**Press Release**

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**Why potatoes deserve a bigger place on our plates**

*By Alex Godfrey, Chair of GB Potatoes*

**The overlooked strength of a staple**

British Food Fortnight invites us to reflect on the food we grow in this country and the farmers who bring it to our tables. It is also an opportunity to look beyond the familiar and rediscover the true value of staples that too often slip beneath the radar. Few foods illustrate this better than the potato.

Because potatoes are so ubiquitous, they are frequently taken for granted. They are seen as a dependable source of carbohydrate, a reliable side dish, but little more. The truth is rather different. Nutritionally, environmentally and culturally, the potato stands among the most important crops we produce, both here in the UK and across the world, and as such, it deserves to be recognised.

Consider potassium, the mineral that has dominated recent health headlines for its role in regulating blood pressure and maintaining heart health. A medium baked potato with its skin provides almost a fifth of an adult’s daily potassium requirement. That is significantly more than a banana or an avocado, which are so often presented as the obvious sources. Yet when newspapers reported on potassium’s importance just last month, potatoes barely warranted a mention. It is a curious omission given the scale of their contribution.

And potassium is only one element of the story. Potatoes quietly underpin a large part of the nation’s vitamin intake. Around fifteen per cent of all the vitamin C we consume comes from potatoes, something that rice and pasta cannot provide at all. A single jacket potato supplies close to half of the recommended daily allowance of vitamin C, as well as a meaningful share of folate and vitamin B6, which are crucial for energy, immunity and brain function. They also contain iron in levels significant enough to support children’s intellectual development and to help prevent deficiencies that affect concentration and mood.

Taken together, it is no exaggeration to say that potatoes represent one of the most nutritionally complete foods we can grow in the UK. They have even sustained people as a sole diet for prolonged periods with remarkably few ill effects. That might not be the preferred diet for everyone, but it does underline the breadth of nutrition these so-called humble tubers offer.

**Nutrition, value and a decline we cannot ignore**

Despite this, fresh potato consumption has been in long-term decline, particularly among younger generations. Convenience, changing habits and the branding of rice, pasta and imported grains as modern, aspirational choices have eroded potatoes’ place in the weekly shop. That decline is not just a problem for growers. It is a missed opportunity for public health. Potatoes deliver more nutrients for less money than almost any other staple. In a cost-of-living crisis, that is not a message we can afford to overlook.

**A future secured by expertise and resilience**

Behind every bag of potatoes is a grower applying real expertise. Potato production is highly technically advanced, involving precision management of soils, water and storage to deliver quality all year round. It takes investment, innovation and resilience to meet those standards, and the commitment of British growers deserves far greater recognition.

As summer turns to autumn, the harvest is underway and potatoes come into their own. Roast potatoes, jackets and warming stews have a natural place on the seasonal table. Yet their importance is not limited to the colder months. Potatoes are a constant presence throughout the year, and their contribution to nutrition, affordability and sustainability should ensure they remain relevant in every household, every day.

This British Food Fortnight, I want people to look again at the potato. It is a nutrient-dense, affordable and versatile food, produced to high standards by British growers, with a far smaller environmental footprint than many of the imports it sits beside on the shelf. If potatoes were discovered today, they would be hailed as a breakthrough food. The fact that they are already here, grown in abundance on our own farms, should be something we value far more.

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**Notes to editors**

**About GB Potatoes** - GB Potatoes was established in May 2022 to fill the void after the AHDB potato levy board ceased to exist, leaving the potato industry without a unified sector focused representation. It aims to provide a cohesive and impactful voice for the sector, encouraging participation from the whole potato supply chain including growers, packers, processors, seed growers, researchers, advisors, and ancillary businesses. Membership is open to anyone in the sector.