



# UGANDA POTATO PLATFORM

*Transforming the Irish potato sub-sector from subsistence to a commercially viable industry*

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## POTATO POLICY / PRACTICE BRIEF #1: CLEAN SEED

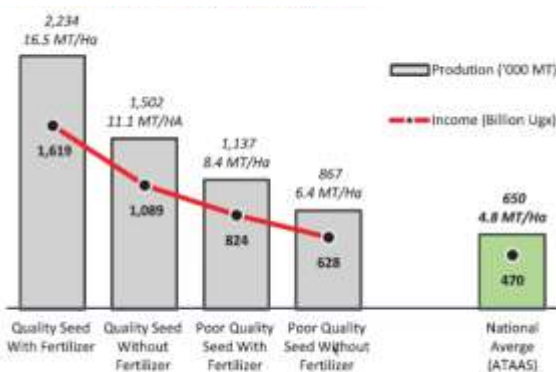
### THE PROBLEM:

**Most ware potato growers in Uganda are not using disease-free seed.** Only 2% of Ugandan potato farmer are using clean seed (GrowAfrica<sup>i</sup>)! This is an urgent problem, since it has the effect of reducing Irish potato yields from an average of by 42% - 49% for Ugandan farmers (EPRC<sup>ii</sup>). Part of the problem is **availability**: Disease-free seed is not available in sufficient quantities, partly because multiplication of disease-free seed is still on such a small scale. Another part of the problem is **affordability**: Many ware potato growers don't value clean seed enough to pay more for it. In surveys done in Kabale, Kisoro and Kanungu Districts, IITA/PASIC found that 66% of Irish potato farmers did not use improved seed because of "affordability"<sup>iii</sup>. Those close to pilot programmes in disease-free seed say that currently clean seed produced under pilot programmes is being sold at the same price as ordinary seed, which doesn't produce enough revenue for commercial sustainability of clean seed production.

### THE SOLUTION:

The solution to making clean seed more available is to increase the proper multiplication of clean seed, including as a priority those varieties of potato needed for specific markets. The Kachwenko Zonal Agricultural Research and Development Institute (KAZARDI) of the National Agricultural Research Organization (NARO) is training clean seed multipliers, but only on a small scale; this training needs to be substantially scaled up to train many more growers in seed multiplication. The solution to encouraging potato growers to pay for the real cost of clean seed, is to help them understand the increased yield that will result from the extra investment in clean seed.

TABLE 1: Indicative National Irish Potato Productivity and Income With and Without Seed and Fertilizer



Source: Swabu Mbowe & Francis Mwasige (2015) EPRC Research Report 14

### THE BENEFITS:

As Table 1 shows, farmers can increase income by 73% through using clean seed. This increased income can be further invested in other improvements: for example, the proper use of fertilizer along with clean seed will further increase yields and income by 48.6%. If practiced nationwide, the resulting increase in Irish potato production, coupled with improved storage, would likely eliminate the need to import potatoes from other countries such as Kenya when production is low.

### THE CHALLENGES:

Increasing the use by Ugandan farmers of clean seed is constrained by lack of both public and private investment to scale up training in multiplication as well as to take those actions that might show potato growers that clean seed is worth the extra investment.

### THE POLICY ALTERNATIVES:

1. Provide government funding for scaling up training and coaching in practices and management of multiplication of clean seed, including expanding the training beyond the Kigezi region to other potato growing areas (note that in surveys done in Kabale, Kisoro and Kanungu Districts, IITA/PASIC found that 84% of potato farmers were willing to pay for extension services<sup>iv</sup>.)
2. Increase public investment in multiplication of disease-free seed

3. Promote private investment in multiplication of disease-free seed. Note that a market study by Dahlberg for GrowAfrica in 2016 found that the potential market for seed potato in Uganda is \$28 million USD, larger than any other segment of the Irish potato value chain and about 2/3 of the entire potential market for all segments of the potato value chain as a whole.<sup>v</sup>
4. Subsidize the cost of clean seed for a limited time so more farmers see learn the value of disease-free seed by using it and become more willing to pay a higher price for it
5. Coordinate this with increased education on the value of clean seed, including development of more demonstration gardens enabling farmers to see greater yield of disease-free seed compared to ordinary seed

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<sup>i</sup> GrowAfrica/Dalberg, 2016: Investment Opportunities for Potatoes in East Africa (PowerPoint)

<sup>ii</sup> Mbowa, Swaibu and Mwesigye, Francis, 2016: Indicative Lost Income due to Limited Technology Use in Irish Potato Production, EPRC Policy Brief, Issue No. 67

<sup>iii</sup> Naviiri, Lydia, 2015: Constraints Against Intensification Among Rice and Potato Farmers in Eastern and South Western Uganda, IITA/PASIC PowerPoint presentation to Second Annual ECAMA Research Symposium.

<sup>iv</sup> Naviiri, Lydia, 2015: Constraints Against Intensification Among Rice and Potato Farmers in Eastern and South Western Uganda, IITA/PASIC PowerPoint presentation to Second Annual ECAMA Research Symposium.

<sup>v</sup> GrowAfrica/Dalberg, 2016: Investment Opportunities for Potatoes in East Africa (PowerPoint)