

IYP around the globe

*People observed the International Year
with scientific conferences, potato growers' congresses,
festivals of biodiversity, cooking contests,
art exhibitions, block parties and school events.
Highlights of a global celebration...*



Flowering potato plants are showered with ribbons at a festival in the Andes, Peru



JANUARY

India

International expo in Kolkata

The world's No. 3 potato producer, India, helped launch the Year of the Potato with an International Potato Expo in Kolkata. Organized by the Indian Chamber of Commerce and the Government of West Bengal State, the expo showcased the potential of India as a hub for potato production and processing. Activities included a two-day conference, field visits, and three days of exhibitions and cultural events. The host state, West Bengal, is India's second largest potato producer, with annual output of more than 7 million tonnes.

Ecuador

A seminar, then a carnival

Ecuador was one of the first countries to form a national committee for IYP celebrations. Events got under way with a workshop organized by FAO and CIP on strategies for small farmer participation in the potato economy. The seminar, attended by delegates from producer organizations, NGOs and local governments, was followed by a potato carnival in the farming area of Alto Guanujo, where 200 people sampled potato dishes and shared the results of a three-year study on the uses of native potato varieties.

FEBRUARY



Switzerland

Odyssey of the potato in Europe

The International Potato Center in Peru launched a travelling exhibit "The Odyssey of the Potato", which visited 10 European cities during 2008. The exhibit, which opened at the Federal Institute of Technology in Zurich, Switzerland, on 1 February, illustrated the domestication of the potato in Peru, its introduction to Europe and dissemination worldwide, and its important role today in food security and economic development.

Ireland

Challenge for Irish schoolkids

Primary school children across Ireland received potato seed tubers as part of a "Meet the spuds!" Challenge – a potato-growing competition sponsored by the country's AgriAware Trust, the IYP national committee and the Irish Department of Agriculture. As the plants grew, pupils recorded progress with drawings, photos and written observations. In June, photos of the harvested crop were submitted for final assessment. The eight winning schools received a cash grant.

Canada

Potato technology on show

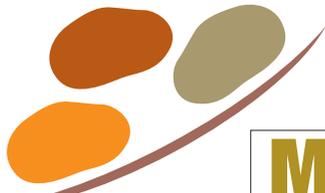
Warming up for the new potato planting season, two of Canada's premier potato-growing provinces hosted conferences and technology exhibitions in February. The New Brunswick Potato Conference and Trade Show featured two days of deliberations on topics ranging from demand prospects to late blight and climate change. On neighbouring Prince Edward Island, the biennial Technology Expo provided a showcase for 100 leading suppliers.

Syrian Arab Republic

Workshop at Damascus University

Damascus University hosted a national workshop on the potato which included presentations on the results of FAO projects to strengthen the Syrian Arab Republic's capacity for virus-free seed potato production using tissue culture, monitor aphid pests of potato, and set standards for seed certification.

CIP



86 ✨ International Year
of the Potato 2008
*New light on a hidden
treasure*

MARCH

United States of America

Gnocchi night in Seattle to raise funds

Sabrina Tatta, a lecturer in Italian Studies at the University of Washington in Seattle, hosted a cooking evening where she prepared *gnocchi* (Italian dumplings made from boiled and sieved potatoes mixed with flour). "The objective," she said, "is to celebrate Italian cooking and raise funds for undergraduate scholarships. We also hope to raise awareness about Italian culture, biodiversity and the potato as a tool for achieving Millennium Development Goals."

Egypt

Potato on display in Cairo

Egypt is the biggest potato producer in Africa, with an output in 2007 of some 2.6 million tonnes. It was, therefore, an appropriate venue for FAO's Near East Regional Conference, which was attended by high-ranking agriculture officials from 32 countries stretching from Morocco to Afghanistan. Between discussions on transboundary animal diseases, pesticide management and climate change, delegates viewed a presentation on IYP and the potato.

Peru

Papa, madre on display in Cusco

French photographer Jean-Louis Gonterre held an exhibition entitled *Papa, madre* at the Inca Museum in Cusco for most of the month of March. On display was a collection of 50 striking photographs taken in Bolivia, Ecuador and Peru with the potato – or *papa* – as the central theme. In documenting the age-old cycle of potato planting and harvesting, Gonterre paid homage to the Andean farmers who have nurtured *Solanum tuberosum* and moulded it into countless varieties.

Italy

IYP celebrated in northern Italy

The Regional Agency for Rural Development, in northern Italy's Friuli Venezia Giulia region, organized a potato exhibition during the annual horticulture show in Pordenone. Visitors were offered potato dishes from around the world prepared by a women's intercultural association. The agency also sponsored on 8 March an international potato conference, with participants from FAO, the European Union, the Italian Ministry of Agriculture and the Alpe-Adria region.

Argentina

Course in papa production

The agricultural research station at Balcarce, near Buenos Aires, began breeding potatoes in 1940. Today, the station covers some 2 000 ha of land, with a staff of 250, and specializes in research on genetic enhancement, seed analysis, micropropagation and nematology. The station shared its knowledge with agricultural science graduates from Argentina and other Latin American countries through a six-day course on potato production, beginning on 10 March.

United States of America

IYP on the web

Representing 4 000 potato growers, the United States Potato Board says further growth in the industry will come from innovation. To celebrate IYP 2008, the Board bought prime cyberspace – on the Food Network website – to supply busy mothers between the ages of 25 and 50 (among the most active users of the internet) with meal ideas and nutrition information.





Peru

CIP

Global potato conference in Cusco

The historic city of Cusco, Peru, at the heart of the potato's Andean centre of origin, hosted in March one of the major events of the International Year: a landmark global conference on "Potato science for the poor" sponsored by the International Potato Center and the Food and Agriculture Organization.

During the four-day conference, more than 100 of the world's leading authorities on the potato and on research-for-development shared insights and recent research results to develop strategies for increasing the productivity, profitability and sustainability of potato-based systems.

Potatoes seen as answer to high cereal costs

Food scientists are meeting in Cusco, Peru, to find ways of boosting world potato production to ease the strain of surging cereal prices on the world's poorest countries. The conference aims to expand the role of a crop that produces more food on less land than maize, wheat or rice.

Financial Times
27 March 2008

They addressed potato development challenges facing three distinct economic typologies – outlined in the *World Bank's World Development Report 2008* – in the developing world. The first is agriculture-based countries, mainly in Africa, where the poor are concentrated in rural areas and produce potato for home consumption

first and then sale to local markets. CIP and FAO say a priority for these countries is research and technology sharing to support a "sustainable productivity revolution" and to link producers to domestic and regional commodity markets.

Different strategies are needed for the "transforming economies" of Africa, Asia, the Middle East and North Africa, where potato systems are characterized by very small, intensively managed farms and by a widening rural-urban poverty gap. The challenge for those countries is to sustainably manage intensive systems, increasing

productivity while minimizing health and environmental risks.

In the urbanized economies typical of Latin America, Central Asia and Eastern Europe, where agriculture plays a reduced role, the challenge is to ensure the social and environmental sustainability of potato-based systems and link small potato producers to new food markets.

Farmer-researchers. Conference participants visited a 12,000 ha "Potato Park" near Cusco, where farmer-researchers have restored to production over 600 traditional Andean potato varieties, providing the genetic building blocks of future varieties.

One of the outputs of the conference has been dubbed the "Cusco Challenge", a year-long dialogue within the global potato science community that will address issues and opportunities in the future development of this essential crop.