**Strengthening Seed Potato Health: Insights from the 6th National Virus Forum**

On the 20th of February, the National Virus Forum convened for the sixth time, bringing together over 40 industry members to advance discussions on maintaining and progressing the control of virus in seed potato crops. Hosted by GB Potatoes and chaired by Alex Godfrey, the meeting took place at Fera, who we kindly thank for hosting the day.

**Safeguarding Britain's World-Class Seed**

Great Britain is renowned for producing high-quality seed potatoes, and protecting this reputation is essential. Early intervention is key - addressing potential issues before they have an opportunity to escalate ensures the continued health of British seed.

**The Power of Collaboration**

A highlight of the forum was an explanation of the success story of Yorkshire’s intervention measures to address the virus challenge it faced in 2018, which led to the forum’s formation. A coordinated industry response turned what could have been a major setback into a positive outcome, ensuring Yorkshire’s seed quality. This case study reinforces a crucial lesson: by working together, we can overcome industry challenges.

**Scotland’s Unique Role**

Virus management requires tailored approaches, particularly in Scotland, where challenges differ due to climate, altitude, and market demands. However, Scotland’s dedicated seed growers—committed to best practices and innovation—ensure that Scottish seed production remains at the highest standard.

A presentation by Adrian Fox (Fera) on aphid epidemiology provided valuable insights into virus transmission, the biology behind persistent and non-persistent viruses and the increasing concerns surrounding Potato Leaf Roll Virus (PLRV). As PLRV becomes a greater issue, understanding aphid behaviour will be critical in shaping future virus control strategies.

**The Way Forward: Communication & Education**

A key takeaway from the forum was the unanimous agreement that education is crucial in maintaining seed health. Clear communication with both seed and ware growers will be essential in fostering industry-wide cooperation. GB Potatoes will take a leading role in this effort through its website, supply chain engagement, and a dedicated technical working group.

It is now up to all of us in the industry to stay proactive in the fight against virus threats.

By working together, sharing knowledge, and remaining vigilant, we can safeguard the future of British seed potatoes.

#Potatoes #SeedHealth #VirusControl #GBPotatoes #Agriculture #Collaboration