

First successful True Potato Seed (TPS) trial of Solynta and Solidaridad in Mozambique shows great potential

A first pilot using True Potato Seed (TPS) in Angonia District, Tete province in Mozambique, conducted by Solidaridad and Solynta shows great potential to drastically improve and innovate potato production in Mozambique. The potato crop is increasingly important for nutrition security and farmer livelihoods in Mozambique and many countries in Africa.

Between August 2019 and April 2020 Solidaridad Mozambique and Solynta executed the first hybrid TPS field trial ever in Mozambique: growing potatoes from true seeds rather than traditional seed potatoes. The seedlings were raised in trays for 6 weeks, after which they were transplanted to farmers' fields.

Solynta provided several hybrid seed varieties to assess adaptability as well as technical advice. Solidaridad Mozambique trained and supported farmers in applying good farming practices, including soil management, fertilizing and crop protection. Several local institutions, such as Universidade Unizambezi, supported this initiative. Mandla Nkomo, Managing Director of Solidaridad Southern Africa said, "the results are very encouraging: average yields of the 3 varieties ranged from 8.5 MT/ha to as much as 25.9 MT/ha in comparison to the yields of 8 MT/ha of local control varieties."

The potato is one of the three most cultivated and consumed food products globally. The importance of the potato will only continue to grow in the coming years along with the world's population. The same is true in many African countries including Mozambique. Potato production in Sub-Saharan Africa has more than doubled during the last 20 years to around 16 mln metric tons on 2 mln ha. Potatoes have a higher nutritional value in comparison to other staple crops like rice, cassava and maize. In terms of water efficiency, the potato also outperforms many other staple crops. As an example, producing 1 kg of maize requires approximately 400% more water than producing 1 kg of potato.

Angonia in the western part of Mozambique is the main potato production region in that country, with around 63,000 farmers producing around 90% of the Mozambican potatoes. As in most other African countries, potato consumption in Mozambique is increasing rapidly. Charles Miller, Commercial Director at Solynta stated, "If our pilot results are replicated in local farmer fields production of potatoes in Mozambique can be increased more than 50%. This will help to reduce dependence on imported ware potatoes as well as help to develop a local supply of quality seed."

Solynta's innovation of hybrid potatoes makes it possible to distribute new varieties from botanic seed instead of seed potatoes. This technology makes it possible to rapidly develop new potato varieties with a higher nutritional value and attuned to specific local or regional needs, for example resistance to drought and certain diseases. Moreover, true potato seeds (TPS) have major logistical benefits as 25 grams of true seed is comparable to 2,500 kg of seed tubers. True seed is easier to store and cheaper to transport, making it easier to access for smallholder families in remote areas. True potato seed (TPS) is also disease free which is not the case with traditional seed potatoes.

“By combining the development knowledge and skill of Solidaridad with the plant breeding and agronomic skill of Solynta we hope that the benefit of TPS can be delivered to local farmers in a fast and efficient way” said Gert van der Bijl from Solidaridad. In the second half of 2020 Solynta and Solidaridad will expand their collaboration in Angonia with the hope of launching this new system in the near future. This will allow us to create change that matters by unlocking the potential of potatoes to improve nutrition security in Mozambique and hopefully in other African countries as well.

About Solidaridad:

Solidaridad is a civil society organization that makes international supply chains more sustainable. It is our mission to create a better perspective for farmers and workers in developing countries, while reducing impact on the environment. We envision a world in which all we produce and consume can sustain us, while respecting the planet, each other and the next generations.

We are an international network organization consisting of eight regional expertise centres located around the world. Solidaridad in Europe focuses on market development, policy influencing, communications, knowledge management and donor relations. We seek to inspire the private sector, governments, civil society organizations and consumers in Europe to contribute to sustainable economic development. For more information, please refer to www.solidaridad.nl or www.solidaridadnetwork.org.

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About Solynta:

Solynta is a Dutch potato company with worldwide research, development, production and commercial activities in Hybrid True Potato Seeds. Solynta is revolutionizing potato breeding through the commercial production of hybrid potato that is propagated by true seeds. Solynta’s hybrid potatoes are not GMO. About 25 grams of Solynta’s potato seeds instead of 2,500 kilos of seed- tubers can plant one hectare thereby reducing transportation costs and making planting material available to more farmers in the developing world. Solynta’s true potato seeds reduce the incidence of diseases caused by viruses and other pathogens thereby increasing yields. Solynta can rapidly breed new potato cultivars that combine beneficial traits including disease resistance thereby reducing the need for pesticides. For more information about Solynta: www.solynta.com.

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