

£150K potato storage fellowship

Capitalising on work from the horticulture sector, Dr Richard Colgan, leading post-harvest physiologist at the Natural Resources Institute (NRI), aims to improve the delivery timing of potato crops into the UK retail and processing sector in one of three AHDB Potatoes awarded fellowships.

Using innovative apparatus and expertise from the fruit sector, the three year programme will investigate the effects of mineral nutrition on the storage behaviour of tubers. Specifically, the work will examine resistance to senescent and low temperature sweetening, alongside the impact of respiration and diffusion characteristics on the long-term storage potential of tubers.

The study hopes to improve the assessment of tuber maturity at the point of

harvest, which will enable better forward planning for delivery of stored potato crops into the retail and processing sectors.

"Another important aspect of the work will be securing a UK community of fresh produce storage research skills for the future," said Dr Colgan. "So naturally I'm thrilled to be awarded this fellowship giving me the chance to invest my knowledge of potato post-harvest physiology and biochemistry, starting with early career scientist Cláudia Gonçalves da Silva Carvalho."

Currently completing her AHDB funded PhD thesis on 'Senescent Sweetening of Potatoes', Ms Carvalho will initially undertake short placements within industry before commencing an 18 month postdoctoral position in the second half of the Fellowship.

Maximising the value of collaboration in science, Dr Colgan, of the Produce Quality Centre (an NRI partnership with East Malling Research), will also receive support from AHDB Potatoes and their dedicated research and advisory facility, Sutton Bridge Crop Storage Research (SBCSR).

Building on his work to date around apples in stores, Dr Colgan announced, "We will be collaborating with ICA Ltd, UK-based experts in cold store facilities, testing a novel piece of equipment, the SafePod.

"Primarily designed for apples in Controlled Atmosphere (CA) storage, we're confident it can be applied to study tuber respiration in stores and will be a valuable tool in our programme of research."



Cláudia Gonçalves da Silva Carvalho.

Vitacress fined over accident

Salad specialist Vitacress has been fined after an employee lost the tips of two fingers in an accident involving a bagging machine.

The incident, which took place in Hampshire at the company's headquarters last April, was heard at Basingstoke Magistrate's Court last month, after an investigation by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). This found that access to the cutting

jaws and heat sealing part of the machine was too easily accessible and that the machine had a hole cut in the interlocking guards to allow larger bags of salad out of the machine on a conveyor belt.

Vitacress Salads pleaded guilty to breaching Regulation 11 (1) of the Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations 1998 (PUWER) and was fined £60,000 and paid costs of £1,088.

AHDB Potatoes launches chip website

With the frying trade accounting for 12% of the GB potato crop, ensuring quality across the sector has never been more important. In a bid to help the chip shop industry keep customer satisfaction high and compete in the increasingly aggressive quick service restaurant (QSR) sector, AHDB Potatoes has invested in a new online resource www.bestchips.co.uk

The site delivers good potato management and best practise procedures, as well as marketing tactics and insights into takeaway and chip consumption patterns, to provide chip shop owners and staff with invaluable, long-term business benefits.

Kate Cox, marketing manager for AHDB Potatoes, said: "We

recognise that the fish and chip shop industry is unique, and as such it requires market-specific information. We have collated all of the material from our existing 'chip skills' portal and added information about market influences and consumption patterns, to create a dedicated, one-stop-shop for the sector.

"We have developed www.bestchips.co.uk to be the go-to hub for best practise information for chip shop businesses; we believe it will add real value to the sector and help improve chip quality and boost sales back down the chain as a result."

Investment in the site replaces the annual Chip Week campaign, which ran for 24 years to 2015.



SmartStor controller wins Certificate of Merit

Crop Systems have been awarded a Certificate of Merit in the Best Product or Innovation in Technology category for their SmartStor controller, at Lamma's recent annual Innovation Awards.

Launched last November, the controller offers growers complete communication with their storage facility, enabling the store manager to monitor anywhere, anytime, via smartphone, tablet, computer or phone. Crop Systems say it is fully compatible with any make of existing equipment, and can work ahead to take advantage of low peak energy savings and outside temperatures.

SmartStor can monitor and control all settings remotely.

Data is fully downloadable for farm assurance in varying formats, can be emailed at pre-determined times, or displayed on demand, complete with a 2-way information diary.

Added to this, a key feature is the SmartRespons lone worker system. With the majority of store managers entering the store alone, it issues an alarm and visual alert if the worker fails to log out within a specified period.

"We are thrilled to have been awarded the Certificate of Merit by Lamma; especially with the record number of entries this year. Recognition encourages continued dedication in developing control systems for the future," said Ray Andrews of Crop Systems.