

Seed Backgrounder

The seed for the SunLite™ potato was developed by Netherlands-based HZPC, the world's largest seed potato company. HZPC is made up of more than 800 farmers who specialize in the cultivation of seed and table potatoes. The company has created 200 - 300 types of potato and exports to more than 70 countries worldwide. HZPC prides itself on creating the right variety of potato for each market and lifestyle segment, soil type, climate and consumer preference. The SunLite™ potato seed was naturally developed, not genetically altered.

In late 1999, the marketing manager for HZPC Americas approached Dr. Chad Hutchinson, professor in the horticultural sciences department at the University of Florida and potato specialist for the state of Florida, and asked Hutchinson if he would consider growing several lines of potatoes from HZPC seeds. Hutchinson and his team at the University of Florida's Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences research farm grow and evaluate up to 400 potato lines a year for a variety of seed companies. This is done by continually planting new seeds, searching for better quality, re-planting and re-evaluating.

After agreeing to become the first site in the United States to test HZPC's new varieties of potatoes, the University of Florida Institute of Food and Agricultural Sciences research farm received its first set of six dime-sized mini-tubers from the HZPC Americas greenhouse in Prince Edward Island, Canada. HZPC sends small plantlets in test tubes from its headquarters in the Netherlands to Prince Edward Island, where the seeds are quarantined for up to one year. The University of Florida's research farm now grows and evaluates about 125 of HZPC Americas' potato lines every year.

The SunLite™ potato is a result of these efforts, consistently leading all others in taste and appearance. Researchers later discovered that the SunLite™ potato has 30 percent fewer carbohydrates and 25 percent fewer calories than Russet Burbank potatoes; a 5.2-oz. serving of SunLite™ potato contains 18 grams of carbohydrates compared with about 27 grams in the same size serving of the Russet Burbank potato. In addition, SunLite™ potatoes can be harvested more quickly than the average Russet Burbank potato. A shorter growing period allows spring harvesting from January through June.

SunFresh of Florida Marketing Cooperative, Inc. has paid for exclusive rights to grow and market the SunLite™ potato in the United States.