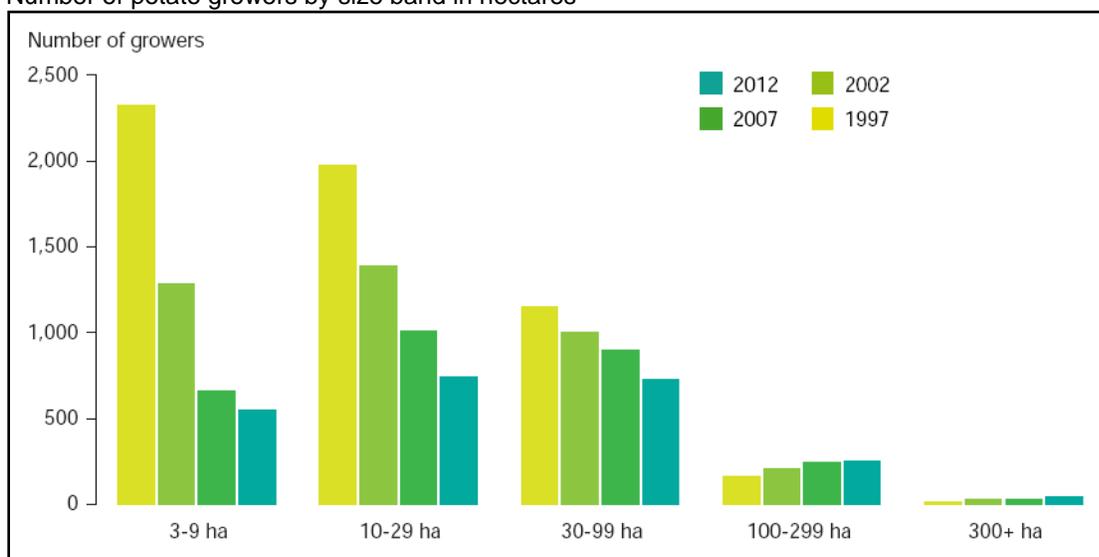


3. Increasingly production is in the hands of bigger farms

The area planted has been recorded in Britain since 1866. Even if one abstracts from the massive increase in potato areas due to the Second World War, these have decreasing, reaching in 1975 the same planted area than in 1897. Despite the contraction in the area under potatoes, as shown in the figure below, production of potatoes is at levels much higher than in 1897. In fact, the average production for the period 1960-2013 was about 61% higher than the average for the period 1885-1938. The reason for the increase in production, of course, is the higher production per hectare attained due largely to the adoption of irrigation, improvements in soil management, and more effective machinery for seedbed preparation.

Like other farming enterprises the number of potato growers has also decreased. In fact, the number of registered growers has decreased from 76,830 in 1960 to 2,190 in 2013. However, as shown above the level of production has not followed that trend. The reason for this has been the consolidation of the industry due to higher capital investment. As shown in the figure where in 2012, 13% of all registered growers planted 100 ha of potatoes or more. These growers represent just over half of the total planted area and under a quarter of growers planted area of 3-9 ha in 2012, compared to 41% of growers in 1997.

Number of potato growers by size band in hectares



Source: AHDB/Potato Council Planting Returns

Hence after the aforementioned consolidation now potato production is in the hands of fewer but more specialised growers who have to meet increasing demands for high quality potatoes, especially for blemish-free, pre-pack potatoes for retail. At the same time there is increasing pressure for potatoes to be grown using integrated crop management principles (ICM) under crop protocols and quality assurance schemes.