

SA GROWER

NZ update provides important insights

POTATOES SA
By **ROBBIE DAVIS, CEO**

LAST month, I attended the Potatoes New Zealand Inc annual conference and annual general meeting in Pukekohe – one of NZ's largest potato production areas.

With just four Australians present, it was critical the nation was represented to reinforce the important industry relationship and learn about practices employed to manage Tomato Potato Psyllid, which has been detected in WA.

There was considerable opportunity for feedback on what is and isn't working in the field in NZ and to meet with research and industry experts, including primary producers.

Potatoes NZ chief executive officer Chris Claridge provided an overview of the organisation's research and development strategy contracted to and undertaken by the Foundation for Arable Research; a major factor is maximising productivity, which is often limited by soil conditions and the presence

of soil and seed borne diseases and pests.

The six strategic research, development and extension initiatives are as follows:

- Right to farm issues – including water management;
- Best on-farm practice – including crop rotation interaction and efficient input usage;
- Industry plant breeding; Diseases and pest management;
- Innovative products and components; and
- Novel waste product development.

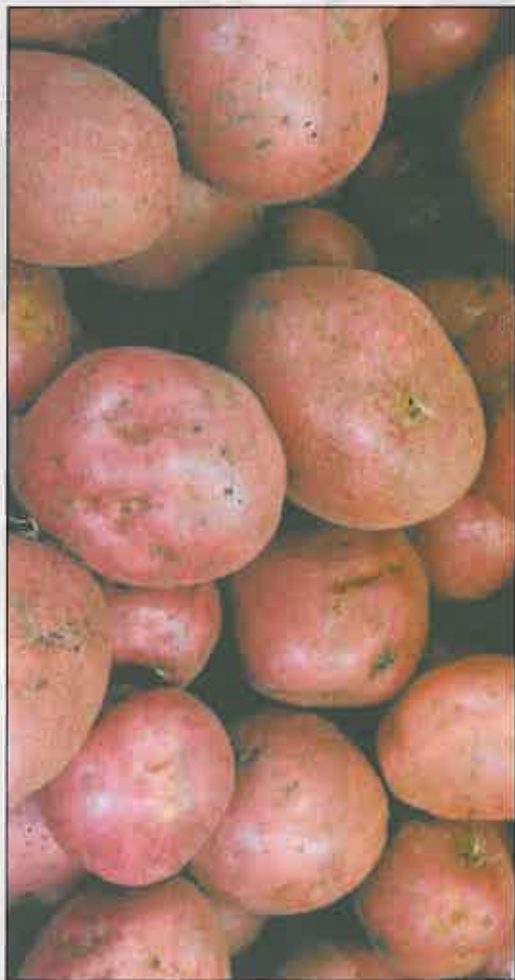
This R,D&E is assisting Potatoes NZ Inc achieve its priority goals of:

1. Increasing profit from productivity by \$150 a hectare per year;
2. Doubling the value of fresh and processed NZ-based exports by 2025; and
3. Enhancing the value of the domestic market by 50 per cent by 2025.

Following an agronomists' forum on day one, speakers on days two and three included world-leading agronomist John Sarup, SPUD Agronomy & Consultancy Ltd, United Kingdom; Plant and Food Research NZ's TPP and Liberbacter specialist Jessica Dohmen-Verejisse; Plant and Food Research NZ principal scientist Grant Smith; FAR chief executive officer Nick Pyke; and VICSPA general manager Nigel Crump.

Chairman Stuart Wright provided a snapshot of the NZ potato industry in his annual report, which included the following:

- In 2016, NZ's total horticultural exports exceeded \$5 billion – a remarkable increase from \$3b in 2008;
- Potatoes are a substantial part of this success story with more than \$120 million of exports – \$84m of frozen fries, \$16m of crisps and \$26m of fresh product – which greatly exceeds Australia's exports;
- Domestically, demand remained strong in the consumer and food service sectors with gross



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the voice of
the potato
industry
in New Zealand

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S O U T H A U S T R A L I A




two countries has never been more essential despite competition in export markets.

There is opportunity and need for shared knowledge and experience especially in agronomy, pest management (Zebra Chip disease complex), biosecurity and value-adding. We should be working towards this partnership to enable more volume to allow joint southern hemisphere exports into the growing markets of Asia when the northern hemisphere is unable to supply.

The contacts made at the event will be used constructively in the establishment of an 'incursion preparedness' blueprint for exotic plant pests and diseases.

household expenditure on fresh potatoes of \$2.2m a week and \$1m on frozen fries;

■ In 2016, weekly expenditure on crisps was \$2.3m, with nearly \$1m

spent on hot chips; Access to Japan for fresh processed potatoes is being sought; and Exports of fresh potatoes to Fiji remain high. Collaboration between the