



Vereniging voor de Aardappelverwerkende Industrie

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Potato processing industry set to become a world leader with sustainable quality

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The Dutch Potato Processing Industry Association (VAVI) today presented its 2014 Sustainability Report to Sharon Dijksma, State Secretary for Economic Affairs. The report was handed over by Chairman René van der Linden, who was accompanied by a VAVI delegation, at the building of the First Chamber in The Hague.

The potato is gaining ground worldwide. This is a sustainable development, because the potato uses less land and water and grows faster than rice and other crops per unit of nutrition. Through plant breeding, new varieties can also contribute to reducing the global food shortage.

A new high point was reached in the 2013/2014 potato season: a record volume of potatoes, over 3.7 million tonnes, was processed in a sustainable way into more than 2 million tonnes of potato products.

Sustainable techniques are being used to the greatest extent possible in cultivation, processing and logistics.

Regarding cultivation, the food safety certificate for the potato processing industry now includes a section on sustainability. The sustainability requirements of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) will therefore be met.

Contrary to earlier press reports about current low potato prices, it is possible for growers of potatoes for French fries to conclude contracts with potato processors based on fixed prices agreed in advance. The growers are therefore able to cover the costs of cultivation. An estimated 60% to 80% of potatoes to be processed are delivered by the growers to Dutch potato processors on a contractual basis.

In terms of processing, key areas of focus include reducing energy consumption, generating green energy through fermentation, reducing the use of packaging materials, limiting emissions into water, the soil and the air, processing by-products and residual streams in the best way possible, reducing saturated fatty acids and using sustainable palm oil.

Limiting CO₂ emissions is the main priority with respect to the logistics process. Efforts in this context include using centrally located cold stores to limit transport kilometres, using transport by very long vehicle in the Netherlands and replacing transport by road with transport by ship where possible.

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At consumer level, sustainable packaging that is adjusted to the wishes of customers and to the composition of families in terms of portion is used to the greatest extent possible.

In social terms, considerable attention is devoted to the issue of sickness absence, accident prevention and training in the sector. Efforts in these areas will ensure that the sector has sufficiently qualified technical personnel also in the future.

Considerable progress has been made in improving the fatty acid composition of the cooking oil used to prepare precooked products: the transfat level is less than 1% and the percentage of unsaturated fatty acids is increasing. In 2014, over 60% of the palm oil used to prepare precooked products sold in the Netherlands met the Roundtable on Sustainable Palm Oil (RSPO) criteria. By the end of 2015, this will be 100%.

In addition, a study was carried out into new marketing opportunities for by-products in the context of a biobased economy and the reduction of waste. In addition to a part that is used in fermenters to generate green energy, most of the by-products, particularly steam peels, are delivered to the livestock farming sector as sustainable feed. This supply can to an extent replace the import of soybean meal.

In addition to the results achieved, this report sets out VAVI's policy for the coming five years. The association's members are leading suppliers of potato products to the hotel and catering industry, the food service industry, supermarkets and industrial companies throughout the world.

VAVI has published reports before. When the milestone of 3 million tonnes processed potatoes was achieved in 2001, the 'With Quality to the Top' report was presented to the then Minister of Agriculture. 'Sustainability in the Potato Supply Chain', the first sustainability report, was published in 2003 and updated in 2011.

The potato processing industry was therefore one of the first in the agribusiness sector to prove that sustainability and corporate social responsibility are essential to maintaining a leading position in Europe and becoming a world leader.

The VAVI 2014 Sustainability Report can be downloaded at www.vavi.nl.

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