

Beyond 2008

Accelerated, sustainable development of the potato sector is essential both to guarantee world food security and to drive economic development in countries dependent on agriculture

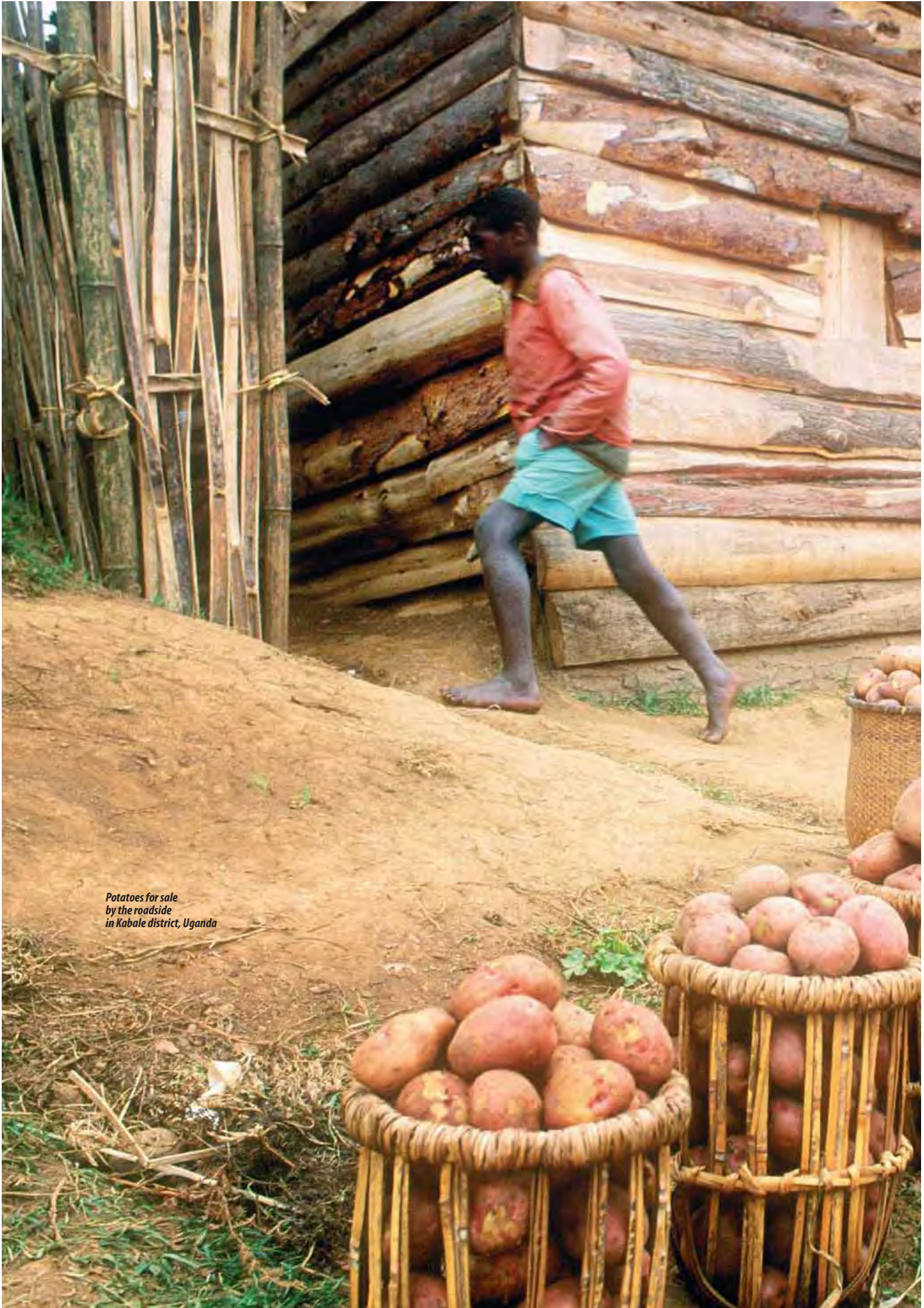


For potato growers, every year is the year of the potato. In December 2008, as the International Year draws to its close, potatoes are being harvested in Argentina and Australia, in northwest China, and in the equatorial highlands of Uganda and Indonesia. In the Andes, farming families have finished sowing their terraced plots before the rainy season, the main crop is freshly planted in Malaysia and southern Malawi, and the spring crop will soon break the surface of fields from Viet Nam's Red River Delta to countries around the Mediterranean.

If trends continue, 2009 will be another record year for global potato production, which has expanded steadily since 1991 thanks to a massive 95 percent increase in harvests in the developing world. However, dark clouds are gathering over prospects for the year ahead. FAO has warned that the global economic slowdown may reduce flows to the developing world of investment and development assistance, including the support to agriculture that has helped many countries strengthen their potato sector. Developed countries may be tempted to raise trade barriers, which already apply stiff tariffs on imported potato products. The banking crisis could leave millions of farmers with little money and no credit to invest in production.

In 2009 and beyond, accelerated and sustainable development of the potato sector is essential both to guarantee the food security of the world's growing population and as a source of added value to drive economic development in countries dependent on agriculture. The International Year has highlighted the contribution that the potato is already making to development and food security in Africa, Asia and Latin America, where potatoes have become an important staple food and cash crop. But further progress requires both increases in the productivity, profitability and sustainability of potato-based farming





*Potatoes for sale
by the roadside
in Kabale district, Uganda*