

Predictions for the storage season ahead

Current weather forecasts predict that rain and unsettled conditions are likely as we move into the autumn, and this may create challenges for growers with concerns about potato storage and disease control this season.

Store cleanliness and hygiene should also be top priority for growers before harvest.

"I can't stress enough the value of ensuring the correct preparation has been put in pre-season, and that stores have been cleaned thoroughly to remove any debris or dust that can harbour fungal spores," explains Morley Benson, key account manager at Certis.

In line with ongoing product stewardship, new CIPC application rates have also come into effect this year, which means consideration will have to be given to tighter product control, in addition to managing crops following a potentially wet harvest this year.

"We would always recommend treating before any signs of sprouting, the earlier the better. With sprout control, prevention is always better than cure."

"The first application of CIPC is critical, so this means as early as three weeks after harvest for some, or at the earliest opportunity thereafter, as once tubers break dormancy it is difficult to regain adequate control.

"Before going into store, make sure the crop is as dry as possible, and has cured before treatment. This is important to minimise skin damage and reduce the risk of storage diseases.

"Growers will also need to pay careful attention to tubers in store - frequently looking out for any signs of dormancy break is important," he urges.

"Continued control and management of stores is a must - this includes temperature and ventilation. Keeping stores cool will reduce the sprouting risk, but the perfect temperature does depend on the variety and target market."

CIPC recirculation in-store will also be a key area of focus. Additional statutory measures are likely to be introduced in 2017/18 requiring active air recirculation as a statutory section of the label.

"With sprout control, prevention is always better than cure."

"Good active recirculation of CIPC can ensure a better overall coverage of the suppressant, reducing the risk of residues. It will also ensure maximum efficacy at the new lower dose rates. Store modifications such as variable frequency drives and the creation of plenums can help achieve more positive airflow through the crop.

"Whichever is the storage method of choice, ultimately, growers will need to ensure their crop is in the best possible condition before being stored, and before treatment" Morley concludes.



Certis' unique potato portfolio



CERTIS

Certis Europe BV, 3 Riverside,
Granta Park, Great Abington,
Cambridgeshire, CB21 6AD.

Tel: 0845 373 0305

Email: infocertisuk@certiseurope.com

www.certiseurope.co.uk

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POTATOSAFE

AUTUMN 2016

NEWS

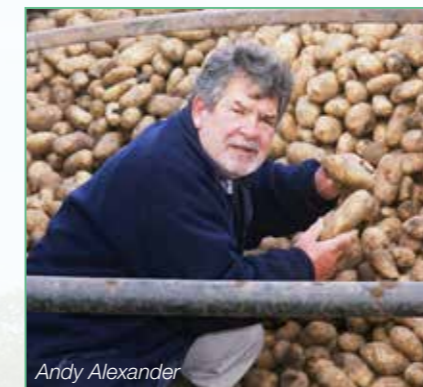
Lessons learned from potato growers down-under

Andy Alexander, specialist potato consultant and agronomist, has provided advice across the UK and Australia for over 35 years, and has travelled to the southern continent over 17 times.

He explains how adapting to change in a volatile climate has been key to success for growers in Australia, and what lessons UK growers can take from this.

"My role is to provide business advice, measuring the abilities of organisations to survive in tough environments.

"The key challenge in Australia is the weather and the extremes that can be experienced. Some days there can be very high temperatures of over 30°C, and on others up to 35mm of rain in under 24 hours.



Andy Alexander

"At the other end of the spectrum in the UK, the impact of this year's wet and cold spring has the potential to result in a late, and in some cases average, crop for many British growers.

"Ultimately, whether you're farming in the UK or Australia, potatoes are expensive to grow and as units get larger, the financial risk becomes greater. Therefore, it's all about feeding and protecting the plant to ensure a healthy crop."

At the time of Andy's first visit to Australia in 1998, pressure was growing on the frozen food industry. Cultural changes were driving higher sales in snack foods, and large food brands were increasing the pressure for universal product quality.

"It's all about feeding and protecting the plant to ensure a healthy crop."

"The work in Australia all started when a friend of mine was working for McCain Foods. As a business they didn't think they were getting the best possible produce from source, and I was tasked with looking at some of the on-farm situations to see what improvements could be made.

"The big brands need to ensure the same quality of product is sold across the world, so their customers know what to expect whether in Sydney, London or Hong Kong.

"I helped growers to understand the importance of adapting their practices to produce a product the consumer wanted, at the desired quality while also ensuring they were conscious of the market conditions.

"Australia has some very large farms, and the big operators with advanced irrigation set-ups can easily commit to growing at least 1,000 hectares of crop.

"One farm I work with is 2.5 million hectares in size, and covers an area bigger than Holland and Belgium put together. However, the bigger the area, the bigger the potential risk, if issues arise.

"It's all about making objective suggestions that the farmer hasn't necessarily considered, and educating growers about why crops need the products they do. I can come in with a fresh take on their businesses.

"In Australia, they are very open to change, and I think this is what sees them through the difficulties and

enables them to maintain the quality of crop on-farm, despite the volatile conditions."

Top potato tips from down under:

- Understand your soil type and its capabilities
- Know your market and end consumer
- Record everything you do, so you can compare and benchmark each season
- Consider contracting as a method of reducing risk
- Employ people that embody the values and goals that you have for the farm

"They are very open to change, and I think this is what sees them through the difficulties."

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CIPC stewardship update



With over 1.2 million tonnes of stored potatoes being treated with sprout suppressants, the 'Be CIPC Compliant' campaign, has been vital in raising awareness of the rules, regulations and best practice guidance for use of CIPC in stores.

Following millions of pounds' worth of investment, the programme has so far resulted in significant compliance improvements.

However, the industry is urged not to be complacent which means continued work to promote the importance of responsible usage is needed.

As part of the CIPC stewardship, dose rates will continue to be reduced via phasing into 2017, and it is vitally important for growers to be aware of these regulatory requirements.

For the coming season, starting from August 2016 through to July 2017, this includes:

- 24g chlorpropham per tonne of potatoes for the fresh market



- 42g chlorpropham per tonne of potatoes for the processed market
- First application within three weeks of harvest even in the absence of dormancy break
- Latest time of application is 14 days before removal from store for sale or processing

In addition, Red Tractor Farm Assurance requires all stores where CIPC is used to be audited. Growers must therefore demonstrate that this check has been carried out before any application is applied.

Growers are urged to visit www.cipccompliant.co.uk for the full list of regulatory requirements, and for up to date information.

NSP workshops available this autumn



As part of the Nematicide Stewardship Programme (NSP), workshops will be provided in collaboration with ARTIS across the UK, this autumn/ winter and into the spring.

Covering operator and machinery best practice guidelines, for the application of granular nematicides, the NSP training has previously attracted more than 400 people from across the industry, and with limited availability, growers are being urged to sign up soon.

Each session will provide practical advice, addressing real areas of concern for the safe use of nematicides. Protecting the surrounding environment and wildlife is a key consideration of the training, and is also the overall principle of the stewardship.

For more information about the NSP, visit www.nspstewardship.co.uk. For more information about Artis, or to book a course please visit www.artistraining.com.

Best practice tips for growers when using nematicides:

- Calibrate equipment pre-season, and consider regular re-calibration after use over a large area
- Immediately incorporate nematicides into the soil, so they're not left on the surface
- Minimise operator exposure via use of a closed transfer system

- Switch equipment off three metres from the row end
- Rotovate boundaries of treated field after application
- Use one area of the field for re-filling
- Handle spillages professionally – replacing large spillages in a returnable container, marking up and keeping in a legal store for eventual professional disposal
- Check the daily product usage against unit area of land treated

To sign up for regular industry updates visit

www.certiseurope.co.uk/competition

For further information please contact the Certis technical hotline on 0845 373 0305.

New developments at Potatoes In Practice

Another successful Potatoes In Practice (PIP) event was held at the James Hutton Institute's Balruddery Farm on 11 August.

The annual showcase, which is the largest field-based potato event in the UK, is reported to have attracted over 700 delegates from across the sector, including international guests and industry speakers.

This year's event featured the latest leading research, machinery demonstrations and trial plot tours, as well as seminars discussing the current issues and topics from across the sector.

A key point of interest was the launch of a new molecular diagnostic service for the diagnosis of Free Living Nematodes (FLN), by James Hutton Limited. This service is thought to be a quicker and more cost-effective method of sampling and soil testing, which will provide a greater degree of accuracy for UK growers who regularly monitor soil pest levels.

Visitors were also introduced to a new App by Agrovista UK, which instantly measures tuber diameter and calculates yield per hectare from an image. This exciting new innovation is due to be launched in November.

The AHDB led Grower Platform Survey was also highlighted at the event. This survey aims to gather vital data to support research into the management of rotations, to enable improvements in agronomic and economic sustainability for UK farming. Those wanting to take part in the grower survey can do so by visiting http://www.niab.com/pages/id/448/AHDB_Management_of_Rotations_-_Grower_Platform_Survey

For more information about the PIP event and the James Hutton Institute, visit www.hutton.ac.uk.

Looking back on this year's blight season

Persistent rainfall and warm temperatures resulted in high blight pressure early on in the season, causing challenges for UK growers, as the value of the crop also crept up.

Tighter spray intervals were seen as a recurring method of control, which resulted in an increased demand for the fungicides available to keep on top of potato blight.

One product which has proven to be very effective this season is Valbon, which when mixed with ZinZan has given a high level of protectant activity and useful kick-back.

As a co-formulation with mancozeb, Valbon has also shown to be a useful anti-resistance tool in the fight against alternaria.

When deciding how to tackle blight late in the season, growers should

continue to check for warnings and monitor blight risk, using useful tools such as Blight Watch.

Blight Watch is available at www.blightwatch.co.uk.



This month on Twitter

Red Tractor @RedTractorFood
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BBC Cambridgeshire @BBCCambs
Rural crime latest: Potato crops targeted <http://bbc.in/2aPLV4N>



AHDB Potatoes @AHDB_Potatoes
News, alerts & maps: Whole website dedicated to #potatoes #aphidmonitoring from @FeraScience <http://aphmon.fera.defra.gov.uk/>

James Hutton Inst @JamesHuttonInst
Hundreds attend #PotatoesInPractice event nr #Dundee <http://www.hutton.ac.uk/news/hundreds-attend-potatoes-practice-2016>
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