



EU action plan: a call to combat late blight in potatoes

Civil Dialogue Group
Starch

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copa***cogeca**
european farmers european agri-cooperatives

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The screenshot shows the COPA-COGECA website. The header includes the logo "copa*cogeca" with the tagline "european farmers european agri-cooperatives". Navigation links include "Members", "Request access", "EN", and social media icons. A menu bar lists "EUROPEAN FARMING", "ABOUT", "POLICY", "NEWS", "PUBLICATIONS", "PROJECTS", and "CONTACT". The main heading is "PUBLICATIONS". Below it, there are filters for "2024", "mail", and "Languages...". A search bar contains "Quick search" and "Search in content". The results table has columns for "Name", "Language", and "Date".

Name	Language	Date
EU Action Plan - EU potato production at risk: a call to combat late blight in potatoes	DE EN ES FR IT PL RO	30/05/2024



Late blight in potatoes

* **Annual economic damage in the EU is estimated around 900 million EUR**

source: Development and validation of IPM strategies for the cultivation of cisgenically modified late blight resistant potato, Geert J.T. Kessel & Co, European Journal of Agronomy, 2018,146-155)



Famine Memorial, Dublin, Ireland

The pathogen: *Phytophthora infestans*



- * The pathogen, a fungi, infects both foliage and tubers and can destroy the complete crop within 1-2 weeks.
- * The pathogen is highly adaptive and able to quickly develop resistance to fungicides and break resistance genes (R-genes).
- * Recently, the pathogen population is developing more complex virulence spectra. These developments are reducing the number of effective control tools.

Source: FN3PT

The EU action plan aims to

- **Raise awareness** of the need to tackle this problem among national and European public authorities and stakeholders in the potato value chain.
- **Develop concrete measures** in close collaboration with the European Commission, Member States and stakeholders.
- **Recognize the need for safe, effective and sufficient tools to control late blight**
- **Prioritise the provision of coherent and systemic information.** and advice available to EU farmers based on the adoption of the latest R&D findings on the population dynamics of *Phytophthora infestans*.



Content of the action plan: short-term measures

- * **Creating a stakeholder dialogue platform** and **collaborating with the existing scientific research groups and networks.**
- * **Equipping the farmers' toolbox sufficiently.**
- * Develop a **harmonized availability of tools.** Ensure collaboration between Member State authorities to avoid having differences in available solutions across Member States to suppress selection and the spread of resistant strains.
- * Highlighting how **late blight resistant potato varieties** are one important key to any solution. Now, the resistant varieties mostly contain a single resistance gene (R-gene), which is highly likely to be circumvented. Therefore, conventional breeding with the support of marker-assisted selection needs to continue.
- * **Raise awareness among distributors and value chain partners** about the need to promote planting different available late blight-resistant potato varieties.



Content of the action plan: mid-term measures

- * **Monitoring Phytophthora infestans populations.**
- * Establishing of an **early warning system** for the spread of late blight and resistance to fungicides.
- * Developing a **coordinated approach from the crop protection sector and breeders.** The most effective way to control the spread of late blight is the combined use of effective plant protection products and resistant potato varieties with combinations of different resistance genes.
- * **Developing new and effective solutions** with the ability to control foliar and tuber blight.
- * Breeding
 - * An early detection of new types of late blight bypassing new genetic resistances can help to avoid uncontrolled outbreaks of late blight. providing **a feedback-system for potato-breeders.**
 - * Both traditional marker-assisted breeding as well as New Genomic Techniques (NGTs) are a supportive tool to develop additional resistant varieties.



Call on policy makers



- * Communicate on the importance and benefits of potatoes in a balanced diet, thereby securing EU potato production by combatting late blight in potatoes
- * Support from authorities to help bridge the gap between researchers and farmers and to find widely shared solutions that would ultimately be perceived as new feasible opportunities for farmers to improve productivity.
- * Make funds available for fundamental and agronomic research projects and knowledge transfers to combat late blight in potatoes.



Call on policy makers

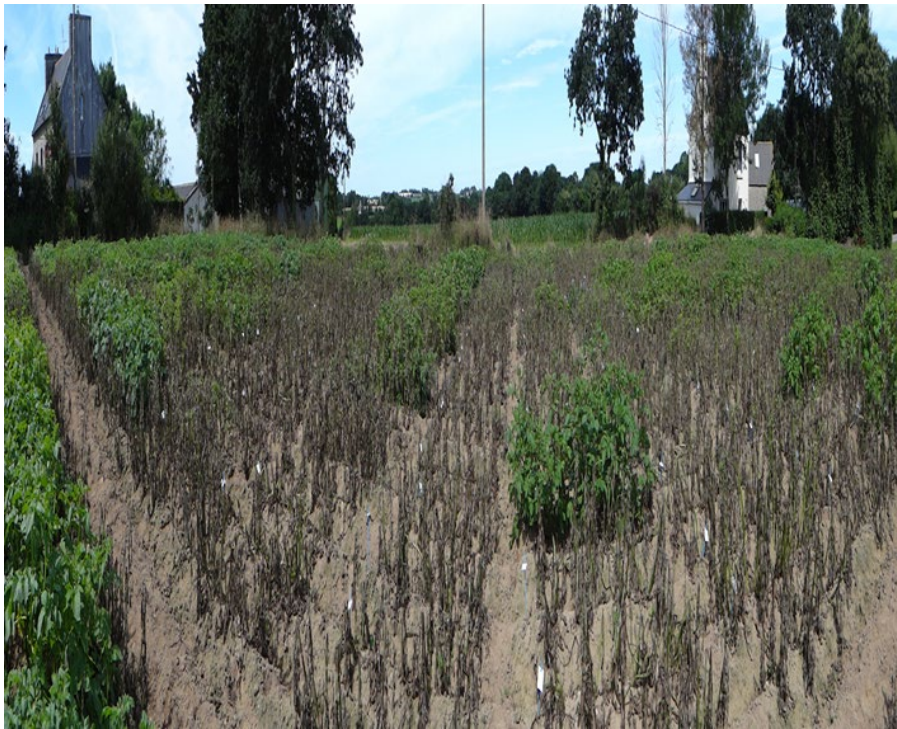


- * Support the continuous availability of existing late blight fungicides and consider their benefits when reviewing their approvals.
- * Maintain conventional solutions in the overall search for alternative solutions. Currently available fungicides should not be banned nor restricted without a proper risk/benefit analysis, and unless a similar effective, sustainable and affordable alternative, with at least the same level of efficacy, is available on the market. Fungicides supporting a minimum of five highly efficient modes of action should be maintained to ensure effective fungicide resistance management by farmers.
- * Establish a faster and less burdensome approval procedure for effective plant health solutions
- * Promote chemical solutions with a lower environmental impact as part of the search for alternative solutions



Call on policy makers

- * Support further development of breeding techniques for improved disease resistance including for both conventional as well as NGTs. NGTs must be therefore approved as soon as possible
- * Develop effective, tailor-made Integrated Pest Management strategies
- * Set up an EIP-AGRI Operational Group project on potato late blight with concrete actions to share knowledge and research results in each relevant Member State.



Stakeholder commitments



- **Partnership** - Involve farmers, scientists and industry with EU and national competent authorities.
- Ensuring that **effective conventional crop protection and biocontrol products, decision support systems and new improved potato varieties** continue to be made available for farmers in the EU.
- **Provide information for all stakeholders** on the cycle of *Phytophthora infestans* and its susceptibility to the different modes of action of fungicides and of resilient improved late blight resistant varieties (R genes/vertical resistance).
- **Collaborating in the supply chain to convey consistent messages about integrated *Phytophthora* management to growers and advisors.**

Thank you for your attention !

