

Helping Scotland Grow

Finding Alternative Growing Media for PBTC Mini-tuber Production

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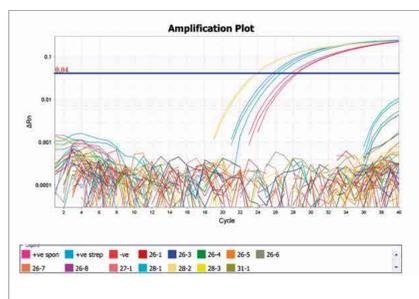
SASA, funded by the AHDB, is working closely with PBTC growers to find alternatives to peat-based growing media, helping to future-proof mini-tuber production and supporting the potato industry at its very foundations.



Initial screening of growing media in microcosm tests.



Roots from microcosms harvested after 12 weeks and DNA extracted.



DNA extracts tested for a range of pathogens by PCR.

- There is a UK Government backed drive to reduce peat use by professional growers, including PBTC growers, by 2030 so it is crucial that suitable alternatives are identified.
- Alternatives must support mini-tuber growth without compromising yield or quality and they must not introduce potato pathogens.
- Laboratory analysis, microcosm studies and glasshouse trials at SASA will be used to screen a range of growing media and identify potential candidates for mini-tuber production.



Growing media tested in glasshouse trials for ability to produce healthy mini-tubers in trials at SASA and at growers' premises.

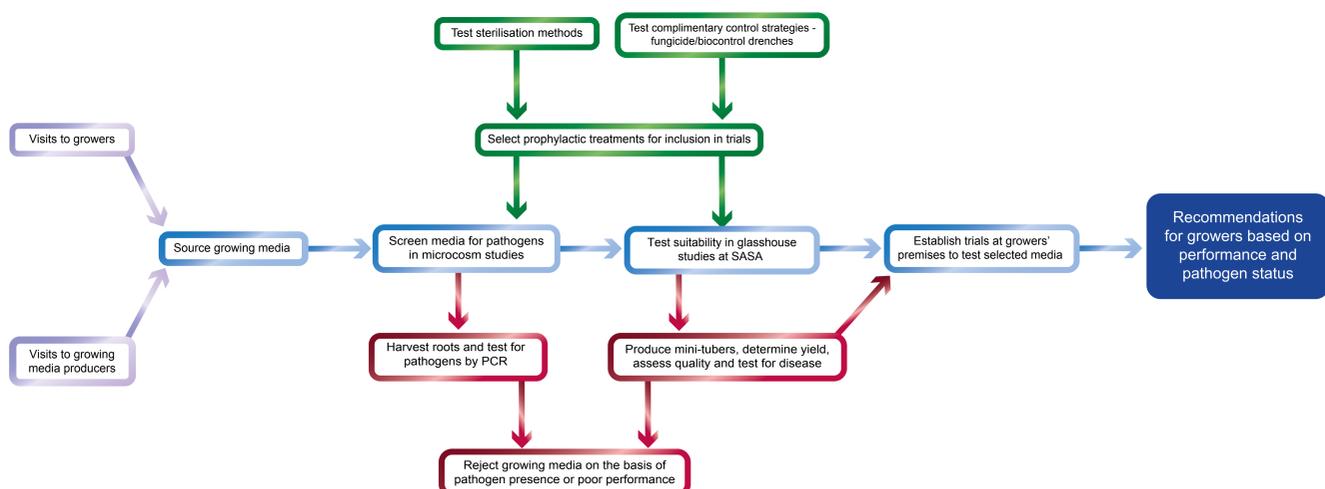


Mini-tubers harvested from field trials will be tested for presence of pathogens.



Yield and quality of mini-tubers from each growing medium will be assessed.

- Prophylactic treatments such as sterilisation methods and fungicide/biocontrol drenches will also be considered.
- Scottish PBTC growers have pledged their support for the project and will host trials at their own premises to test the suitability of selected peat alternatives for PBTC production.



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