

Performer Potato Wins Best New Variety at the UK Grower Awards 2017

Potato breeder and seed supplier Agrico UK Ltd have recently won the UK Grower Awards in the category of 'Best New Variety: Vegetables/Salads' for their 'Performer' potato. The judges favoured this chipping & processing variety for its ability to be a 'medicine for the land,' combatting the potato pest known as 'Potato Cyst Nematode'.



Agrico's Marketing Manager & Variety Ambassador Mark Oughtred receiving the award from actress, writer and comedian Jo Caulfield who was hosting the event

The Performer potato impressed the judges for its ability to combat potato cyst nematode (PCN), a serious soil borne crop pest, particularly in the UK and in many parts of Europe, where it costs millions of pounds a year in lost yield.

There are two species of PCN, *G. rostochiensis* and *G. pallida*, and while many potato varieties are now resistant to the former, it is the latter that has become widespread in the UK, causing damage ranging from slight yield loss and growth impediment up to complete crop failure.

Current control measures rely on crop rotation, the use of chemical treatments, trap cropping and the selection of resistant potato varieties. Most growers use a combination of these approaches. However, with crop-protection chemicals under ever greater scrutiny, varieties with inbuilt resistance are becoming increasingly important.

Performer produces a high yield in *G. pallida* infested soils even without chemical treatment, allowing it to be grown in fields where other potato varieties are financially unviable. However, it gets better than this – Performer has the added ability to prevent *G. pallida* from multiplying which reduces the nematode population, effectively cleaning the soil for future farming production. The grower, the soil and the environment all benefit, as Agrico has shown via independently assessed trials carried out over the past five years.

Although Performer tuber numbers can be lower than other varieties, the marketable yield is very high with low wastage, commonly producing in excess of 50 tonnes per hectare. This variety is also well suited for long term storage and produces an excellent product late into the season with stable sugar levels. With its large size, long oval shape, shallow eyes and pale-yellow flesh, Performer is an ideal chipper and is gaining popularity in the fish and chip shop market in particular.

Archie Gibson, Executive Director at Agrico UK comments:

“We are very pleased to win this award and receive recognition from the judges that plant breeding is able to address concerns about soil health, in particular regards to the detrimental effects of Potato Cyst Nematode Pallida”.



Performer is a big and bold variety that lives up to its name, providing a solution to the PCN Pallida problem in the UK

For more information about the UK Grower Awards please visit: www.thegrowerawards.co.uk

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For more information about Agrico and the Performer potato, please contact Mark Oughtred at Agrico UK Ltd

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About Agrico UK Ltd

- Agrico UK Ltd is a specialist developer and supplier of high grade seed potatoes for pre-packers, processors, seed merchants and branded operations worldwide
- Through their sister company 'Agrico Research BV' in Holland, Agrico breed new and innovative potato varieties to bring to an ever changing market
- Agrico UK is contracted to grow over 1,100Ha of conventional and organic seed and collectively markets approximately 45,000 - 50,000 tonnes a year of certified Scottish, English, French and Dutch seed
- Agrico UK choose varieties that cater for the domestic consumer preference, and that grow well in the UK climate. By working with a carefully selected team of growers on a technical level, they then multiply these varieties up to sell seed potatoes commercially to customers in the table, chipping, crisping and processing industries
- Although a subsidiary of Agrico Holland, a Dutch farmer owned cooperative, Agrico UK operates independently to accommodate for the home market, but has the advantages that come from being part of a larger organisation
- For further information please visit: www.agrico.co.uk