



## POTATO NEWS.

JANUARY 2020

**MARKET** – The potato market has reached a **plateau** on price over the last few months. Growers with good quality **'free-buy'** potatoes in store are **resisting** movement as they feel the market will **strengthen**. Latest AHDB figures released on 20<sup>th</sup> December have revised their 2019 GB yields upwards to **5.1 million** tonnes. Based on harvested tonnage with an average yield of **46 T/Ha**. This still represents a deficit on what the market requires given previous consumption figures. However, there is still **optimism** that quality potatoes **long-term** will be in demand. Processors and packers alike are trying to **manipulate** their **contracted** tonnages to protect themselves from forcing the market **upwards**. The processing sector is estimating that there is potentially **50,000** tonnes of contracted material (Yorkshire) in the ground pre-Christmas. Naturally, the likes of McCain potentially need to find replacements for these stocks. **'Free-buy'** price has **increased**; although there are **cheaper** supplies coming from **Europe** (Belgium). The **packers** vary in their requirements. Some are more **heavily** into the 'free-buy' market, whilst others are **comfortable** with their current situation. There are several hectares of potatoes to be **harvested** and best estimates would suggest **5-7%** of the area planted. Based on a tonnage figures then circa **300,000 tonnes**. The tonnage still to **harvested** will either be attempted during **January** if the weather improves significantly or there will be an attempt in the **Spring** if the market is extensively short. Whether these potatoes are lifted or not, the quality will not be the best; the ability to store them will be very questionable. The **pre-pack** sector is now paying from **£200-260 / T** for whites. **Maris Piper** demand has maintained its value during the last month, **£220-300 / T**. Red varieties are much the same as last month; around **£220-280 / T**. **King Edward** pricing will depend on demand following Christmas. Christmas and Easter tend to be the high demand periods. These prices need to be maintained in the high **£200's** to compensate for **lower** yields. The **processing** sector for the **French fry** market has not altered. The **cheaper** supplies coming from **Europe** (Belgium) are **preventing** further increase in the free-buy price unless it is for specific **varieties** (i.e. M-Piper). The **crisping** sector is finding the situation much more serious. Fry quality is **more** important for **crisping** than in French fry production as there is not the scope to manipulate fry colour as there is in frozen chip production. The **chip shop** sector remains strong with reasonable uplift in the period pre-Christmas. Prices range from **£200-250 / T** with top end Agria at **£300 / T**

In **Europe** there are still potatoes in the ground, particularly in the **Netherlands** and areas of **Germany**. The overall yield from the **EU 4** countries was higher than **2018**, due partly to a **larger** area planted in conjunction with **greater** yields. However, the **overall** tonnage was **not** as large as originally anticipated; with **crop** still in the **ground** there is a feeling that the



free-buy market will increase. **Eastern Europe** still has a big demand due to their large deficit this year. The Futures (**April 2020**) have increased marginally; as of w/e **22.12.19** the price was **€185 / T**. The **Canaries** are still buying potatoes, but **no** dramatic increase in prices. **Sterling** is strengthening against the **Euro**

The potato industry is entering a new **decade**. Is **climate** change going to be the most **important** factor to mitigate against? The last **decade** has seen **7** of the **hottest** years globally. However, the UK has had its share of extremes; a very **dry year** (2018) followed by a very **wet year** (2019), which is the sole reason for the shaping of the potato market. These periods of extremes are difficult to combat. In reality, the **area** that is planted in **GB** and the potential **yields** that are achievable are a recipe for **over supply**. Contracts remain more of a **safety net** in many incidences. It will be the growers who can **manage** these extremes most effectively who will have the best opportunity for success.

## HARVEST

- **2019** harvest will not be completed in the **same** year!
- Some growers are still **trying** to complete their harvest; others have stood down and will **re-look** at it if the land dries suitable or the market warrants this type of quality.
- **Damage & bruising** levels have remained high.
- **Soil adhesion** continues to be an issue.

## STORAGE

- The **management** of stores is very **challenging**.
- **Rots** are widely reported in most **late** harvested stocks and it is **monitoring** the progression of these that is **critical**.
- Reports of stores becoming unstable due to deterioration of stocks and needing **unloading** to salvage some **value**.
- **Airflow** continues to be essential this season to **reduce** the incidents of rots and make sure the **later** lifted crops are **dried** rapidly. More tuber **weight loss** may have to be accepted this season.
- **Reduced** ventilation may be appropriate **post**-Christmas if the crop is properly dry.
- With **rots** are becoming more noticeable in stocks. What are the **options**?
- **Extended** ventilation this season; **monitor** their development & try to prevent them collapsing and dripping onto other tubers.
- **Watch** for **condensation** points. This will only **exacerbate** break down problems.
- **Exposed stanchions** (loss of insulation) could cause **condensation** from warm air meeting the cold steel.



- **Quilts** laid on crop where condensation lines occur could be a **solution**.
- **> 1% rots** consider movement options (**1 tuber in 100**). At this point the problem could escalate rapidly.
- **Sprout suppression** has been effective this season. Due possible to good MH **uptake** and **less** physiological age in the tubers.
- **CIPC, Mint Oil or Ethylene**. The latter 2 for **packing** stores this season, but **processing** stores for **2020** season will need to **consider** both.
- **Remember** with Mint oil (Biox-M) to keep the store closed to outside air for **48-72** hours to improve efficacy.
- **CO<sub>2</sub>** levels could increase, but not a problem for packing if it is only a short-term rise; unlikely to be a problem in **French** fry production; **crisping** varieties requires more caution
- **CIPC 2<sup>nd</sup> / 3<sup>rd</sup>** applications delay as long as possible; particularly for **long-term** crops (May/June); to gain maximum **efficacy** for the amount available.
- **CIPC tMRL** is expected shortly. Anticipation of **1ppm**; based on the submitted data by European Member States (including GB).
- **DMN & Orange oil** still not received regulatory approval.
- **Communicate** regularly with you customer on quality.

## 2020 SEASON PREPARATION

- **PCN** results for next season's field.
- Select **suitable** varieties.
- **What** seed tuber treatment are you considering using (seed wash report & field history information).
- No **Monceren** available. Consider treating seed at source? **On-farm** treatment on seed arrival or **on-planter** treatment

<b>Maxim 100Fs</b>	<b>£470 / 5lt</b>	<b>Rate 250ml/ton</b>	<b>Cost £23.50 / ton</b>
<b>RhiNo Fs</b>	<b>£95 / 1LT</b>	<b>Rate 200ml/ton</b>	<b>Cost £19.00 / ton</b>
<b>RhiNo Ds Selected Distributors</b>			
<b>Emesto Prime Ds</b>	<b>£47.50 / 2 kg</b>	<b>Rate 1kg/ton</b>	<b>Cost £23.75 / ton</b>

- The above **costs** (approximates) require **application** costs adding.
- **Irrigation** considerations; reservoir filling; licence requirements.



- **Maleic Hydrazide** should be built into plant protection programme to help sprout suppression. **Check** for customers' approval.
- **AHDB** trials show **better sprout** control with the available alternatives, where good **MH uptake** has been achieved.

## SEED

- **Inspect** seed on arrival
- **Decant** into boxes or chitting trays within 24-48 hours. More applicable for **varieties** that suffer from **blackleg**.
- **Stock** that requires **cold** storage needs a rapid **reduction** of tuber temperature to prevent **sprouting**.
- Could be a late **Spring**.
- **Virus** testing is high on growers' agenda following last season's problems.
- The **test** is not a guarantee of virus free seed; it is a **guide**.
- **Sampling** for a virus test need to come from a **wide range** of boxes to achieve a **representative** sample.
- A **rapid** test is available or a **grown-on**.

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NB – Information above is a guide. For all treatments please refer to the product label. For further advice contact me; or your agronomist