

The Belgian potato industry on the path of a sustainable growth.

The Belgian potato sector has experienced, or should we say – created – a “fry revolution” during the past 25 years.

From a traditional, locally directed sector, it has developed itself into the worldwide largest exporter of frozen potato products with a total of more than 3.8 million tonnes of potatoes processed into fries, chips, flakes, mashed potato products, granulates etc in 2014.

Over 90 % of the total Belgian production of potatoes is being exported of which a growing part into third countries all over the world.

Despite the growing acreage of potatoes planted in Belgium, as well in Flanders as the Walloon region, Belgium has also evolved into the largest importer of potatoes with production in the north of France, the Netherlands and Germany.

This huge success has also created new opportunities for the total Belgian potato chain : farmers, suppliers of goods and services, trade, processors, researchers etc., which is illustrated by the success of the biannual potato exhibition Interpom Primeurs in Kortrijk, which has become the largest indoor potato event in the world.

The specificity of the Belgian potato sector is related to the family run business throughout the potato chain, from farmer, over trade or packer to the processors : it is one big potato family.

Of course (despite the name ‘french fries’ used by the Americans) everybody knows that the Belgian potato sector is famous for its real ‘Belgian fries’, topped with mayonnaise. The Belgian ‘frietkot’ culture has been recognised by the Flemish authorities as tangible cultural heritage and currently the French and German speaking communities are studying the application.

But tradition is one thing, the sustainability is a second one : Belgapom, the Belgian potato trade and processing industry, has launched a project ‘together for sustainable growth’ which tries to provide answers to the question : how to create a sustainable future for this traditional, but also modern sector of the Belgian agro food industry ?

This project contains several angles : from environment over relationships within the potato chain and from scientific research till communication.

‘The potato in the land of the fries’

To illustrate the link between past, present and future, Belgapom has edited in collaboration with the editor Canalazzo a reference book on the Belgian potato sector. This book contains historical information on the potato in Belgium, the development of the sector during the past 20 years and a vision to the future. A number of remarkable persons with an important impact on the development of the sector share their vision or tell their story. Also some famous Belgian cooks are highlighting the potato . The book is illustrated

with new photography of the potato in the land of the fries. And of course the ‘real Belgian fries’ are presented as well as the plans of the sector for its future.

The foreword of the book has been written by the Belgian European Commissioner Marianne Thyssen, who has known this sector for a long time.

The book will be available in Dutch, French and English and will be sold as well via the Belgapom website as in several bookshops. The book will also be available in the shop of the Belgian pavilion at the world Expo in Milan.

My name is Bint, James Bint (with a license to fry).

Although Belgium has a rich tradition on its Belgian fries and ‘friteries’, and the sector has evolved into the world largest exporter of frozen potato products, it is remarkable that a real world wide image for the ‘Belgian fries’ is lacking. This is why Belgapom, together with the young agency IKON, has started the search for an ambassador for the ‘real Belgian fries’.

And “Mister James Bint” has made himself available to carry out this message all over the world.

The wink to a famous secret agent is obvious, but his name is also related to the famous potato variety ‘Bintje’, which is over 100 years old, but still is a major variety for the Belgian fry production. Other varieties are also grown in order to provide a larger scope of quality, taste and biodiversity.

James Bint has travelled to his ‘home’ city London and to the world expo in Milan. A road movie reporting on his adventures is available on his website.

James Bint is not a real person, but a figure that could have stepped out of a comic strip (also a typical Belgian speciality), who is only communicating through his text bubble.

James Bint will be present at the frites shop of the Belgian pavilion of the World Expo in Milan (including a ‘selfie competition’ to win a food.be trip to Belgium). He will also participate at the world potato congress 27-31 July 2015) in Beijing, China.

More information (including a cartoon with the story how real Belgian fries are made and exported all of the world) is available at the website www.jamesbint.be. This website is available in Dutch, French, English, Italian, Spanish and Mandarin.

The Belgian producers of potato products will also be able to make use of James Bint in their export activities all over the world. The major condition to make use of the name and logo of James Bint is that the fries have to be produced in Belgium. As James Bint tries to convince the world that Belgian fries are a true source of happiness and fun !

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James
Bint says,
“**BUY
BELGIAN
FRIES**”

