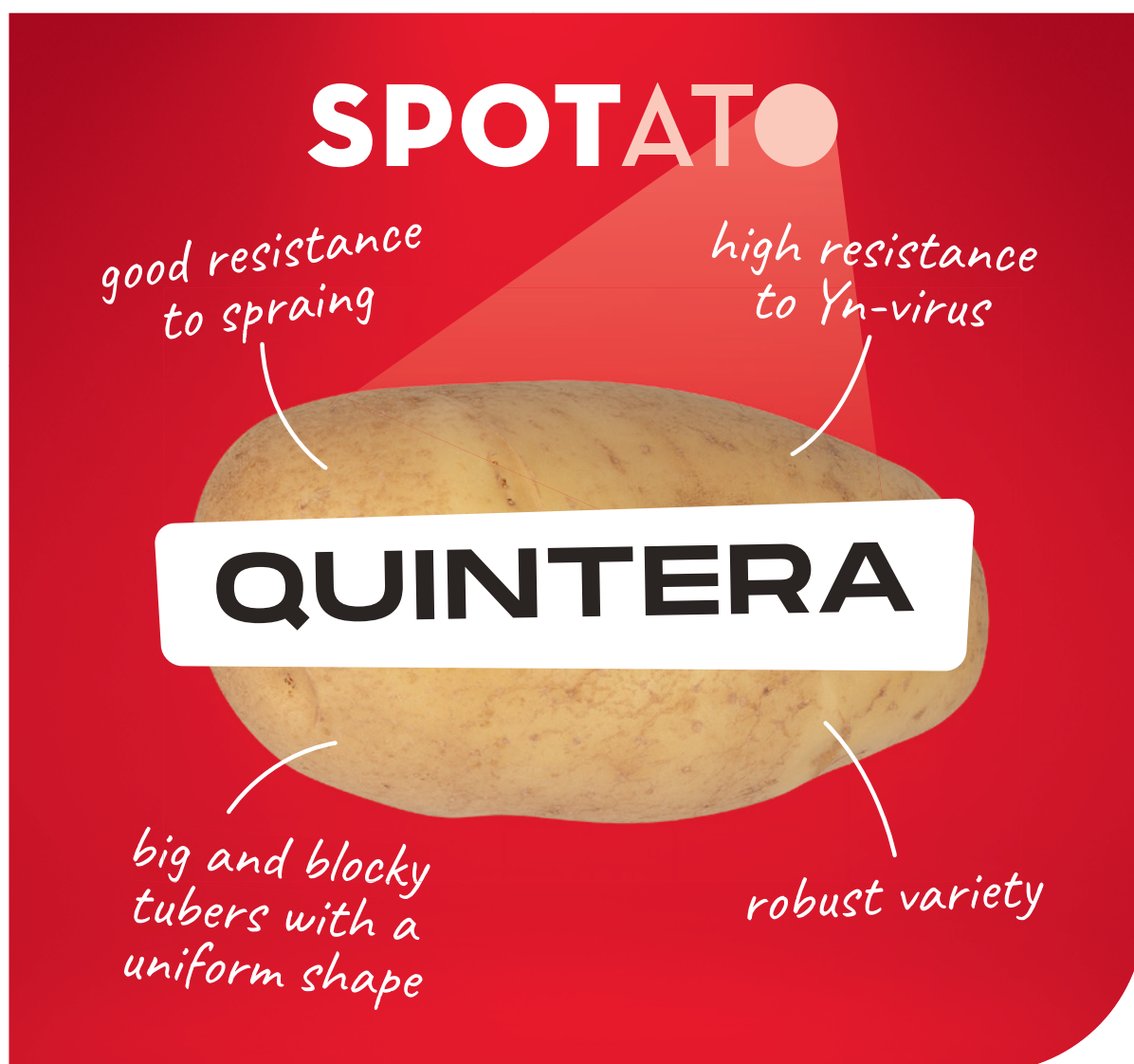


# POWERHOUSE QUINTERA CONQUERS THE WORLD

TEXT WELMOED DE HAAN-BENEDICTUS PHOTOS : MANON MOONEN, BILAL BASHEER EN ABDULLAH IBRAHIM

The new Quintera variety for French fries is a real powerhouse. It is not fazed by the dreaded potato virus Y (PVY), it is easy to handle, and it is just the right size. The Quintera is conquering the world. From the village of Pingjum in the Netherlands to Egypt — Quintera is a welcome guest.





## SEED POTATO GROWER

### Durk Hilarides

On his arable farm in Pingjum, Durk Hilarides cultivates some 20 hectares of HZPC seed potatoes. Next year, half of his fields will be dedicated to the new, virus-resistant varieties Camelia and Quintera. A logical choice, according to Durk: 'With a view to the future, we are consciously establishing new varieties from mini tubers. The fact that the Quintera is resistant to the Y virus is, of course, a huge plus. We can make do with much fewer chemicals and less fertilisation. If you look at the new agricultural policies in the Netherlands, for example, this is essential. With these new varieties, we can move forward.' Some six years ago, Joop Jukema at HZPC asked Durk if he wanted to start growing Quintera mini tubers. Back then, this variety was only a number. Many trial shipments followed; the Quintera has already travelled to the four corners of earth. 'And it still does, by the way. The variety was christened with a name, and we continued to cultivate more Quintera. We still regularly get requests for a trial shipment. Right now, there just so happens to be one ready for McCain in Brazil.'

At first, they had to get to know each other a bit better, but Durk now knows the Quintera inside and out. 'The variety is somewhat prone to growth cracks. You can limit this by not overdoing the fertiliser. And for me, as a seed potato grower, there could have been more tubers on it. It is quite a hefty grower. The ware growers are happy about this; they prefer large tubers. With this variety, I also recommend tuber treatment. I am pretty fanatical about that anyway – everything I put in the ground has to be good.'

So is the Quintera a quirky variety? 'No, I actually find it a very easy potato to grow. It is virus-resistant and able to withstand scab. This variety has a long dormancy period which means that cold storage is not at all necessary. As a French fry potato, it is used throughout the world. Whether in the Middle East, Egypt or Eastern Europe, the Quintera does well everywhere. So, I would say, keep going forward with this variety!' →



## THE WARE GROWER AND PROCESSOR:

**Abdullah Ibrahim and Bilal Basheer**

From a small test field three years ago to a projected 200 hectares by 2024 – Bilal Basheer and Abdullah Ibrahim cannot proceed fast enough with the Quintera. Bilal is the director of Frozena Company in Egypt. Frozena produces 60,000

tonnes of French fries annually and exports them to 30 countries worldwide. Abdullah is the agricultural manager of Tazweed for Agricultural Crops, Frozena's sister company that has grown several HZPC varieties, including Quintera, for the past three years.

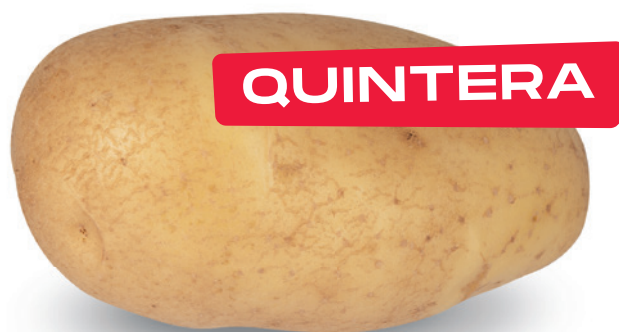


Photo: Abdullah Ibrahim and Bilal Basheer



Abdullah: 'Every year we have several test fields with HZPC varieties. First, we receive a small amount so we can build experience with a variety. We look at the yield, how the variety is doing in our region, and whether the potatoes are easy to process. We then share our experiences with HZPC in a report. We started with Quintera three years ago, and 2023 was the first full year of growing, storing, processing, and selling these potatoes as fries. Although we are far from knowing everything about the variety, we can only really say something about it now.'

In Egypt, the greatest challenge is to properly protect the potatoes from diseases and viruses. Climate change, on the other hand, is much less of a risk in this region. Since there is no rainfall here, growers use irrigation and can water their fields in a controlled manner.

Bilal: 'For us, as French fry manufacturers, it is important to find a good balance between costs, on the one hand, and yield, on the other. Potatoes are the raw material for our final product, French fries. Because the Quintera has some promising resistances, we can save costs. We can harvest the variety quickly, and the dry matter content is good. That is the agricultural side. Looking at the processing side, you see that Quintera will keep for a long time in cold storage. Last year, the tubers lasted as long as seven months. This year, we are trying to keep them even longer. The tubers are nice and large and uniform in shape and size. That makes it a potato that is easy for us to process at a high yield.'

Are there really no downsides then? 'Well, there definitely are, but they do not have much to do with the variety. But, instead, with its availability. We would like to expand quickly with the Quintera. So, as far as we are concerned, HZPC can seriously ramp up seed potato production,' Bilal says with a smile.