

## Malaysian Activities Rewire Consumer Attitudes toward Potatoes

For years, consumers held the misconception that potatoes were fattening; in Asia, this misconception was compounded by the fact that most consumers ate primarily rice and lacked familiarity with the various dining opportunities that potatoes present. During the past year, the international program in Malaysia successfully harnessed the power of the internet and social media to put this misconception to rest – beginning with a December 2015 media event that ultimately reached millions of Malaysians. The multi-stage event began with a celebrity chef cooking demonstration, followed by a dietician talk on U.S. potato nutritional benefits. The highlight was a U.S. Potatoes Cook-off, where 12 teams of popular food bloggers, consisting of two bloggers per team, competed to prepare the best Christmas dish using U.S. fresh, frozen or dehydrated potatoes. The concept behind the contest was that bloggers would be eager to share their experience of using U.S. potatoes to prepare the dishes, thus reaching a large target audience. Because the message is delivered by a third party, the credibility of the message would be enhanced. Sure enough, twenty positive U.S. potato write-ups appeared on the participants' blogs. Another 19 articles about the event appeared in the print media with coverage on a local online television station as well.

