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Thursday 25th May 2017, 2:29 GMT

Battling the potato myth

Potatoes South Australia has worked with the University of Adelaide to research why consumers are eating fewer potatoes



Taste, versatility and ease of use all rate highly for Australian consumers of potatoes.

It's the myth that potatoes are carbohydrate-loaded and that starchy vegetables aren't healthy that's caused the drop in consumption among Australians, according to a study by Potatoes South Australia (SA) and the University of Adelaide.

The report 'Australian consumers' insights into potatoes – nutritional knowledge, perceptions and beliefs' by Katie Wood, John Carragher and Robbie Davis, analysed the results of a survey of 1,200 Australians and found that one-third of those surveyed had decreased their consumption of potatoes in the past five years.

As diets have become more diverse, potatoes have been increasingly replaced by alternatives such as rice, quinoa, durum wheat and sweet potato.

The Australian potato industry has been affected dramatically by the shift in eating patterns, the report found, with the average per capita potato consumption dropping 20 per cent between 1995 and 2012.

That said, better nutritional education and marketing could be the answer to boosting consumption.

"Understanding the nutritional benefits of eating potatoes appears to be limited and messages to correct this would be beneficial to increase consumption in the future," the report stated. "Future marketing campaigns should emphasise

these nutritional messages to encourage the inclusion of the potato as part of a healthy diet."

At the Australian Potato Industry luncheon in Adelaide on Monday 15 May, ahead of the Hort Connections event, potato-lover Andrew Taylor told delegates how he dropped 110 pounds, or 50kg, from a potato diet.

Eating about 4kg of potatoes a day, the former school teacher said he based his decision on research he had undertaken into the most nutritious food. Being full of fibre, water and many of the essential vitamins and minerals, he chose the spud as the essential food ingredient for his diet to tackle his addiction to food.