

Pack 113, Item 7

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**Radio spots: Irish potato production and post-harvest activities**

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**Notes to broadcasters**

Irish potato farmers need to know many things in order to get a good yield of high quality potatoes. This resource contains 26 radio spots that provide key information about a wide variety of production and post-harvest issues for Irish potatoes: from land preparation all the way to marketing.

If farmers in your area grow Irish potatoes, you could use these spots as quick reminders of recommended practices. You could air them during your regular farmer program—or even as short promos for your farmer program.

As well as 26 written radio spots, the resource contains links to five audio spots—for spots #1, 7, 20, 23, and 26. The spots were recorded in the Hausa language. But even if you don’t understand Hausa, you can get a good idea of how to produce a radio spot that serves your farmers well.

**Spot 1: Effective storage areas**

Effective storage areas will save your crop! Good storage is well-ventilated and pest- and disease-free. Good storage helps farmers store their potatoes long enough to avoid the market gluts and low prices immediately after harvest. Instead, they sell later when prices are higher.

*Hear* this spot in Hausa at: <https://soundcloud.com/farmradio/irish-potato-radio-spots-1-effective-storage-areas>

**Spot 2: The benefits of sorting**

Sorting separates good tubers from rotten, diseased, or blemished ones, and from other farm waste. Move rotten or diseased tubers far from the storage area and burn.

**Spot 3: Finding new markets**

Farmers often need new markets for the potatoes. But how do you find new markets? Here are the five main strategies for finding buyers: First, talk to other farmers and find out who they sell to. Second, talk to – or join – a group or co-operative. Third, talk to other organizations – buyers’ organizations, market organizations, NGOs, retailers’ organizations, restaurant organizations, etc. Fourth, take your product to recognized markets. And fifth, search out new markets by making phone calls or sending texts. Do you know any other good ways to find new markets? Please let us know!

**Spot 4: Don’t bruise your potatoes!**

Bruised potatoes mean big losses! Carefully pack only un-bruised potatoes in 50-kg sacks for transport via pickup trucks. Pack bags so that potatoes are immobilized and do not bounce against each other on sometimes rough roads. Ensure careful loading to avoid bruising. Bruised potatoes are more susceptible to infection, which spreads disease to other potatoes, resulting in serious losses.

**Spot 5: The importance of weeding**

What is a weed? A weed is a plant that is growing where it is not wanted. Weeds slow crop development and reduce yields by competing with crops for water, nutrients, and space. They also cost money and time for the farmer. Weeding means removing weeds to reduce competition and increase yields.

**Spot 6: The benefits of keeping records**

One day, I was visiting with a farmer and his wife. Their home and everything around it were clean and tidy. They had a sow, some good chickens, and a nice garden.

As we talked, they told me that some other farmers made more money than they do. They asked me why. Before answering, I asked them some questions about their farm.

I asked them how much time they spent weeding and cultivating their crops. I asked them how big their maize yield was last year, how much they had sold, and how much income they had made from selling it.

I asked them when their sow would be giving birth to her next litter of baby pigs.

They couldn’t answer my questions. They just didn't know.

I visited another farm family later that day. At their place, it was quite different. They were able to answer my questions. And if they weren't quite sure, they looked at notes they had made on a calendar on the wall, or in a box of papers they kept in a special place in their home.

This family was making a lot more money than the other family. In fact, this family told me they thought that their good farm records helped them more than anything else to make more money in farming.

They said that farming is their business and that, just like people who are in business in town keep records, they also keep careful records.

Now … which farming family would you like to be?

**Spot 7: Where and how to plant**

To give your Irish potatoes the best chance of success, remember these three things:

1) Plant in well-drained soils such as sandy or sandy loam.

2) Plant potatoes only on land where tomatoes, peppers, garden eggs, and potatoes have NOT been grown in the last year or two seasons.

3) Deep plough land to 30 centimetres.

Hear this spot in Hausa at: <https://soundcloud.com/farmradio/spot-7-where-and-how-to-plant>

**Spot 8: Plant your best tubers**

For best results, plant tubers that are 25-60 millimetres in diameter, have 4-6 sprouts, and weigh about 40-60 grams - or about the size of a chicken egg.

**Spot 9: Sourcing inputs**

For best yields and income, source your seeds and crop protection products from reliable sources. This include reputable agro-dealers and the National Root Crops Research Institute. You can also source seeds and crop protection products from recommended farmers with reputable farming skills. Using reliable sources will save you from adulterated, fake, or lower quality inputs.

**Spot 10: Clearing land before planting**

Once you have chosen good land to grow potatoes, clear it. This involves five things: First, gather and spot burn unwanted debris in heaps to avoid killing the soil with fire. This will kill any pests and disease organisms harbouring in plants. Also, remove all stones and other obstacles.

Second, clear land manually or with herbicides.

Third, plough, if possible with mechanized equipment.

Fourth, harrow, if possible with mechanized equipment.

Lastly, make your ridges.

**Spot 11: Irrigation systems**

There are three kinds of irrigation systems. First, a drip irrigation system lays plastic hoses along the base of a crop row. The hoses are perforated with small holes that release water slowly and evenly. Second, a sprinkler system shoots water into the air, where it then falls onto the crop. Third, in furrow irrigation, water is pumped from a water source and allowed to flow across the floor of the beds or ridge.

**Spot 12: Plant in batches!**

Farmers. Do not plant all your potatoes at one time! This will cause a glut in the market, reduce selling prices, and result in a lot of rotting, wasted product. Instead, stagger your production by planting in batches. You'll get better prices and greatly reduce losses.

**Spot 13: Managing late blight**

Late blight of potato is the most serious disease that affects potatoes and can destroy a whole crop, especially when there is high rainfall, high humidity, and low temperatures. To prevent late blight, always rotate potatoes with crops such as maize and soybean, use resistant varieties whenever available, and monitor for the disease every two days after plants emerge. Blight shows as a white powder on leaves.

**Spot 14: Managing common scab**

Common scab is another serious potato disease. To prevent common scab, rotate potato with crops such as maize or soybean, use clean, disease-free seed, avoid planting in fields with low soil pH, and avoid damaging tubers when weeding, earthing up, or harvesting. Monitor for common just before harvest and while harvesting.

**Spot 15: First weeding**

Weed potatoes 2-3 weeks after planting when sprouts emerge from the soil. Why is weeding important? It reduces competition for water, nutrients, and space, giving a higher yield.

**Spot 16: Protect yourself from pesticides**

Pesticides are designed to kill pests, and they will harm you too if you’re not careful. Pesticides enter your body in three ways: by being absorbed through your skin or eyes, through your mouth, and by breathing them into your lungs. So it’s important to cover skin with protective clothing, wear goggles, and wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth.

**Spot 17: Fertilizing your potatoes**

When potato tubers start to grow, apply mineral fertilizer NPK 15-15-15. Do this four weeks after planting and after the first weeding. Remember that fertilizer is expensive. So, measure the fertilizer to know the correct quality per plant.

**Spot 18: Second weeding**

Do a light second weeding 5-6 weeks after planting, before the leaf canopy closes. Weed lightly and carefully to avoid damaging growing tubers.

**Spot 19: Harvest in sunny weather**

Try to avoid rain and other sources of moisture when harvesting potatoes. Whenever possible, harvest in sunny and cool weather after the plant dries and dies off. Spread tubers and dry for two hours, then sort before putting in storage.

**Spot 20: Destroying rotten tubers**

After harvest, avoid contaminating healthy tubers by gathering all remaining residues and rotten tubers and burning them away from the field.

*Hear* this audio spot in Hausa at: <https://soundcloud.com/farmradio/spot-20-destroying-rotten-tubers>

**Spot 21: Weeding**

Weed potatoes 2-3 weeks after planting when sprouts emerge from the soil. Do a light second weeding 5-6 weeks after planting, before the leaf canopy closes. Weed lightly to avoid damaging tubers.

**Spot 22: Why farmers should sort, grade, and package their potatoes**

Why do potato farmers sort their harvest? To remove damaged and diseased potatoes.

Why do they grade? They grade according to size and quality. This separates potatoes for the market from potatoes meant for consumption.

Why do potatoes farmers use packaging? By using suitable, attractive, well-ventilated, and well-labeled containers, farmers maximize their income.

**Spot 23: The benefits of collective marketing**

Have you considered marketing your potatoes in a group? There are several advantages, but here's two big benefits: Because there are no middlemen, the farmer gets the full income from selling potatoes. Also, when farmers sell together, they can more easily co-operate to avoid a glut in the market - and learn good practices from each other. Want to know more? Talk to farmers who sell collectively!

*Hear* this spot in Hausa at: <https://soundcloud.com/farmradio/spot-23-benefits-of-collective-marketing>

**Spot 24: Recommended transportation methods**

Transporting potatoes to storage can be a big source of post-harvest loss. But if you get it right, it will put you ahead of the crowd! Immediately, after harvesting, carefully pack potatoes in 50 kg sacks, making sure not to bruise them. Then, transport them to the storage area with pick-up trucks. If you follow this recommendation, you will maximize your income.

**Spot 25: Recommended spacing**

Here’s the recommended spacing for Irish potato tubers: Plant tubers 8 to 15 centimetres deep and leave 30 centimetres between tubers. For larger tubers with 6 or 7 eyes, leave 40 centimetres. For small tubers with 2 or 3 eyes, leave 20 centimetres.

**Spot 26: Crop rotation is a must!**

To avoid buildup of pests and diseases, rotate potato with crops such as maize and soybean. Leave the field without potato for three years. Grow potatoes on the same plot only every fourth year.

*Hear* this spot in Hausa at: <https://soundcloud.com/farmradio/spot-26-crop-rotation-is-a-must>

**Acknowledgements**

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