regions, but also across the UK. My team and I are keen to speak to levy payers and provide them with information on the variety of services and events that will benefit their businesses.

I'm currently planning our presence at **BP2019**, billed as 'the potato industry event'. We have an exciting programme planned so it would be great to see as many of you there on the 20 & 21 November as possible. For details visit [www.bp2019.co.uk](http://www.bp2019.co.uk)

### Claire Hodge

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Senior Knowledge Exchange Manager – Arable, Scotland



Since starting at AHDB in 2012, I have played a key role in the development of the Strategic Potato Farm programme, leading specifically on the running of SPot Scotland at Bruce Farms.

This year promises to be an exciting one. I'm looking forward to the final results from Scotland, when we will review what we've learnt over the past four very different seasons and find opportunities to take the project forward with a seed growing business.

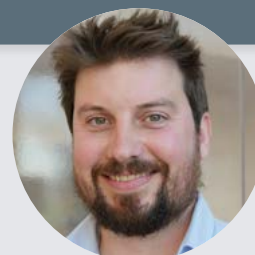
I'm also studying for my Nuffield Scholarship, looking in to **connectivity and communication in the seed potato supply chain**. So, I'm traveling to Kenya, Chile, India and Brazil to compare the work I do in Scotland to those overseas and how we can help each other improve.

It promises to be hard work, but I think the experience will be really rewarding.

### David Wilson

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Arable Knowledge Exchange Manager – Potatoes, East



Having only taken on the role for East Anglia and the South East in February, I am very keen to get out and about in the region.

Most of my career has been in the potato industry, I'm looking forward to supporting growers by sharing knowledge, challenging perceptions and providing new ways of working.

There are several issues facing the industry and regulatory changes mean that we must be more resourceful when it comes to crop protection.

In my part of the country, many growers may find water in short supply this year. It's something we've addressed through trials at SPot Farm East. Our updated **Seasonal Water Management for Potatoes** guide has updated common scab tables, so you know, better than ever, which varieties need water first.



### Amber Cottingham

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Arable Knowledge Exchange  
Manager – Potatoes, East Midlands



Living on a potato farm in north Lincolnshire and now working as the Knowledge Exchange Manager for the East Midlands region, I live and breathe potatoes. I started at AHDB in early 2016; originally in the Market Intelligence (MI) team. Before that, I worked for Branston Ltd.

When I was in the MI team, we launched the **Potato Data Centre** ([www.potatodatacentre.ahdb.org.uk/](http://www.potatodatacentre.ahdb.org.uk/)), which gives you a chance to examine trends for the varieties you grow and the markets you grow for.

When planning the programme at SPot North we recognised the importance of looking at alternatives to lost actives in full-scale demonstrations. It is designed to address the issues faced by growers and this year, will include trials and demos on the ways that we can tackle burn-off and storage without Diquat and CIPC. With the focus on knowledge exchange, the events in the summer will look to encourage input from all those that attend.



### Bill Watts

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Arable Knowledge Exchange Manager — Potatoes,  
Wales, West and South West

If you've ever attended any of our SPot farm events, you might recognise me from my presentations on potato cyst nematodes and biofumigation.

Having recently completed my PhD, I have now moved into Knowledge Exchange, where I hope to get to know growers my region and offer as much support as possible.

I'm leading on both SPot West at Heal Farms and SPot South at Dillington.

This season we are looking into **haulm destruction trials**, which will be replicated at several sites nationally. These trials will be investigating haulm topper and root cutter implements in combination with desiccants for haulm destruction. The demos will investigate treatments in seed, salad, pre-pack and processing crops.



### Harry Henderson

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Knowledge Exchange Technical Manager –  
Arable, Machinery

After growing up on a beef farm in my native North Wales, I developed an interest in farm machinery, which has taken me around the world, working in agriculture.

My career has seen me manage a plant-breeding farm near Cambridge, before moving to John Deere in 2005 to become a Crop Systems Specialist, specialising in crop protection, harvesting and precision farming products. From there, I joined AHDB.

In my current role within AHDB's Arable team, I am the 'go to' person for mechanisation across all sectors of

AHDB. This has seen the development of the **AHDB Machinery Cost Calculator**, which allows you to calculate the cost of farm machinery, per hectare or per hour. It can also illustrate the savings or costs of owning your own equipment versus hiring or getting in a contractor.

This season, on the potatoes side, I will be involved with haulm destruction and sprayer efficacy trials held across the SPot sites. I'm particularly looking forward to the haulm topper and root cutter days we are planning in Lincolnshire and Somerset.



# In the SPotlight: Strategic Potato Farm dates and trials 2019

**There's plenty going on across the Strategic Potato Farms this summer. Each event offers an opportunity to discuss the latest on-farm trials and demonstrations.**

Strategic Potato Farms form part of the Farm Excellence programme; a network of over 60 farms, including Monitor Farms. Farm Excellence provides a channel for integrating farmers and their businesses into the wider AHDB research and knowledge exchange programmes.

## West

**Strategic Potato Farm West – Heal Farms, Shawbury, Nr Shrewsbury, Shropshire**

AHDB contact – Bill Watts, bill.watts@ahdb.org.uk

Host – Matthew Wallace

- Desiccation demonstration
- Herbicide trial
- Danfoil low water volume sprayer investigation (demonstration)
- Investigation of foliar phosphate for PCN damage mitigation (demonstration)
- Varietal plots for Sutton Bridge natural dormancy studies

### Dates for the diary

Field walk – 20 June

Open day – 11 July

## South

**Strategic Potato Farm South – Dillington Farms, Ilminster, Somerset**

AHDB contact – Bill Watts, bill.watts@ahdb.org.uk

Hosts – Chris Wilson and Ollie Blackburn

- Desiccation demonstration
- Herbicide demonstration
- Haulm destruction trial
- In-field 'Ground Data' sensor technology for crop monitoring

### Dates for the diary

Herbicides field walk – 13 June

Open day – 15 August

## Scotland

**Strategic Potato Farm Scotland – Bruce Farms, Meikle, Blairgowrie, Perthshire**

AHDB Contact – Claire Hodge  
Claire.hodge@ahdb.org.uk

Hosts – Geoff Bruce and Kerr Howatson

- Cultivations
- Nutrition
- Seed spacing
- Cover crops
- Precision

### Dates for the diary

Open day – 9 July (the day will include a 'golden plot' featuring all the best practice approaches to growing)





## North

**Strategic Potato Farm North – RJ and AE Godfrey, Brigg, North Lincolnshire**

AHDB contact – Amber Cottingham  
amber.cottingham@ahdb.org.uk

Hosts – Alex Godfrey and Will Gagg

- Residual herbicides trial (fully replicated trial)
- Irrigation methods – taking into account financial and marketable yield (demonstration)
- Organic matter (demonstration)
- Desiccation – agricultural chemical and mechanical (two fully replicated trials)
- Dormancy and Maleic Hydrazide (fully replicated trial)

### Dates for the diary

Field walk – 6 June

Open day – 16 July

Field walk – 15 August

Haulm destruction day – date to be confirmed depending on the season

## East

**Strategic Potato Farm East**  
**Outgoing host: Elveden Farms Ltd.**  
**Incoming host: James Foscett Farms Ltd., Suffolk**

AHDB contact – David Wilson  
David.Wilson@ahdb.org.uk

Both farms will host events this summer, before James Foscett Farms officially become SPot hosts in September.

### Dates for the diary:

- Field walk and storage update (James Foscett Farms) - 18 July
- Dessication demo (Elveden Farms) - Date TBC August/September

Desiccation event date based on crop progress during season.

Final event dates will be listed at  
[ahdb.org.uk/events](http://ahdb.org.uk/events)

## Meet the Knowledge Exchange team cont ...



**Kathryn Hales**

Kathryn.Hales@ahdb.org.uk  
Knowledge Transfer Officer – Potatoes

I have worked at AHDB since October 2018, having completed my PhD in Plant Pathology at the University of Warwick's Warwick Crop Centre. Currently, I am focusing on the delivery of AHDB's blight tools. Following the success of previous years, I am looking to make an impact on the **Fight Against Blight and Blightwatch** projects.

In 2019, we are offering in-season genotyping. Previously, growers had to wait until the end of the season – and after implementing a blight spray programme – to receive results from any samples submitted. The faster service will enable growers to use the genotyping data to better inform their blight management decisions. Have a look at [www.blight.ahdb.org.uk/](http://www.blight.ahdb.org.uk/)



**Laura Bouvet**

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Knowledge and Innovation Facilitator

My role at AHDB is jointly funded with Agri-tech East to focus on post-harvest technology, working closely with the AHDB storage team at Sutton Bridge. We have already run several storage events around the country in 2019, as the sprout control situation continues to evolve.

These events will continue over the next 12 months and you can find the

latest at [www.ahdb.org.uk/events](http://www.ahdb.org.uk/events)

Meanwhile, I would recommend signing up to receive our

**Storage Bulletin** newsletter, or visiting [www.ahdb.org.uk/storage-hub](http://www.ahdb.org.uk/storage-hub), where you can find video and podcast reviews of the information we have discussed at our events.



**Anne Stone**

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Knowledge Transfer Manager – Potatoes

I have moved from my regional role in the West to a new role that provides the link between Research and Knowledge Exchange. My role is to look after the tools and publications that we offer growers, as well as supporting the national SPot Farm trials programme.

One of my specialist areas is potato cyst nematode (PCN) control. Recently we have published a new

**PCN Grower Guide** and a specialist guide on sampling and testing for PCN, which is important for ever more growers as

PCN spreads across the country.

This year, we'll be updating our **PCN calculator**. You can find out about this and our other technical work at the Agronomists' Conference on 3 and 4 December.

# Industry view: handing over the Strategic Potato Farm torch

**Though 2018 was his last year as a SPot Farm host, Andrew Francis believes Elveden can still play a role in driving innovation. They will be hosting some 'legacy' events in 2019.**

Our new SPot hosts in the East will come on board in September, meaning that this summer we will run a series of topical events focussed on chemical loss, storage and irrigation.

"When we began as Strategic Farm hosts back in 2016, we didn't really know what to expect, other than my team and I saw it as an opportunity to learn as much as we could, as quickly as possible. At Elveden, we've always been open-minded and keen to learn, so we were pleased to be able to interact with experts. We are lucky to have a high profile operation here on the estate and we feel we have a duty to support the wider industry.

The programme turned out to be bigger than any of us had expected, so it was all hands on deck to ensure it ran smoothly. We were really pleased with the three open days: they were always well attended and people kept coming back to hear more – a good sign! The visitors really made the attraction, so it was important to provide plenty of opportunities to share the work we'd been doing with the wider industry. It was, after all, one of the main reasons for doing it.

## **Open days, PCN and irrigation trials highlights**

In terms of highlights, I was very proud of the 2018 open day. It was a slick operation because everyone did a great job of sorting out the logistics and deciding which demonstration sites to showcase beforehand. We had plenty of interest in the day – helped, no doubt, by the weather – meaning visitors could be taken to see the activity in the fields first-hand.

When it came to the demonstrations, we found the varietal work on PCN very useful, particularly the crucial distinction between 'resistance' and 'tolerance': the former referring to varieties that are immune to the disease and the latter identifying crops that produce a good yield, despite being infected by PCN.

One of the demonstrations that had the biggest impact on the business was an investigation into the link between irrigation and different varieties'

susceptibility to scab. Although it didn't work in the first year, we managed to get it off the ground in 2017. The data proved extremely useful the following year because of the drought conditions we experienced: we were able to use it to inform our irrigation strategy during a year of low water availability. Next steps – 2019 events

As an industry, we have to deal with a lot of change and there's plenty more on the horizon, so learning to cope with an uncertain future is essential. The Strategic Farm programme can help by driving industry-led research to support growers throughout the country.

Taking part enabled me and my team at Elveden to look at best practice and innovation. While the three years involved a lot of hard work from everyone, the benefits were certainly measurable and I'd recommend it to others who are interested in taking part. I'd really like to thank all the members of my team who were involved in so many ways over the three years, as well as all of the people who helped to create, manage and report on the work. Most importantly, thanks to all the people who visited us.

The better the industry support, the better these initiatives become. I understand that James Foskett Farms will pick-up the baton as SPot host in September, which is great news.

We are proud to be part of an innovative and forwarding thinking community of growers and supply chain. We are no longer SPot hosts, but 2019 and 2020 are going to be years of change for all of us.



We believe in exchanging ideas and learning from each other. We wanted to stay involved, so hosting events alongside Fosketts during this vital season is ideal."

## **Are you our next Strategic Farm host?**

During the summer of 2019, we'll be looking for new Strategic Farm hosts to take up posts in 2020. This is our last summer with the current hosts in Scotland, the West and the South West. If you're in those areas and are interested in finding out more, come along to a summer event (see page 7) and speak to your local KE Manager.

We want to work with farms of all sizes and with growers with different types of business outlook – there's no set way of being a SPot host. If you're interested in trying new things and working with other growers in your area, please get in touch.

Think your region needs a SPot Farm? We'd love to hear from you! Contact your local KE Manager (see pages 4-6) to make your pitch!

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