



Seed

There are reports that seed for many varieties are tight this year with many growers opting to use a mixture of certified seed and home saved seed to cover the requirements for the 2022 season. While this is perfectly fine, growers need to be aware that due to the Brexit impasse between the EU and UK on seed imports from Scotland and Great Britain, this avenue for seed doesn't look like it will be available in the near future. As a result the Minister of Agriculture has committed to resourcing the seed industry here and we expect an announcement shortly about some supports for Irish seed growers. While this is welcome, and badly needed, the seed growers who will be tasked with supplying the seed to Irish growers will need commitment from ware growers otherwise the industry is going nowhere.

Fresh seed is vital to the industry and unless we produce the seed here for most of the varieties that are almost unique to Ireland at this stage, many of them will disappear to be replaced by imports for Europe. The high dry matter varieties that we like in Ireland are not popular on the continent with the result that there are few seed growers in Europe prepared to risk growing varieties that they may not have sale for. Therefore in order to supply the Irish market with these types of varieties the only real option is to produce the seed in Ireland.

So what can growers do? Well the first thing ware growers can do is to contact seed producers to organise fresh seed for the 2023 season, this will give the seed producer confidence to grow the required seed amounts for a market that they are sure exists otherwise they are taking a huge risk to grow for a market that may or may not be there. Every year the Department of Agriculture publish

a list of seed growers and the area of seed for all the different varieties entered for certification so either farmers contact their local merchant to order seed or they can contact the seed producers directly and book in seed for next season. The link to the list of seed producers is below;

[2021 List of Pre-Basic and Basic Seed Potato Crops inspected for Marketing in Ireland](#)

While the list of growers is for the crop marketed last year most of the growers will still be available to grow crops in 2022.

Planting

The new [Nitrates Directive \(S.I. No.113 of 2022\)](#) was published at the end of March and while most of the document will be of passing interest to tillage and potato farmers, there are two significant changes that will come into effect in 2022 which will directly affect all tillage farmers.

1. Firstly all tillage crops will have to have some sort of cultivation after harvest to stimulate green cover to establish.
2. Late harvested cereal crops or crops such as maize, beet and potatoes will have to have a 6 meter buffer zone between the crop and any watercourse, to prevent any surface runoff into the watercourse.

For the moment there is no clear guidelines on how to treat the buffer zones and what harvest dates are considered "late", DAFM are looking for clarifications on a number of issues relating to these changes, so as soon as these become clear we will issue an update.

According to the [Met Eireann data](#) most soils are 1 - 2 °C above normal so conditions in most areas should be warm enough to plant as soon as the weather dries up again later this week. However, last year many crops that were planted early were affected by late frosts which delayed emergence and made herbicide applications more tricky so don't panic just yet. May bank holiday weekend is still a good target for most to get crops planted by, although in the north west it will be slightly later.

Remember soil conditions are more important than the date, working in wet

soils will cause compaction, reduce rooting and nitrogen uptake which will result in lower yields.

Watch cultivation depth, remember soils are wetter the deeper you go down and if you are going deeper than 35 cm you are going to slow all operations, wear more parts, burn more diesel and cost more money. Don't forget that drills will slump after planting by up to 3cms (1 inch) so bear this in mind when you are calculating you desired final seed depth. When planting is in full swing don't forget to carry out the normal daily checks to make sure applicators are working correctly, seed is planted at the correct depth and seed spacing is where it should be etc. This will help to avoid any surprises when they start to emerge.

Picture 1; Check planting depth at regular intervals



Fertiliser

Fertiliser costs have risen steadily over the last few months, based on the modelling in the Teagasc Costs and Returns calculator, where fertiliser was purchased at current prices this would equate to approximately €1,250 /ha (€500 /ac) in fertiliser costs alone. Where it was purchased earlier in the

year then obviously it will lower the costs, in January we estimated that fertiliser costs would be about €950 /ha (€380 /ac) based on the prices available at that time, so the real figure is likely to be somewhere in between. The current green book recommendations for the different varieties grown are in the tables below.

Table 1; Fertiliser recommendation for main crop potatoes e.g. Rooster/ Kerr's Pink

Soil Index (P & K)	N kg/ha (units/ac)	P kg/ha (units/ac)	K kg/ha (units/ac)
1	170 (136)	125 (100)	305 (244)
2	145 (116)	100 (80)	245 (196)
3	120 (96)	75 (60)	185 (148)
4	95 (76)	50* (40)	120 (96)

Table 2; Fertiliser recommendation for salad potatoes e.g. Gemson/ Charlotte

Soil Index (P & K)	N kg/ha (units/ac)	P kg/ha (units/ac)	K kg/ha (units/ac)
1	120 (96)	125 (100)	245 (196)
2	100 (80)	115 (92)	185 (148)
3	80 (64)	100 (80)	120 (96)
4	70 (56)	50 (40)*	65 (52)

Table 3; Fertiliser recommendation for seed potatoes

Soil Index (P & K)	N kg/ha (units/ac)	P kg/ha (units/ac)	K kg/ha (units/ac)
1	155 (124)	125 (100)	170 (136)
2	130 (104)	115 (92)	140 (112)
3	105 (84)	100 (80)	110 (88)
4	80 (64)	85 (68)*	80 (64)

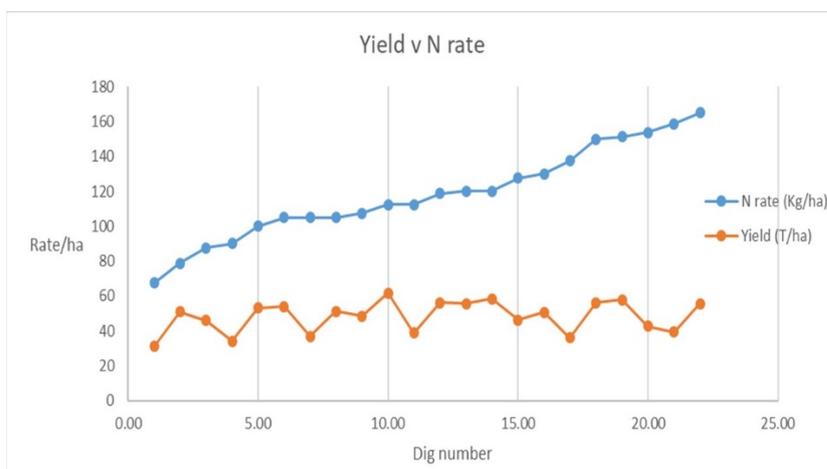
Note; * where a soil P test is above 15 mg/l, no fertiliser P is required

Given that costs are so high then growers should look to see how these costs can be reduced, there are a couple of points to consider;

1. Follow the most recent soil test and use the most appropriate fertiliser blend or mix for the field.
2. Where possible, tailor the fertiliser requirement to each individual field, blanket applications of 7-6-17 or 10-10-20 tend to be more expensive.
3. Organic manures where available can help to reduce the total amount of fertiliser required.
4. Placing fertiliser can reduce the total compound fertiliser required by 20-30%.
5. Late applications of nitrogen i.e. more than 50 days after 50% emergence are unlikely to increase yield and will delay harvest.
6. The total allowances for nitrogen are high for many varieties and most will not need the full allowance.

In 2021 on the national potato yield digs record sheets, growers were asked to record the total amount of fertiliser that crops received, while it is only one year's data the results make for interesting reading. They surveys indicate that there was very little correlation between total nitrogen applied and final yield. The optimum economic nitrogen rate in 2021 was approximately 100-120 kg/ha (80-96 units/ac). See the graph below for details.

Figure 1; 2021 Bord Bia Yield Dig Survey Results N rate vs Total Yield



World Potato Congress

Don't forget that the World Potato Congress is only 8 weeks away and places are filling up quickly. There promises to be lots of things to do and see at the conference including presentations from many industry experts, conference tours and social events.

This is a once in a generation opportunity for anyone in the potato industry in Ireland to attend and benefit from the event.

The congress runs from May 30th to June 2nd for further details or to register to attend click on the link below.

[World Potato Congress 2022](#)



WPC2022IRELAND

30TH MAY - 2ND JUNE 2022
www.wpc2022ireland.com



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