

Facts and figures about potato



- **The potato** (*Solanum tuberosum*) belongs to the solanaceae family of flowering plants. It originated and was first domesticated in the Andes Mountains of South America.
- The potato is the **third most important food crop** in the world after rice and wheat in terms of human consumption. More than a billion people worldwide eat potato, and global total crop production exceeds 300 million metric tons.
- There are more than **4,300** varieties kinds of native potatoes, mostly found in the Andes. They come in many sizes and shapes
- There are also over **180 wild potato species**. Though they are too bitter to eat, their important biodiversity includes natural resistances to pests, diseases, and climatic conditions.
- Potato is **vegetatively propagated**, meaning that a new plant can be grown from a potato or piece of potato, called a “seed”. The new plant can produce 5-20 new tubers, which will be genetic clones of the mother seed plant. Potato plants also produce flowers and berries that contain 100-400 botanical seeds. These can be planted to produce new tubers, which will be genetically different from the mother plant.
- Potatoes **can grow** from sea level up to 4700 meters above sea level; from southern Chile to Greenland. They are produced in over 100 countries worldwide.
- **One hectare of potato** can yield two to four times the food quantity of grain crops. Potatoes produce more food per unit of water than any other major crop and are up to seven times more efficient in using water than cereals.
- Since the early **1960s**, the growth in potato production area has rapidly overtaken all other food crops in developing countries. It is a fundamental element in the food security for millions of people across South America, Africa, and Asia, including Central Asia.
- Presently, more than half of **global potato production** now comes from developing

countries. The International Potato Center has played an important role providing resource- poor farmers in developing countries with a range of new technologies and potato breeding material specifically designed to suit local conditions.

- Potatoes are an excellent, **low fat source of carbohydrates**, with one-fourth the calories of bread. Boiled, they have more protein than maize and nearly twice the calcium. An average serving of potatoes with the skin on provides about 10 percent of the recommended daily intake of fiber.
- **When boiled**, a single medium sized potato contains about half the daily adult requirement of vitamin C, as well as significant amounts of iron, potassium and zinc. Potato also contains substantial amounts of vitamin B and valuable supplies of essential trace elements such as manganese, chromium, selenium and molybdenum. The high vitamin C content enhances iron absorption.
- Potatoes can have white, yellow, pink, red, purple, and even blue flesh color. Yellow is primarily due to the presence of carotenoids concentrations, and the red, purple, and blue color to anthocyanins. Both are antioxidants and believed to play an important role in preventing cancer and diseases related to ageing.
- Potatoes have toxic components known as glycoalkaloids in leaves, sprouts, and stems, which are meant to protect the plant against fungi and insects. They can be removed by peeling and cutting away the green areas.
- Pests and diseases are the major stresses to high yield production in potatoes. A disease called late blight is one of the most destructive diseases in potatoes.
- **The International Potato Center** maintains the largest collection of potato in the world, including more than 7,000 samples of native, wild, and improved varieties. CIP’s genebank ensures that they are both securely conserved for the long-term and also available for use by farmers, breeders, and researchers.

