

# POTATOES

AT GILFACH Y FRÂN

## CALU DEMONSTRATION FARM FACTSHEET

September 2008

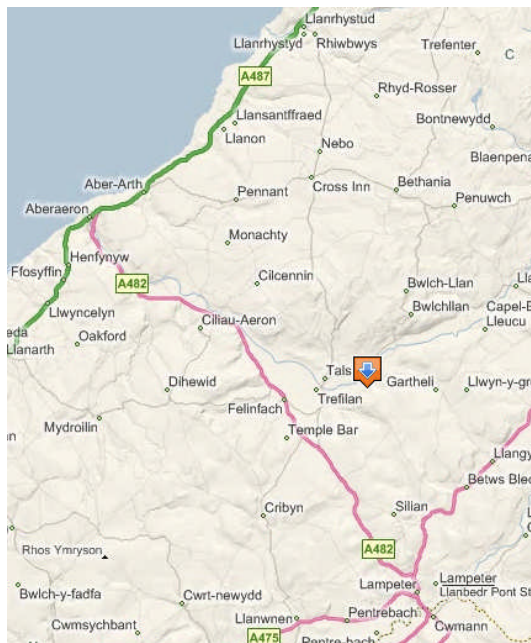


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### INTRODUCTION

On Monday 8<sup>th</sup> September 2008, Mr Ashley Hope, farmer of Gilfach y Frân, hosted a CALU open day to look at the performance of several varieties of potatoes. The event particularly focused on the naturally blight resistant Sárpo Mira variety.

Gilfach y Frân is in Abermeurig, approximately 9 miles south east of Aberaeron in Ceredigion. The total farmed area is 135 hectares with 65 hectares owned by the farmer. The primary income from the farm is from 700 Welsh Mule ewes. In addition, some beef cattle are raised. Parts of the land have previously been used to grow swedes for use as a fodder crop. 2008 is the first year Mr Hope has grown potatoes. Mr Hope is a member of the Ceredigion Potato Grower discussion group which is supported by CALU with assistance from Sion Evans of Mabis.



Location Map: Gilfach y Frân

### BACKGROUND

A trial area of 0.5 ha was planted with four varieties of potatoes. The field had previously only been used for grass and the production of silage. The potatoes were all planted on the 20<sup>th</sup> April 2008. The field only took one day to plant using a Ferguson two row manual planter. Planting the crop early in the season proved particularly advantageous this year, and meant the earlier varieties were ready for harvest before the worst weather of the late summer. The small size of the plot also meant that access was easy and the area was manageable for a first time potato grower.

### VARIETIES

The varieties chosen to grow in the plot were Majestic, Home Guard, Sárpo Mira and Desirée. Seed potatoes for Mira were supplied by the Sárvári Research Trust. The other varieties (Majestic, Home Guard and Desirée) were all purchased from a local supplier at a cost of £12 per 25kg bag. In total, nine bags were required to plant the 0.5ha plot.

- Home Guard is a first early potato that produces short, oval shaped white tubers.



Cronfa Amaethyddol Ewrop ar gyfer Datblygu Gwledig  
Ewrop yn Buddsoddi mewn Ardaloedd Gwledig  
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- Desirée is a main crop potato which produces oval, long potatoes with a red skin.
- Majestic is an early main crop potato that produces oval, long tubers with a white skin and flesh.
- Mira is a main crop potato that produces an oval long tuber with a red skin. Mira is a very good started potato group as it has unprecedented blight resistance, high yields and easy to grow.

Late blight (*Phytophthora infestans*) infection of potatoes is a major limitation on production and profitability for potato growers. Sarpo Mira is not immune to blight, but developing lesions increase in size only very slowly.

### **PREPARATION and MAINTENANCE**

Before planting the field had been fairly weed free and maintained for grass production. Weeds were starting to become a problem by late August in all the varieties, apart from Mira.

During the growing season, the Majestic, Home Guard and Desirée potatoes were treated six times with the blight spray 'Matilda'. The last application was the 1<sup>st</sup> August 2008. The active ingredients in Matilda are cymoxanil + mancozeb. The product is marketed by - Nufarm UK.

Blight was first noticed in the field in early August, The haulms were desiccated by Reglone spray (active ingredient diquat) to protect the tubers from blight. The crop was then left in the ground for 3 weeks to let the skins set.

This meant the ground was opened up for weeds to develop. By contrast, the Mira potato crop still had a good foliage cover and was growing well in early September, showing no signs of blight damage.

### **HARVESTING**

The Home Guard potato crop was harvested by hand in mid August and sold in bags through a local garage at 40p per kilo or £10 per 25kg bag. The rest of the potatoes will be sequentially harvested over the next few weeks and will be sold through the local garage and hopefully also the local shop.

Next year Mr Hope aims to sell potatoes through the local garage, as well as to local pubs and hotels.

### **THE TASTE TEST**

After a tour of the crop site and a discussion about the potatoes, blight and cropping, the group returned to the farmhouse where samples of the variety Mira had been prepared as both chipped and boiled potatoes. General observations were that the potatoes had a nice flavour and the fluffy texture of the chips was well liked.

### **FUTURE PLANS**

The 2008 potatoes trial field will be returned to grass for the livestock kept on the farm, but more potatoes will be planted on another field in 2009. Mr Hope is keen to plant more of the Sarpo potato varieties as they substantially reduce the input of sprays that have been applied to the other varieties. The varieties under consideration for growing are Sarpo Mira, as a main crop and Sarpo Una as a first early potato.

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