**Seed availability for 2025**

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For the second year in a row growers are finding that there is a lack of availability of seed potatoes, particularly for certain varieties. As is often the case in such situations, this is a result of several factors:

1. Seed Yields in 2023 and 2024 fell below expectations due to adverse climatic conditions, especially in England, which supplies roughly one-third of the seed potatoes used for ware production in England and Wales.
2. Brexit has meant that EU seed potatoes can no longer be traded or marketed within the UK, limiting potential imports to cover shortfalls.
3. Brexit has stopped any seed potato exports from GB to the EU, negatively impacting upon planting area given that any surpluses can no longer be exported to Europe.
4. Brexit has also meant that any imported seed potatoes cannot be entered into the UK SPCS thereby leaving the industry almost totally reliant upon seed produced within the UK.
5. Increasing demand from non-EU markets, often for varieties not (or no longer) used within the UK, is competing with the production of seed for the UK market.
6. The recent increase in the risk vs reward for seed production relative to ware production has also led to a reduction in the area of seed potato production in recent years; something that is also happening within the EU as well as the UK.

Following much lobbying, both within the UK and EU by industry and trade bodies, last October the EU conducted an audit of the UK’s seed potato production with a view to engaging in discussions about re-opening the trade with the EU. To date the results of this audit have yet to be published. Even after publication, further steps will be required before bilateral trade in seed potatoes is able to resume as it was pre-Brexit.

Under the Seed Potato Marketing Regulations (Seed Potato Regulations (E&W) 2015 and Seed Potato Regulation (Scotland) 2015), it is illegal to market potatoes intended for seed use unless certified under these regulations, including Farm Saved Seed Potatoes (whether or not they have undergone tuber virus indexing). The industry remains in active dialogue with authorities in Scotland and England to adapt these regulations as necessary, as demonstrated by recent and upcoming virus summits.

Additionally, under the \*Official Controls\* legislation, for quarantine pest reasons, it is illegal to plant any potatoes that do not comply with these regulations.

These challenges highlight the importance of ongoing collaboration between industry stakeholders and government authorities to address seed availability and regulatory requirements effectively.