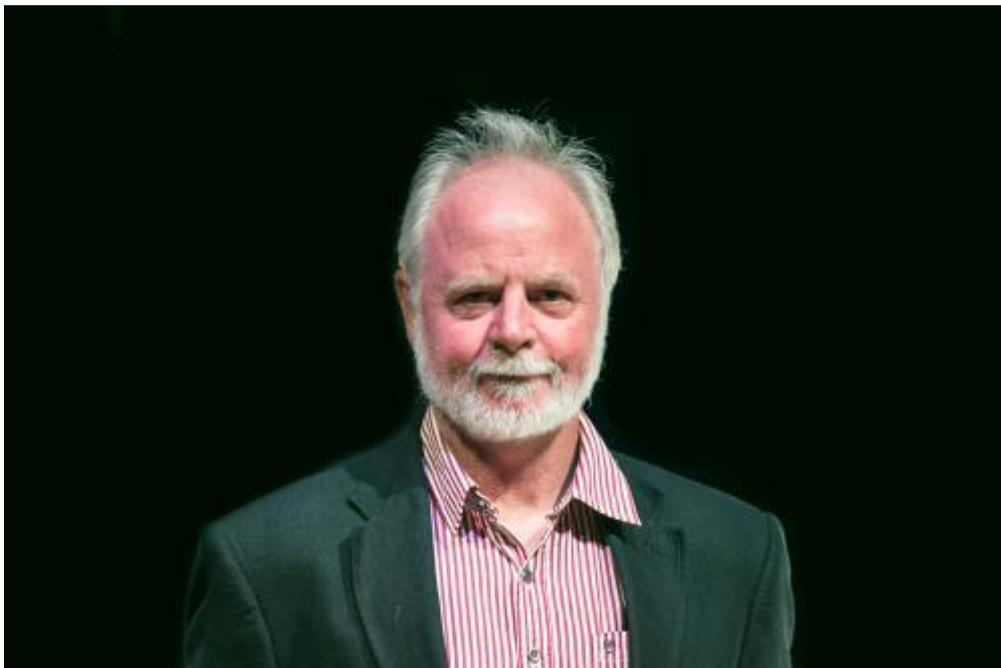


INVENT INSIGHTS with DELOITTE DIGITAL

As we continue our series of conversations with the finalists of Catalyst INC's INVENT 2016 programme, sponsor Deloitte Digital catches up with Paul Watts from Purple Magic.

Purple Magic is a patented, purple-flesh potato variety with high levels of anthocyanins, developed at AFBI, Loughgall in 2003. Consumption of highly coloured fruits and vegetables that have high levels of the antioxidant anthocyanins is thought to have many health benefits as they can reduce free-radicals found in cancer types. Purple Magic was derived from a cross breed and was selected along with several other coloured flesh varieties for evaluation in Canada, eventually achieving varietal status in 2015. Production has been licensed to a Canadian company and the variety has shipped 44 tonnes in 2015, and aiming to produce over 800 tonnes in 2016.



How did you come up with the idea?

The health benefits of the consumption of fruit and vegetables with high levels of anthocyanins, purple and red colours, is now proven, but in 2003 when I started breeding potatoes with increased levels of these compounds, the evidence for this was just starting to be realised. Since then there has been much scientific research which has proven this link. The health benefits extend to lowering blood pressure and cholesterol, activity against certain cancers and even dementia. As potatoes are one of our staple foods, this seemed to be a way of easily increasing our consumption of anthocyanins.

What makes this idea unique to anything else out there?

There are other coloured potatoes and of course fruit and vegetables with very high levels of anthocyanins. Purple Magic has been bred specifically to provide a new potato variety with the unique combination of anthocyanins, processing quality and with commercial yields and disease resistance. It can be made into a range of end-products, it is both easy and profitable for the farmer to grow and it is an attractive product appealing to the consumer.

Where do you envision your idea being in five years from now?

We estimate that in five years we will be approaching a steady state of production in the Americas of 2,000 tonnes of seed potatoes. This is the equivalent of 10,000 tonnes of potatoes for consumption. The 'rest of the world' market is as yet untested and we will only start commercial seed sales in 2019, but current interest in the variety would indicate that this market will reach a minimum of 1,000 tonnes of seed in Europe alone, equivalent to 5,000 tonnes of potatoes for consumption.

As an entrepreneur who or what inspires you the most?

Hendrik Bakker of Solanum International, Alberta Canada. He wanted to break away from run-of-the-mill potato varieties and give the market something different. He saw the potential of Purple Magic when it was just a number in a field in Loughgall in 2006 and saw its commercial potential.