



## POTATO NEWS.

JANUARY 2021

**MARKET** – Each month it is hoped that there will be some **optimism** in the market; but following the **Christmas** period the market still has this **lack lustre** feel. Despite the late harvest for some, there are **minimal** reports of **problems** in store. **AHDB** average free-buy **price** for December was around **£138 / T**. This **includes** the Maris Piper price, which **skews** the figures. In general, the **whites'** price has been very **lethargic** in increasing in value. Now that Christmas (one day event) has finished there is an interest in seeing what **stock** levels remain in **packers'** stores and what the **open** market movement will be like. The **Covid-19 pandemic** has not eased as it was hoped; the new variant is more **prolific**, and the **infection** rates are **rising**. Additional **restrictions** are in place with the anticipation of **more** to come. The **repercussions** for the industry are **polarised**. The **retail** sector is likely to have **greater** demand and the **food service & hospitality** sectors are likely to **decline**. Overall, the market tends **not** benefit, as potatoes destined for the food service sectors become **re-directed** and hence any increase demand from the fresh sector becomes **negated**. There are too many **uncertainties** and it will be a few months before any **clear** pattern emerges.

Disappointingly, there has been **minimal** change in the free-buy prospects. Despite **good** demand over the Christmas period; it has done **nothing** for the free-buy market price. Most sectors are concentrating on **contracts** and purchasing small quantities as and when required, which is minimal. Free-buy **whites** price has a **wide** range, dependent on the quality (**£50-110/T**). Although still resistance over **£100**. This latest phase of the pandemic may have a **positive** effect on demand, which could lift white prices. All other fresh produce has seen a **surge** over Christmas which is **persisting**. Quality **M-Piper** remains in demand and is expected to be all season. Ex farm **£170-240/ T** are achievable, but very much quality dependent and location. **Store** wash ups in **January** are important and will start to indicate how long to keep **stocks** in store. The **Reds** market appears in **deficit** and values are holding and are anticipated to increase later in the storage season. **£200/T** is easily achievable. The **King Edward** market has been strong until Christmas. Much of what is in **store** is on **contract**, but any free buy should retain its pre-Xmas price; **£250-300/ T**. The **export** market primarily to the **Canaries** is buoyant. Traditional areas in Essex have cleared but there is still good demand. **Fish & Chip** market is **unlikely** to have any upturn especially with the current **restrictions** in place across the country. **Prices** are similar to last month's figures.

**Europe** remains in the grip of the Covid-19 **pandemic** and there does **not** appear to be any early optimism in **2021**. America as well as Europe appear to be having a torrid time with the second wave. Regardless of the roll out of the **vaccine** the optimism remains **muted**.



**National** restrictions remain in place. To accompany this effect on the market the **transition** period has ended, and **the UK** is officially **out** of the EU with a deal. However, this has meant **no** tariffs although there is a **lot** of added documentation with **every** consignment entering or exiting **Europe**. The market is **subdued**, like the UK, due to **high** yields and **poor** demand. EU **export** of frozen **fries** is one of the **positives** despite the Global pandemic. This market was **1%** up on the 2019 tonnage. **Reduced** demand within the EU **outweighed** the increased demand **outside** the continent. However, on a positive note; Germany's **table** potato sales continue to **outperform** the processing sector due to the eating habits resulting from the pandemic restrictions. The Futures (**April 2021**) has settled around **€62/ T (£56 / T)**. Much the same as **April '20**

## STORAGE

**Two** store fires in **Germany** in **early** December saw the immediate **suspension** of the use of **1,4sight** (DMN). Following investigations, it was confirmed to be due to **operator** error in that the **petrol** generators were responsible; the product should have been applied with **electric** foggers. The suspension has been lifted (**16.12.20**) provided that the **label** application recommendations were **altered** and only the correct **nebulisation** equipment permitted.

- **Dormancy** on many crops is still very encouraging.
- **Reasons** have not been fully determined, but Maleic Hydrazide (**MH**) uptake could be responsible.
- **Eurostar** and **Challenger** crops will have been the first treated in the processing sector.
- For those who have tested the **MH residue**; uptake levels are very variable **within** varieties and **between** varieties.
- Despite the **12 mg/kg** supposed **magic number** MH manufacturers are **doubtful** of that figure.
- More work is required; this is one of the **gaps** that appears in our **knowledge** of the product.
- **1,4Sight** gained emergency approval from CRD on **08<sup>th</sup> December** provided that certain **criteria** are conformed to.
- **Approved** variety; Storage after **March 2021**; **MH** uptake of **< 12mg/kg**; ensure that any **waste** is **not** fed to livestock or spread on grassland.
- **PLEASE** discuss with customer first **prior** to any application.
- **Mint oil** has full approval.



- Be aware of current **issues** where **Mint Oil** has been applied to a store when **condensation** was present; there have been reports of **scorching** on those tubers that were **damp**.
- **Prior** to application ensure the fridges are **off 24 hours** before; and **recirculate** to ensure **uniform** temperatures **top** and **bottom** of store are achieved and no **condensation**.
- **Ethylene** user will be **ramping** up levels and some will be already at the desired level.
- Monitor **CO<sub>2</sub>** levels routinely.
- Electricity usage is likely **to rise** while trying to maintain the **same** temperatures.
- Any plans to use an **alternative** sprout suppressant in conjunction with **ethylene** needs to be **discussed** with Ethylene provider.
- They are intermating that they will **not** stand by their product once the **cycle** is broken with the use of another product.
- The **electrochemical** sensor will need **covering** during application as a **minimum**, but **removal** of all ethylene equipment is advised.
- Any **sprouts** pre-ethylene treatment start to **thicken** once treatment has begun.
- These sprouts should **reduce** their elongation and become **brittle**.
- Other important areas to monitor are:
  - 1. **Condensation** especially in warm store when there are **cold** ambient conditions
  - 2. **Rots**.
  - 3. For packing samples a **January** wash up is prudent particularly for **skin spot** development on susceptible varieties.
  - 4. **Fry tests** especially where ethylene is being used.

## SEED

- Prepare for post-Christmas **seed** deliveries as highlighted previously.
- **Wash** stocks prior to arrival.
- Seed was **harvested** over a **long** period.
- Scotland especially experienced harvesting **pre** and **post** rain.
- **Powdery scab** visible in some stocks.
- **High** soil content in some stocks.
- Seed arriving for chitting needs **de-canting** quickly & **not** left in bags.
- Don't **overflow** trays.
- **Light** levels are the key factor in achieving good **robust** sprouts.
- Seed **counts** will give you an indication of the **re-plantable** area.



## LAND for 2021

- **PCN** results assessments for **variety** choice.
- Remember to consider **resistance** and **tolerance**.
- **Nutrient** status needs doing if not already.
- **High** application of **Potash** should be split some ideally pre-Christmas.
- **Reservoir** filling; ensure the high rainfall during December is utilised.
- For those in areas of **high** salinity check concentration (TDS) while filling.
- Some crops will **tolerate** higher salinity levels than others; certain irrigation application techniques (**drip**) will have different tolerances.

## PESTICIDE UPDATE

- **DMN** achieved emergency approval on 08.12.20 for 192,500 tonnes.
- **Mancozeb** – despite non-approval renewal by the EU beginning on 4.01.21; it falls outside the **transition** period allowing the UK (**CRD**) to decide on the end **date** of the approval. Consequently, **Mancozeb** potentially could have a further **3 years**, but this could be shorter. This only **applies** to England, Scotland and Wales; for **Northern Ireland** 2021 is the last season with last use **04.01.22**.
- Some **Mancozeb** containing products will still be **difficult** to purchase, e.g. **Invader**.
- **Corteva** Agriscience received notification on **24.12.20** by **CRD** that Oxamyl (**Vydate10G**) will lose its approval as of **31.12.20**. CRD granted an **amendment** for disposal / storage until **28.02.21**.
- There are current **4** applications lodged for emergency approval (**EAMU**) for certain crops and awaiting decision on this.

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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