

The Vegetable Products of Scotland

Good growing country

The climate of the north-east Atlantic coast is good for crops. The long days bring a high solar income. Cool summers allow plants to bulk for a long period. Drought rarely limits yield.

The growing of vegetables here has a long history. The cabbage family, pulses such as beans and peas, swede, potato and other 'root' crops, herbs - all grow and yield well.



Potato, sheep on turnips, vining peas and faba beans

Dependence on imports

Vegetables contain nutrients and minerals essential for a healthy diet. Scotland has enough arable land and good soil to feed all its people with the vegetables they need (also their carbs and protein). Yet many of the vegetables we eat are imported and much of what is grown here does not reach the people who need it.

Why is that? People want veg out of season. It has to come from warmer countries. Some such as the pulses and oilseeds were cheaper to import. Too much local veg is wasted on the plant. There are many reasons.

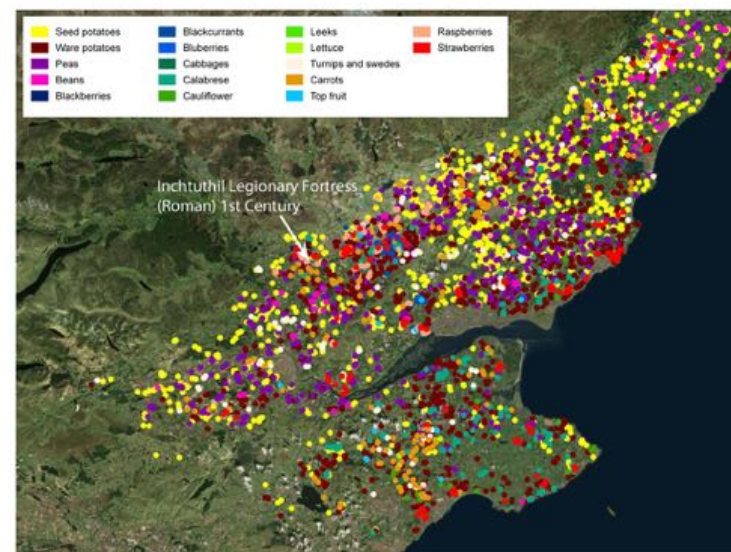
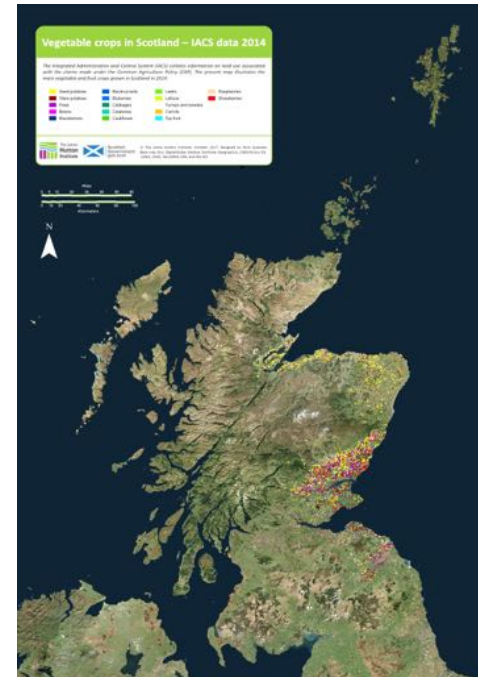
The vegetable map

Why do we want to know where vegetables are grown? If the country is to produce more vegetables, we must know which soils and climates they prefer and whether there is enough similar land available to expand production.

Vegetables and other crops are mapped using data from the EU's Integrated Administration and Control System (IACS) for managing subsidies paid to farmers. Each field growing a crop is geo-referenced, allowing crops to be placed year by year on a map.

In the maps shown here, each coloured dot indicates a field of fruit or vegetables. (The dots are much larger than individual fields.)

Vegetables are grown mainly in lowland Perthshire, Angus, Fife and especially in Strathmore (map below); then to the south of the Forth and in the east Borders, and to the north in Aberdeenshire, the Moray coast and Tarrat.



Is vegetable growing sustainable?

Vegetables have been grown here for hundreds, some for thousands, of years, but for much of that time they were grown at a small scale. Today, the need to supply large markets for economic returns demands large-area cultivation and near year-long production, often aided by fleece and polythene.

Today's commercially-grown vegetables, particularly potato, need a fine soil engineered by heavy field machinery and high pesticide applications. Soils in fields suffering the highest inputs are degrading to a degree that current large-scale methods of growing these crops are not sustainable.



Fleece on the Sidlaw Hills, potato dump, waste broccoli and fruit in polytunnel

Long food supply chains lead to waste in field and factory. Reliance on imports damages soils and biodiversity in other countries.

It is **time for change** ... the Hutton is leading innovation in efficient supply chains, field agronomy, plant genetics ... and in mapping and planning the expansion of sustainable food production. Here's to the next thousand years!!!