

## **WELCOME TO THE JANUARY 2025 EDITION OF THE NPCK NEWSLETTER!**

As we step into a new year, exciting developments are shaping Kenya's potato industry! From hands-on Farmer Field Days empowering growers with cutting-edge agricultural practices to game-changing financial inclusion initiatives, this edition is packed with insights to boost productivity and profitability. Discover how contract farming is transforming market access, explore innovative sustainability efforts like potato peel utilization, and learn how NPCK is driving impactful partnerships to strengthen the potato value chain. Dive in and stay informed on the latest trends shaping the future of potato farming!

### **POTATO SUCCESS STARTS IN THE FIELD: THE ROLE OF FARMER FIELD DAYS**



**SOLHY016 plantation in Ngenia Laikipia County**

NPCK has been at the forefront of promoting potato farming through Farmer Field Days across key potato-growing counties, including Nyandarua, Laikipia, Meru, Nandi, and Nakuru. These field days have been a game-changer, equipping farmers with vital knowledge on Good Agricultural Practices (GAPs) to enhance productivity and boost incomes. The initiative has successfully brought together various stakeholders in the potato value chain, including soil testing experts, seed producers, fertilizer and agrochemical companies, irrigation specialists, processors, off-takers, and policymakers.

### **SEED POTATO QUALITY CHECKING THE QUALITY OF SEED POTATO**

NPCK, through the KSPI project, supports the farmers to access quality seed potato. Fresh Crop Limited and Global South Potato Group are some seed potato companies that are certified by KEPHIS as seed producers. The activity of checking the quality of the seed is always done during harvesting, sorting, and grading and before the distribution of the seed.

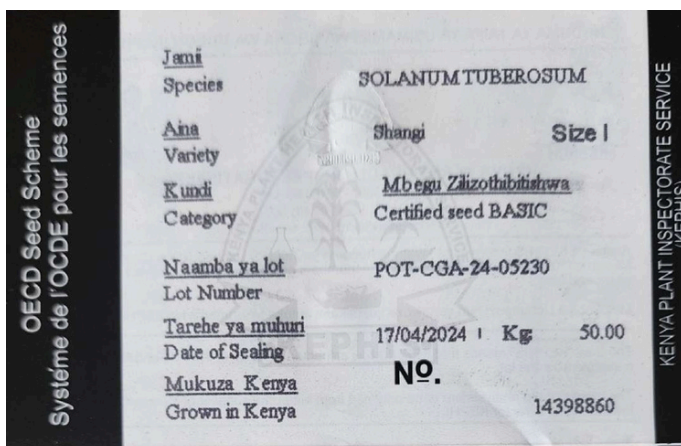


**Farmer field day in Katheri Meru**

[Click here to explore the role of Farmers' Field Days](#)



**Checking the seed quality in Freshcrop and Global South Potato group on 31/01/2025**



**A sample of a legit Kephis Label**

## ADVANCING SEED POTATO INDUSTRY TO THE NEXT LEVEL

Challenges with seed availability and access continue to critically impact potato production in Kenya. Although the number of certified seed producers has increased over the years. The industry, however, is still faced with other additional challenges like delays in sticker labels, counterfeit seeds, and a capacity gap in the utilization of digital platforms during the seed certification process, among others. All these have negatively impacted the overall industry performance.

[Click here to explore Advancing Seed Potato industry](#)

Checking the quality of potato seeds is essential for ensuring healthy plants and a good harvest. Here are the key factors to consider:

1. Visual Inspection
  - Skin Condition - if it's cut or hardening off
  - Size and shape - size 1 (28-45mm) and size 2 (45mm-60mm). Shape - Oval shape
2. Sprouting
3. Disease Testing
  - Inspect for signs of common diseases, such as:
    - Late Blight
    - Blackleg
    - Scab
4. Moisture Content
5. Storage Conditions
  - Store under optimum conditions of 180 degrees
  - Cold storage - longer shelf life ( unica, markies, sherekea, dutch between 90-120 days Dormancy)
6. Size and Uniformity
7. Certification
  - Purchase certified seed potatoes from reputable suppliers, as these are often tested for quality and disease.

[Click here to explore Seed Potato Quality](#)



**A Photo of Seed stakeholders**

## FINANCIAL INCLUSION: A CATALYST FOR THE POTATO VALUE CHAIN



*A moment captured after productive discussions with Tower SACCO, a key financial institution we are exploring partnership with in the KSPI project.*

Financial inclusion is essential for strengthening the potato value chain by offering farmers, traders, and processors crucial access to credit, insurance, and digital payment solutions. This access is vital for enabling stakeholders to invest in quality inputs, adopt modern farming techniques, and improve post-harvest management. However, limited financial access remains a significant barrier for smallholder farmers, restricting their ability to scale their operations and increase productivity.

[Click here to explore Financial Inclusion](#)

## PARTNERSHIPS

### MOU SIGNING WITH THE LAIKIPIA COUNTY GOVERNMENT



*Partners pose for a meeting call with the governor*



NPCK signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Laikipia County Government to enhance potato farming in the region. This partnership is part of the Kenya Sustainable Potato Initiative (KSPI) Project, which is supported by AGRA, with Egerton University and the Kenya Agricultural and Livestock Research Organization (KALRO) as consortium partners.

The primary objective of this collaboration is to address key challenges faced by potato farmers in Laikipia County, such as low productivity, limited access to quality seeds, poor agronomic practices, and inadequate marketing infrastructure.

[Click here to explore NPCK/Laikipia MOU](#)

## STRENGTHENING THE POTATO SECTOR THROUGH COOPERATIVE UNIONIZATION

Potato cooperatives across various regions are at different stages of growth, facing challenges such as governance, storage, financing, and seed quality. By coming together under a national union, farmers can address these challenges collectively and work towards sustainable solutions. The registration process for the cooperative union is underway, with by-laws revised to meet regulatory requirements. A leadership team has been appointed to oversee the process and mobilize more cooperatives to join. The union will also facilitate capacity-building initiatives to strengthen the sector. A strong, organized cooperative movement is essential for the future of the potato industry. By working together, farmers can achieve greater efficiency, profitability, and long-term sustainability.



Galaxy A15  
**Representatives of the cooperatives during a pre-cooperative meeting**

[Click here to explore Cooperative Uninization](#)

## The RwaSIS Initiative: A Game Changer for Potato Farming

Potatoes are a crucial crop in Rwanda, with the country being the sixth-largest producer of Irish potatoes in Africa. Despite the country's efforts in agricultural intensification programs, potato yields remain lower than potential due to suboptimal soil management practices and improper fertilizer application.

[Click here to explore the Soil Testing Technology](#)

## REVOLUTIONIZING IRISH POTATO PRODUCTION, CASE OF RWANDA: THE ROLE OF SOIL TESTING TECHNOLOGY

In Rwanda, a significant shift is underway that could drastically boost the productivity of Irish potato farming. The Rwanda Soil Information System (RwaSIS), a pioneering soil testing technology, is poised to enhance soil fertility management and significantly increase Irish potato yields by up to 20%. This system, developed by the Rwanda Agriculture and Animal Resources Development Board (RAB), aims to improve nutrient management by providing farmers with tailored recommendations for fertilizers, optimizing their use based on the specific needs of each soil type.



**CIP staff members conducting scientific research on potato seedlings in a greenhouse.**

### WARE POTATO CONTRACT FARMING FOR FARMERS.

The KSPI project promotes structured inputs and output markets. One intervention used to achieve this is contract farming. Therefore, NPCK, Viazi Kings, and the Laikipia County Ministry of Agriculture trained farmers in contract farming as a strategy for market access and reducing post-harvest losses.

Some of the potato varieties that the project is promoting under contract farming are Markies and Challenger. On January 30, 2025, 62 farmers in Laikipia County, Laikipia East sub-county, and Umande ward were trained on contract farming.

The farmers came from over 5 established farmer groups from two wards: Umande Ward and Mukogodo East Ward. Two farmer groups. Namely; Umande Potato Growers self-help group and Mwaura Organic farming self-help group have had previous experience with contract potato farming with a company called New Holland Chips company.

From the training, more than 8 farmers expressed interest to immediately start contract farming with Viazi Kings Limited. The plans are underway to have the contracts drawn.



**Mr. Peter Lagat from Viazi Kings Ltd training farmers on potato contract farming in umande ward 30/01/2025**



**Ms. Sarafina Mugo, NPCK Marketing officer addressing farmers. 30/01/2025.**

### REDUCING WASTE

#### UTILIZATION OF POTATO PEEL AS AN ECO-FRIENDLY PRODUCT

Potatoes are a nutrient-dense food, rich in vitamins and minerals. They provide a good source of vitamin C, vitamin B6, potassium, and dietary fibre. The complex carbohydrates in potatoes offer energy and can contribute to a balanced diet. When consumed with the skin, they retain most of their nutritional benefits, making them a valuable component of healthy eating.

One interesting way to utilize potato peels is through the production of nutritional supplements and healthy snacks. By drying and grinding the peels, they can be converted into powder, rich in vitamins and minerals, which can be added to smoothies, soups, or baked goods to enhance their nutritional content. Simultaneously, potato peels can be sliced and either fried or baked to create crispy snacks seasoned with various spices, offering a nutritious alternative to conventional potato chips. Together, these methods not only minimize food waste but also cater to the growing demand for health-conscious products.



**Potato peels**

Potato peels have various innovative and sustainable applications that benefit both the economy and the environment. One effective use is as animal feed. Dehydrated potato peels serve as a nutritious supplement for livestock, providing essential nutrients while lowering overall feed costs. This approach supports animal health and promotes sustainable farming by utilizing a by-product that would otherwise go to waste.

Another promising application is the development of biodegradable packaging. Research is exploring the use of starch from potato peels to create bioplastics. This initiative addresses plastic waste by producing materials that decompose naturally, offering an eco-friendly alternative to traditional packaging.

Composting potato peels is also effective. When composted, they create nutrient-rich organic fertilizer, enhancing soil health in gardens and farms. This process recycles organic waste into valuable resources for plant growth, improving crop yields and soil quality.

[Click here to explore Utilization of Potato Peels](#)