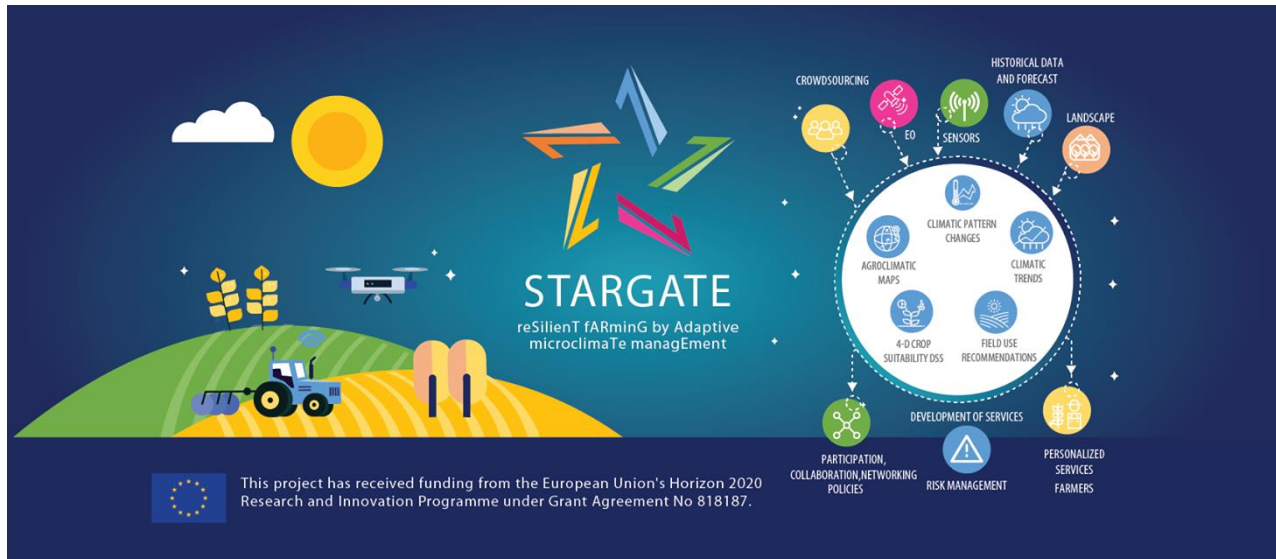


Starch potatoes are still in demand

With the development of Aloja Starkelsen Ltd., the demand for export produce, namely organically produced starch, is increasing. As the production of potato starch requires potatoes with high starch content, the ware potatoes will not be suitable for this purpose. Turning to the researchers of the Priekuli Research Centre of the Institute of Agricultural Resources and Economics (AREI PPC), we inquired about those varieties of starch potatoes that are able to provide a suitable amount of starch for processing and easily yield to organic farming methods.



When choosing a potato variety with the aim of passing the crop on to the processor, special consideration should be given to the selected starch potato varieties. As the organic potato starch is an export product that can be successfully sold both to the EU Member States and to the USA and the East, the project "Baltic Organic Potatoes for the World Market" was implemented from 2013 to 2015 for a faster increase of production. It was implemented within the Estonia-Latvia cross-border cooperation programme by seven partners from Latvia and Estonia. This project focused on the study of raw materials, namely potatoes for organic starch production. From the varieties created in Latvia, we can highlight three medium late maturing potato varieties that are ideally suited for starch production - "Brasla", "Imanta" and one of the latest newcomers - "Jogla".

Studies show that Brasla does not stand out in tuber size, but, despite various summer conditions, its advantage is a stable yield level and a stable and adequate starch content in tubers. On average, the starch content in potatoes varies depending on the weather; thus, in sunny summers the starch content is very high, while in rainy summers it is lower. Brasla will be a reliable ally in this regard. In any year, under any growing conditions, it is possible to obtain a normal yield with a sufficiently high starch content from this variety. Although Brasla is relatively less resistant to leaf rot, it is compensated by the fact that Brasla forms tubers very quickly and accumulates starch quickly, so if the leaf rot appears, it affects the yield less than in other varieties. In addition, the variety has proven itself in organic fields as testified by the information provided by Priekuli Research Centre.

The second variety that the starch manufacturer Aloja Starkelsen Ltd. readily uses for processing in starch production is Imanta. But there is a small nuance - this variety of potatoes can be a challenge for seed growers because it forms large tubers extremely quickly. In fact, so rapidly that specialists have difficulty in ensuring the size of the tubers according to the requirements of the seed material, while the producers can only rejoice at the result of Imanta.

Furthermore, the newcomer Jogla was registered and included in the catalogue of plant varieties only last year. Agronomists say that this variety of starch potatoes raises hopes. It is expected to justify itself as a valuable raw material for starch production also in the organic field. Jogla has a higher starch content than the two varieties mentioned before and a very similar starch content to the widely used Dutch potato variety Kuras, but compared to Kuras, Jogla can be harvested up to two weeks earlier.

Currently, in connection with the introduction of Jogla into production in the integrated management system, Priekuļi Research Centre together with partners has launched a project to develop seed production methods and to carry out farm and processing factory inspections. Separately, the content of starch and the economic profitability of this particular variety will be evaluated.