

Industry is urged to pull together



TASK FORCE: Tjaart Hofman speaking at the British Potatoes Event in Harrogate

A MAJOR Northern event heard a plea to keep a potato crop protection product on the market and about new in-field diagnostic tools.

At the British Potatoes Event, held in Harrogate, the CIPC Task Force called for the potato industry to

pull together to help keep Chlorpropham on the market for seasons to come.

Speaking on behalf of the task force, Tjaart Hofman, portfolio development manager at Certis Europe, urged industry stakeholders to share their experiences with

the active substance, and to reiterate its importance to the sector.

He said CIPC re-registration would be concluded early this year. "This task force is working closely together to collect all available data and answer any



potential questions regulators may have to ensure CIPC continues to bring major benefits to the potato industry in the future.

“The potato processing industry has evolved significantly over the last 30 years, with the European potato sector now worth approximately 19.4 billion euros. Of that figure, 50 per cent is represented by the processing sector specifically.

“Europe remains the second largest producer of potatoes worldwide and is the biggest exporter of frozen potato produce globally. The volume of frozen potato produce exported outside the EU has increased from 0.685 million tons of potatoes to 1.300 million tons of potatoes in the last ten years.

“This guaranteed year-round supply of potato produce is only made possible through access to crop protection products that help maintain crop quality in long-term storage, and most importantly CIPC.”

Dr Mike Storey, chair of the CIPC stewardship group, said growers also had

a role to play. “This is a critical time for the UK potato sector, and at farm level we also need to work together to ensure there are no exceedances of the current CIPC MRL levels, and that Be CIPC Compliant stewardship guidelines are followed and maintained.

“Without CIPC, there will inevitably be an impact on production and storage capabilities, so it’s important that the industry acts now to raise awareness of the lack of valid alternatives, to secure the future of this active.”

Also at the event **Fera** Science senior nematologist Tom Prior presented new in-field diagnostic tools developed by **Fera** which are able to rapidly identify plant-parasitic nematodes, insects, fungal, bacterial and viral pathogens, from plant material.

Accurate and simple to use, these tools have been integrated into the Genie II diagnostic machine, and can be used in the field as a service conducted by Fera or purchased and used by agronomy firms, Fera

announced at the event.

The portable device, scheduled to be released this year, can distinguish between different species of root knot nematode in minutes, analysing DNA samples and matching these to DNA sequences of known pathogens.

This allows for rapid detection - **Fera** said current lab-testing is expensive and currently takes a week to identify the pest, preventing a swift response to issues.

Mr Prior said: “As nematodes have been estimated to cost the worldwide food and farming industry around £48 billion of damage, and cause losses of up to ten per cent of annual food production, being aware of what is in your field and adopting appropriate strategies is key to enhancing long-term production.”

He talked about the risk of root-knot nematodes to potato crops, the importance of accurately identifying nematode populations to species and how Fera is developing innovative methods for rapid identification in the field.