

Brussels, 19 June 2017

Europatat Congress 2017 – Making the European potato trade great!

Last week on 15 & 16 June, the **Europatat Congress 2017** took place, organised in coordination by **Europatat, the European Potato Trade Association, and Belgapom, the Belgian Potato Trade and Processing Industry Association**. Feedback on the congress and side events has been extremely positive. Under the slogan “Make the European Potato Trade Great Again! (it’s gonna be huge, it’s gonna be great, it’s true)”, the Congress focused on two of the major topics that are on the table of European policy this year, namely Plant Health (following the recent EU reform on Plant Health and Official Controls) and International Trade (following recent historical political events).

The keynote speaker in the morning session, Mr Harry Arijs (DG SANTE, European Commission) gave participants an insight about the impact that the new European Plant Health Regulation will have in the potato sector when it enters into force at the end of 2019. At the present key implementing and delegated acts are being discussed and the potato sector’s input will be of high value. Other notable speakers in the morning included Lieven van Herzele (Belgian Federal Public Service Health, Food chain safety and environment) and Professor René Custers (VIB) who spoke about the role of innovation in plant breeding to reduce the dependency on plant protection products.

The afternoon session highlighted the role of Europe in the potato trade. Véronique Willems (Secretary General of the European Association representing SMEs), stressed the challenges but also the many benefits that the Europe Union has brought over the last 60 years. Lene Naesager (DG Agriculture, European Commission) highlighted the opportunities that the European Promotion Policy for agricultural products brings (with a budget of € 200 million by 2020), and was especially complementary of the potato sector as an example for other agricultural sectors. Lastly, Cedric Porter (World Potato Markets Magazine), spoke about the consequences of Brexit for the European potato industry, and enlightened participants with a possibility for a “Breturn”.

Participants also had the opportunity to review the different activities of Europatat during the well-attended meetings of the various Europatat Commissions (early, ware potatoes & packers; RUCIP, seed potatoes & technical and regulatory issues). At the AGM held on Thursday 15 June, the annual activity report was introduced and the accounts were approved by the members. The social events, which included a typical evening at the famous old brewery “De Koninck” at the old town of Antwerp, an unforgettable Gala dinner at the “Zoo of Antwerp” and an impressive visit to the Antwerp Harbour Building, including a Boat trip on the Scheldt, provided members and other participants with an opportunity to reinforce the networking and contact among the European potato community.

ENDS

Note to the Editors: Europatat is the European Potato Trade Association, representing the interests of the seed and ware potato traders in Europe. Europatat currently has over 45 members, including both companies and associations. For more information, contact the association at secretariat@europatat.eu or visit the association website www.europatat.eu.

