



WatchITgrow

A revolutionary jump forward for the Belgian potato chain!

Planetarium - Brussels, 14 March 2017: Today BELSPO, VITO, CRA-W, ULG and Belgapom launch the webplatform watchITgrow.

WatchITgrow is a new geo-information platform developed for the Belgian potato sector with the purpose to better estimate and increase the potato yield in a sustainable way. With this webtool the Belgian potato growers, traders and processors can quickly and in a user friendly way access data and information on the growth of different potato varieties.

WatchITgrow is the result of 3 years of scientific research under the project name iPot. The iPot project started in 2014 under the auspices of the STEREO-III research programme of the Federal Science Policy Office (BELSPO). WatchITgrow now makes the results of this scientific research available for the entire Belgian potato sector.

The power of Remote Sensing for the agricultural sector

WatchITgrow is the first platform to combine several types of data. Through the combination of satellite and drone images, weather and soil data and yield prediction models, the potato sector can consult, via watchITgrow, in a quick and efficient way the correct information on one or multiple potato fields. With these additional insights one can:

- Access more and more accurate information on the state of the crop;
- Better monitor the potato crop in function of growth, health status and development;
- Map spatial variability within the field;
- Improve yields;
- Estimate the harvest date and yields during the season;
- Reduce production and quality losses.

Not only external data but also data from the potato industry (such as yield and quality parameters) can be centralised using this geo-information platform. This allows the users to check in an easy way for example which part of the production area gives the best yields or where a certain potato variety performs better or worse and what the possible causes may be.

WatchITgrow, the potato sector and research world, side by side

After 3 years of scientific research by scientists from Flanders and Wallonia (VITO, CRA-W and ULG) together with the potato traders and processors (Belgapom), the online geo-information platform watchITgrow is born. The platform is developed for the potato sector with intensive input from the sector.

The data and knowledge of the potato sector enabled the researchers to finetune and gradually improve the monitoring system. Thanks to additional field data the application will keep improving and become more and more accurate season after season.

This innovative instrument can form the basis of future applications within the field of precision agriculture, such as for instance disease monitoring and fertilization advise, but also the possibility to link the field registration system of Vegaplan.

Crucial is the fact that the potato grower remains himself the owner of his data, whereby he can decide himself whether or not to share this information with his customers.

Belgium, the biggest exporter of frozen potato products in the world

Belgium is the biggest exporter of frozen potato products in the world. Romain Cools from Belgapom: "On a yearly basis the Belgian companies process almost 4,5 million tonnes of potatoes in fries, crips and other products, of which 90 % are exported. If the sector wants to keep investing in a sustainable growth, more an better potatoes are needed and this with an optimal use of natural resources. However, an extension of the agricultural area is not possible. With the help of watchITGrow, the potato production can be better monitored and the yield increased. This way, the potato chain can, as flag ship of the Belgian agro-food chain, further insure and extend its role as a world player in the potato industry. "

More information

<http://www.watchitgrow.be>

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