

POTATO REVIEW

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10-year celebration

OXBO International, formerly branded as Ploeger, is celebrating a 10-year milestone of successful potato harvesting in the UK, having delivered its first machines in 2013.

The company, whose headquarters are in Fakenham, Norfolk, recently rebranded itself as Oxbo. In recent years, it has seen rapid growth in its service and spare parts departments which led to a recent upgrade of its workshops. It distributes to Norfolk, Lincolnshire and Yorkshire.

Consortium clinches research grant

A CONSORTIUM of key industry, academic and farming partners, including Emerald Research Ltd (ERL), Dyson Farming, Bangor University, The James Hutton Institute and Light Science technologies, have won an Innovate UK grant for a project that will explore regenerative approaches to growing commercial potato crops.

In collaboration with a consortium of key industry, academic and farming partners, including Dyson Farming, Bangor University, The James Hutton Institute and Light Science technologies, the three-year programme is titled Transformative Reduced Inputs in Potatoes (TRIP)

The TRIP programme is dedicated to exploring innovative regenerative approaches aimed at revitalising farm soil organic matter. Additionally, it focuses on finding solutions to tackle the environmental challenge posed by greenhouse gas emissions in the UK's potato farming industry, with a particular emphasis on reducing the notable levels of CO₂ and N₂O emissions.

Large scale commercial potato crops require intensive soil cultivation to prepare the seedbed and typically require levels of inputs (fertilisers,

herbicides, fungicides and insecticides) in order to produce crops that meet commercial quality and tonnage requirements.

Conventional potato production's current carbon footprint comprises: Fertilisers (55%, including N₂O emissions from soil application of nitrogen fertiliser), storage energy (29%), seed (9%) and transport (5%).

Simon Fox, MD of ERL, said: "We believe that this project has the ability to fundamentally change the soil tillage and input regimes used to produce potatoes in the UK."

He added: "We are excited about the very real potential not only to reduce the carbon footprint of UK potato production, but to do so in ways that are practical and economically rewarding for the farmer."

Throughout the three-year programme, led by Dyson Farming, there will be regular updates from the consortium partners through the official TRIP communication channels and from farm-scale and replicated trials taking place through the farming partners SDF Agriculture, F G Pryor and Son Ltd, Colwith Farm Potatoes Ltd. and CP Richards & Son Ltd.



Kids' dates for growing and harvesting announced

KIDS Country, the education programme run by the East of England Agricultural Society for children aged five to 11 years, has launched its 2023-24 academic year events calendar, featuring potato growing and harvesting, and all events now run on-site in schools.

Kids Country's Education Manager, Sandra Lauridsen, said: "We are offering a more flexible approach, with our whole events programme re-worked to deliver our usually fully booked events programme into the playground and classroom. Teachers don't need to worry about stretching the budget to coach costs, and we hope this will help even more children experience Kids Country events."

Planting activities will take place on March 5th, 6th and 8th, and harvesting will take place on July 9th, 10th and 12th. For more details, or to get involved, contact Sandra here.
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