



11th World Potato Congress in Dublin, Ireland, Addresses “The Changing World of the Potato”

Richard “Dick” Okray receives World Potato Congress Industry Award for international work in potatoes

Ever since Sir Walter Raleigh introduced potatoes to Ireland, in 1589, the “Emerald Isle” has been synonymous with spuds. And though it took nearly four decades for the potato to spread to the rest of Europe, Spanish Conquistadors had

discovered the flavors of the potato, in Peru, as early as 1536.

Combined with the deadly Great Famine of 1845-1849, caused by potato blight, Ireland has a long history in potatoes that’s inextricably



entwined with the United States, Europe and all the world.

Thus made the setting of the 11th World Potato Congress (WPC) in Dublin, Ireland, seem more than a fitting venue, but one that was both appropriate and timely, particularly following the last successful event in Cuzco, Peru, in May 2018.

Taking place in the regal setting of the Royal Dublin Society, May 30-June 2, 2022, most of the opening and closing ceremonies, and plenary and business sessions were in a respected



Above: A light shone brightly on “The Emerald Isle” of Ireland as it hosted the 11th World Potato Congress (WPC), May 30-June 2, 2022, in Dublin. Ireland and potatoes are synonymous considering their history and tradition together. Suffice it to say The Emerald Isle’s relationship with the spud is truly unique.

research library that remains stocked to this day, floor to ceiling, with old reference books.

According to Liam Glennon, chairperson of the local organizing committee, 900 delegates from 61 countries were in attendance, and for the first time, the WPC and Europatat Potato Congress were held concurrently.

It was a chance for delegates to meet global potato contacts and explore new business opportunities in the fresh, processed and seed potato sectors.

With the theme of “The Changing World of the Potato,” the role of the potato in combatting global hunger and its credentials as a sustainable and nutritious staple were emphasized.

WELCOME ADDRESS

Glennon kicked off proceedings on Monday, May 30, with a welcome address, followed by remarks from



Above: Local host for the 11th World Potato Congress in Dublin, Michael Hoey of the Irish Potato Federation says it was a dream to bring the world together for the event because potatoes are part of the Irish DNA. They are in their blood. Hoey also took time to welcome his Ukrainian colleagues who were present to let them know that the world is feeling their pain.

Right: In the first plenary session on Monday, May 30, Dr. Qu Dongyu, director



general of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), United Nations, Italy, addressed the WPC theme, “The Potato in a Changing World.” He covered everything from potato research to global food security, population growth, trade protections and restrictions, the conflict between Russia and Ukraine, and the impact of the worldwide pandemic. Dr. Dongyu won a World Potato Congress Award, in Idaho, in 2006.

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Romain Cools, president and chief executive officer of the 11th World Potato Congress.

Further addresses were made by Michael Hoey, president of the Irish Potato Federation; Charlie McConalogue, Ireland's minister of Agriculture, Food and the Marine; Janusz Wojciechowski, European commissioner for agriculture; and Robert Kearns of the Canada Ireland Foundation, Canada.

Hoey also took a sober moment to



"If I Can" rang loud and clear when Chris Koch, a potato farmer from Alberta, Canada, who was born without arms and legs, gave his keynote speech on overcoming all obstacles and leading a productive and happy life. Although he mostly travels the country, independently without an aide or escort, giving talks, Koch can drive nearly any John Deere implement and considers himself a lifelong farmer.

20 BC'T July



welcome his Ukrainian colleagues who were present to let them know that the world is feeling their pain in their fight against the Russian invasion.

Plenary, business, and poster sessions, as well as a corresponding trade show in the Exhibition Hall, kept attendees busy and informed over three days of the WPC.

A welcome reception Monday night was followed by a Congress BBQ in the Clayton Ballsbridge Hotel on Tuesday night, and a social evening on Wednesday at the Guinness Storehouse, in Dublin.

All provided networking opportunities, refreshments, and good food to eat.

A highlight of the World Potato Congress is its Industry Awards ceremony, held the second evening of the event, in this case on May 31.

INDUSTRY AWARDS

As chair of the WPC Industry Awards Committee, Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association Executive Director Tamas Houlihan presented plaques to deserving individuals who have made a lasting impact on the world potato industry.

Awards were presented to **Dr. John J. Burke, Richard W. "Dick" Okay, Paul C. Struik and Antoon Wallays** for their long and distinctive work in the international potato industry.

Okay was employed, from 1982-

Above: On full display at the WPC trade show/exhibition hall were Keogh's Irish potato chips, or "hand cooked crisps." Ross Keogh of Keoghs Farm, Ireland, presented a business session titled, "The Future is Bright," in which he noted, "Quality is remembered long after price is forgotten."

2020, at Okay Family Farms in Plover, Wisconsin, growing 7,750 acres of quality row crops in Central Wisconsin, specializing in fresh channel potatoes.

The farm was started by his family over 110 years ago. His most recent title was president, and he worked in sales for the family organization.

Following his retirement, in 2020, he remains a co-owner of the family farm, which won a national environmental stewardship award for its outstanding achievement for pesticide risk reduction.

The international potato industry has benefited greatly from the leadership of Okay. He served on the Executive Committee of the U.S. Potato Board (now known as Potatoes USA) and has served as a potato industry ambassador from the United States, attending multiple World Potato Congress events in China, Scotland, New Zealand, and Peru.

He and his wife, Carol, were instrumental in helping raise funds to build multiple wells in impoverished villages near Cameroon, Africa.

They established a WellersWalk



event in Stevens Point, Wisconsin, with participants filling and carrying large water jugs to a central location, raising awareness of the trek many villagers in Africa make daily just to gather enough water for their families' needs.

IMPROVING LIVES

Funds raised from the annual event were used to construct wells in areas around rural Cameroon, greatly improving the lives of thousands of villagers.

Active in his community and industry, Dick has served on numerous

organizations and boards, including the Wisconsin Migrant Labor Council; Central Wisconsin Economic Development Corp.; United Potato Growers of Wisconsin; and the United Potato Growers of America.

Dick is also widely respected and admired for his philanthropic efforts, serving on the Board of Directors of the St. Michael's Hospital Foundation, the Edward J. Okray charitable Foundation and recently the Farming for the Future Foundation.

Dr. Burke is one of Ireland's foremost experts in potato agronomy. In the

Left: Dick Okray of Stevens Point, Wisconsin, receives the Industry Award at the 11th World Potato Congress held in Dublin, Ireland.

Right: Pictured at the WPC awards ceremony are, left to right, Romain Cools (WPC president), Mark Finnessy (of Okray Family Farms, accepting the Industry Award for Dick Okray), Antoon Wallays, Paul C. Struik, John Burke and Tamas Houlihan (WPC awards chairman).

1990s, John returned to study to undertake a Ph.D. entitled "The effect of seed source, physiological age and desiccation date on yield and chip

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color in a range of potato cultivars.”

John retired from Teagasc (Ireland’s Agriculture and Food Development Authority), in 2007, having worked also on cereal disease control.

In retirement, he returned to his favorite crop to volunteer with Vita, an Irish non-government organization working primarily in Ethiopia and Eritrea on potato development projects.

He worked tirelessly to maximize the impact of potato, always with a focus on developing farmers’ capabilities and knowledge.

PREVENTING BACTERIAL WILT

He spearheaded local seed production on virgin community land in Chencha, Ethiopia, to prevent the spread of bacterial wilt, and pioneered the production of seed potatoes in mountainous regions in Eritrea to prevent viral degeneration.

Struik has been a professor of crop physiology at Wageningen University since 1986. He was the youngest-ever



appointed professor in Wageningen at that time, and potato has been the focus crop over his career.

He has conducted research on physiology; seed production; QTL (Quantitative Trait Locus)-based modeling of crop growth and quality; seed system and chain management of agricultural produce in Africa; and sustainable intensification.

Paul has been editor in chief of Potato Research, the journal of the

Above: Resting their tired feet at the WPC are, from left to right, Mark Finnessy, vice president of Okray Family Farms, Plover, Wisconsin; Potatoes USA Chief Executive Officer Blair Richardson; and Dick and Carol Okray, with Dick being retired from Okray Family Farms and the recipient of this year’s World Potato Congress Industry Award.

European Association for Potato Research (EAPR), since 1990, and a member of the EAPR Board in various roles over the same period.

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Nine hundred delegates from 61 countries attended the 11th World Potato Congress in Dublin, Ireland.

Take Aim Against Colorado Potato Beetle

Neonicotinoids have been the foundation of insect control in potatoes for decades. But, some pests, including Colorado potato beetle (CPB), are showing signs of resistance to this class of chemistry. Some growers have reported lower levels of residual control from at-plant applications of neonicotinoids leading to an increased need for foliar applications to control second generation CPB. Experts recommend incorporating multiple modes of action into CPB management plans to provide robust control and help preserve the long-term utility of neonicotinoids.

When left untreated or treated with only neonicotinoids, CPB can quickly defoliate an entire potato crop. Growers can take aim against this voracious pest with one swift move: an application of Minecto® Pro insecticide.

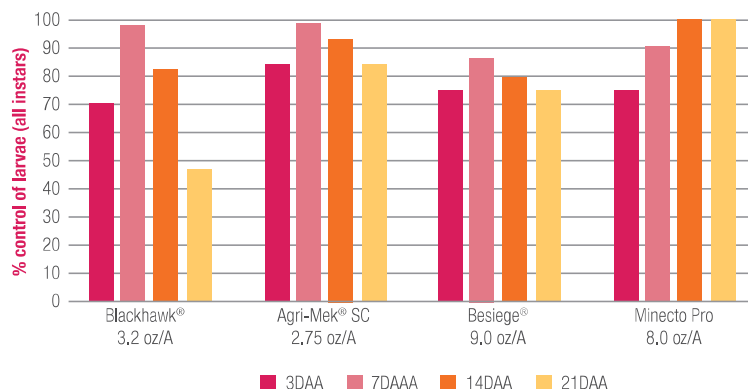
“There have been some reports of neonicotinoids not working well in the eastern part of the U.S.,” says Kiran Shetty, Ph.D., Syngenta technical development lead for potatoes. “There are also reports of second-

generation beetles not being effectively controlled by neonicotinoids. In that case a product like Minecto Pro, a non-neonicotinoid foliar insecticide, fits really well because you can clean up the second generation that comes up during the course of the season while maintaining a good resistance management strategy.”

Minecto Pro is a strong alternative to neonicotinoids for mid- to late-season insect protection in potatoes. With two modes of action from two active ingredients, cyantraniliprole and abamectin, Minecto Pro controls a wide range of lepidopteran pests, Colorado potato beetle and other insect populations that may overlap or occur simultaneously. Minecto Pro is rainfast once dry and provides a reservoir of active ingredients, delivering extended residual control of sucking and chewing pests for up to three weeks.

To learn more about controlling potato pests like CPB, visit www.syngenta.com/minectopro.

Colorado Potato Beetle Control (Larvae)



No. of total larvae in check (per 20 plants):	
3 DAA	40.0
7 DAA	49.0
14 DAA	72.0
21 DAA	57.0

Variety: Red Norland

All treatments included NIS @ 0.1% v/v; Foliar application: one application on June 13, 2016; USEC010042016 – Internal Syngenta trial, NY

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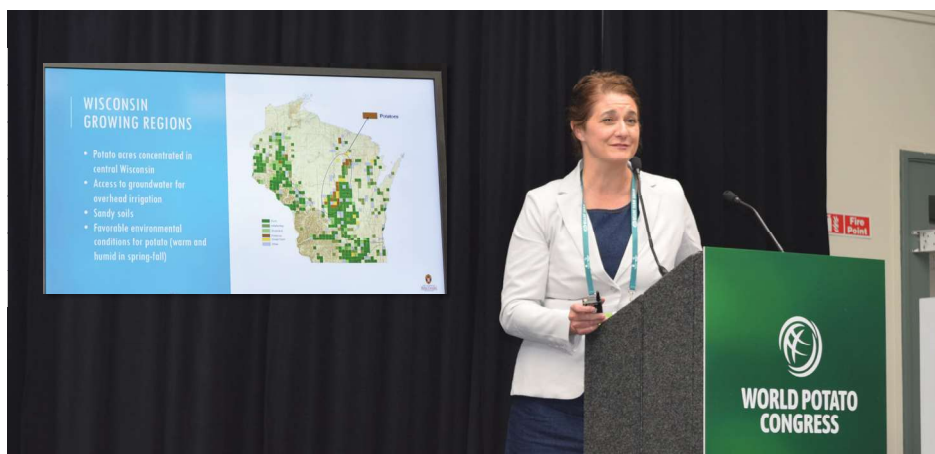
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He is co-author of more than 500 scientific papers in international journals, including the “Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences” and a “NATURE PLANTS” paper, and six papers in “Trends in Plant Science.”

After his studies as a civil engineer, **Wallays**, together with his business companion and agronomist Luc Raes, created the Belgian potato processing factory Agristo in Hulste/Harelbeke.

Both Antoon and Luc were sons of farmers, and their spouses were active in the administration department of the company, making it a real family business.



University of Wisconsin-Madison's own Amanda Gevens, professor and chair in the Department of Plant Pathology, gave a presentation on “Emerging Plant Pathogens of Potato” at the WPC.

BELGIAN POTATO TRADE

Since the beginning of his career, Wallays he has been active in the Belgian potato trade and processing

association, Belgapom.

As chairman of the environment group, his role in the development of the Belgian potato industry was one of the most progressive regarding new water purification and re-use technology.

He was responsible for the creation

Left: As is tradition during each WPC closing ceremony, the official flag is handed off from the present year's host country to the upcoming winner of the congressional honors. Liam Glennon (right, holding flag), president of the Irish Potato Federation and chairperson of the WPC Organizing Committee, hands the flag to Dr. Nigel Crump (left), general manager for the Australian Seed Potato Industry Certification Authority. The 12th World Potato Congress will take place in Adelaide, Australia, June 23-26, 2024.



One of several technical tours offered to WPC attendees took them to the Meade Potato Farm, a family-run grower, packer, and shipper, in County Meath, Ireland, that's been in business since 1982 and employs over 340 people.



of the Flemish guideline for best available technologies, which became a reference document for the European Union potato and vegetable processing industry.

As president of Belgapom (2006-2012), he played a crucial role in the development of the Belgian industry federation and the professionalization of the European Potato Processors Association, of which he was a long-time active board member.

Each of the WPC Industry Awards

winners was allowed a few words after receiving their plaques. Congratulations to each of them for the well-deserved, prestigious awards and their accomplishments in the international potato industry.

WPC technical tours took place Thursday, June 2, and included choices of potato farms, castles, distilleries, scenic and coastline routes, museums and field days. Additional leisure excursions were

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Left: Paula and Tamas Houlihan took in the plenary sessions on Tuesday, May 31, before Tamas, executive director of the Wisconsin Potato & Vegetable Growers Association, presented the WPC Industry Awards. Tamas is chairman of the WPC Industry Awards Committee.

Right: Alicia and Jeremie Pavelski of Heartland Farms, Inc., Hancock, Wisconsin, pose with daughter, Charlotte, at the 11th World Potato Congress, in Dublin. The room where the plenary and business sessions were held, on the historic Royal Dublin Society grounds, was once a respected and well-stocked (still to this day) research library.



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offered to WPC attendees, families, and guests.

DECLARATION OF DUBLIN

On the last day of the World Potato Congress, Cools outlined the “WPC Declaration of Dublin,” calling for the global potato value chain to invest in potato solutions to advance the United Nations (UN) Sustainable Development Agenda 2030.

In this agenda, the UN has included 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG’s), which are a universal call to action to end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.

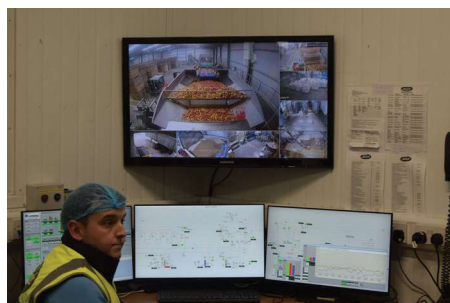
Cools pointed out statistics illustrating world population growth of 9.7 billion by 2050, and a need for 70 percent more food produced in an increasingly sustainable way.



Climate change is an extra challenge to increase productivity to reduce rural poverty. To obtain these objectives worldwide, millions of smallholder families are needed to

assure food security, climb out of poverty, and engage in an active value chain, leading to jobs and wealth creation.

Cools reasoned that local food



Above: What is a visit to Dublin without a proper Irish jig? Dancers and musicians entertained WPC guests at the Guinness Storehouse during a social evening, June 1, 2022.

Left and Below: Though red Rooster potatoes seem to be the pride of Ireland, the Meade Potato Farm brings over 35,000 metric tons of various premium spuds to market each year, on average.



production, and potatoes more specifically, must be intensified to assure food security and reduce dependency from international trade.

In a lot of areas in the world, the potato crop could be part of the solution, as has been illustrated during the COVID pandemic and the impact of the conflict in Ukraine.

As is tradition during each WPC closing ceremony, the official flag is handed off from the present year's host country to the upcoming winner of the congressional honors.

Glennon, president of the Irish Potato Federation and chairperson of the WPC Organizing Committee, handed the flag to Dr. Nigel Crump, general manager for the Australian Seed Potato Industry Certification Authority.

The 12th World Potato Congress will take place in Adelaide, Australia, June 23-26, 2024. **BC'T**



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