

VALUE-ADDED POTATO PRODUCTS PART OF OUR FUTURE?

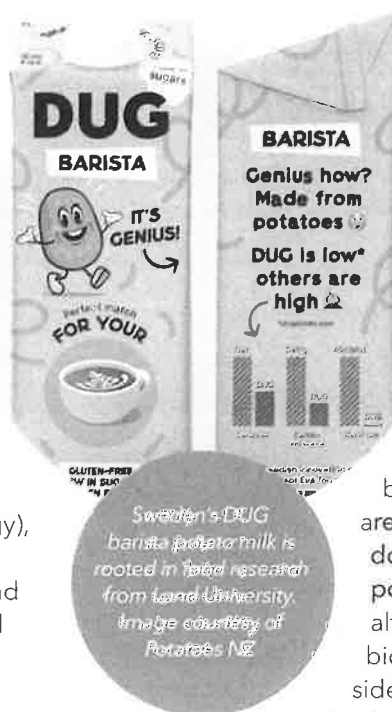


Kate Truffitt : Potatoes NZ chief executive

How do you take your coffee? With potatoes? Potato milk is an increasingly popular option for a growing number of consumers in Sweden, China, the United Kingdom and other parts of Europe, thanks to the development of DUG – a vegan-friendly potato-based milk.

First developed in 2017, DUG is a Swedish brand that stems from research undertaken by Professor Eva Tornberg at Lund University. Its major selling points are that it is creamy (due to emulsion technology), has a low climate footprint – with potatoes requiring significantly less water than almond or cow's milk for example – and can be used just like any other milk.

So why does it matter that a portion of the world's population are drinking their lattes and eating their cereal with potato milk? Because it is a successful example of the power of innovating and creating value-added products from potatoes.



'Potato plastic' is a biodegradable bioplastic material made of potato starch. The idea is that it could be used for short shelf-life products, such as takeaway cutlery and straws, and could then decompose to become nutrients for the soil in two to three months. Prototypes have been made, but there has been no mass production to date.

Potato starch is already in use as a special starch-based adhesive for paper products. Synthetic glues, which have been commonly used in paper packaging, **are made from polymers that do not break down naturally, contributing to environmental pollution, but the potato starch-based alternative has been shown to be 94 percent biodegradable within 14 days.** The other plus side for this innovation is that potato starch is a by-product of French fry and potato crisp production, so that makes it a sustainability win for the paper products industry and the food industry.

Potatoes are also being used to make vodka by producers, including Chopin Vodka, and by some food producers to make a healthier high-fibre ice cream.

As a food staple, potatoes are already a globally important, efficient crop that makes a major contribution to people's diet and nutrition around the world. Creating value-added products is not about changing the existing vital role of the potato, but it is about considering what other opportunities exist to use potatoes and potato by-products.

New Zealand has a successful, mature potato industry and there is an opportunity to foster greater collaboration amongst our growers, stakeholders, experts and scientists to focus on opportunities to innovate and develop value-added products that will help grow our industry success and sustainability in decades to come. ●

“

Potato milk is just one of multiple value-added potato products currently being produced or developed in global markets

Value-added products from potatoes create a way for our industry to diversify its income streams, reduce reliance on fluctuating demand and prices of raw products, and access new markets and opportunities for growth.

Potato milk is just one of multiple value-added potato products currently being produced or developed in global markets.