



sustainable potatoes united development study

How do you like your potatoes: round, pink, unblemished? What are the characteristics that make one potato more attractive than another? Is it their appearance, taste, texture? As consumers we control the marketplace and women have approximately 80% of the buying power. If you knew that the pretty potato you regularly buy needs to be sprayed 20 times a season, threatening the health of our natural environment and the farmer who cultivates it, would you choose to buy a potato with character that required no spraying? European Commission statistics from 2010 suggest that people are more likely to buy a product that provides benefits both to the environment and food safety.

The Irish agriculture and food development authority have made an application to the Environmental Protection Agency to trial genetically modified (GM) blight resistant potatoes in Ireland. They believe GM potatoes could significantly reduce the use of fungicides which are currently sprayed as many as 20 times a season by farmers to prevent the spread of this disease. Although naturally blight resistant potatoes already exist, Teagasc are convinced that none of these potatoes are commercially viable, but is this true?

How does a potato become commercially viable? To dig deeper into this question the Lifeline Project in partnership with the Savari Research Trust and supported by GIY Ireland are asking the people of Ireland to grow a variety of naturally blight resistant potatoes this summer as part of a community based research project. As anyone who has gardened knows, the best way to understand your food is to grow it yourself. We will be giving away free seed potatoes to encourage you to participate in the study and document your experience, from field to fork. So get out there and dig a plot, however small, in a field, allotment, community garden, backyard, town square, or local vacant site...Why not stick a couple in a pot on your balcony...anywhere will do! We are particularly interested in getting commercial, non organic, farmers to participate. If hundreds of growers unite and document their experience cultivating naturally blight resistant spuds, we will generate a tremendously valuable body of knowledge to contribute to the debate. This autumn we will gather to celebrate what we have learned with some of the best chefs in the country who will experiment with your recipes and the potatoes we have harvested. How do we like our potatoes? Lets put Irish consumer preferences to the test!

How can you get involved:

- Register your 'research' team, plant blight resistant potatoes anywhere you can and document your experience
- Provide potato growing expertise and support to the growers during the course of the study
- Organise a local tasting party at a street party or community festival, take photographs and send them to us
- Send us your favourite potato recipes, make a neighbourhood potato cookbook
- Provide a site for our Potato Harvest Celebration this autumn
- Become a project sponsor, help us develop a FUNDIT campaign, match our funding, donate prizes and rewards
- Supply infrastructure for the autumn celebration: Tents, sound gear, platforms, banners...etc.
- Volunteer your skills for our autumn potato celebration: we will need artists, actors, designers, producers, administrators, photographers, presenters, script writers, chefs, storytellers, everybody and anybody!

**To offer your expertise and resources or to register your 'research' team contact: research@spuds.ie
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