

CALU press release - 0707

Bangor's Blight Beaters

Britain's potato crop is struggling this year as our monsoon summer continues without let up. We hear of flooded fields, waterlogged soils and the dreaded blight getting out of control. The Sárvári Research Trust at its Open Day on 2nd August offers a solution – new blight-resistant potato varieties.

We may think potato famines caused by blight are a thing of the past but the same blight fungus is still lurking ready to pounce. This summer, the weekly sprays to control the blight have been difficult or impossible to apply and then the heavy rain washes the spray off again. Farmers across the UK are battling with blight – and some are losing the battle.

The Sárvári family working in a smallholding in rural Hungary have been breeding hardy Sárpo varieties of potato for years. They use traditional selective breeding strategies, not Genetic Modification (GM) techniques. These Sárpo potatoes grow without pesticide, resisting the diseases which sweep across Europe every summer. The potatoes are further developed (again, without the use of GM techniques) by the Sárvári Research Trust at the University of Wales, Bangor and the best varieties, which are easy to grow and good to taste, are introduced to the U.K. market.

These are the low-input potatoes of the future costing the earth less to grow. They are the only ones which survive when the chips are down.

The Open Day of the Sárvári Research Trust, supported by CALU, is at Henfaes Research Centre, Abergwyngregyn, Llanfairfechan, LL33 0LB. Exit 13 on A55. The meeting starts at 11a.m. Commercial and amateur growers, agronomists, food writers and chefs will be attending. All are welcome.

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