

YIELD DIG RESULTS

What an unusual and variable season 2020 has been, most growers were able to plant crops earlier than normal but late frost, followed by severe drought in some areas, excess rainfall in July/August and again in late October made growing the crop very tricky for all growers. Some growers were finished digging earlier than ever, but in the north west they are still struggling to finish harvesting in very poor soil conditions.

Table 1 shows the results for Rooster for each region, as rooster now makes up over 50% of the maincrop area grown this will result in a significant decrease in overall production from 2019. Table 2 gives the results for Kerr's Pink.

Table 1; (Rooster t/ac)

County	< 50mm	50mm - 80mm	Oversize/Waste
National Average	4.28	14.79	1.04
Meath	2.87	13.52	0.99
Wexford	3.92	14.44	0.44
Cork	7.07	17.26	2.14
Louth/ Dublin/ Kilkenny	3.26	13.94	0.59

Table 2; (Kerr's Pink t/ac)

County	< 50mm	50mm - 80mm	Oversize/Waste
National Average	4.9	11.62	0.92
Cork	7.73	13.32	1.82
Louth/ Kilkenny	3.65	11.54	0.86
Meath	3.77	10.04	0.66
Wexford	4.45	11.58	0.34

The yields recorded show a significant decrease on the 2019 crop and despite the early planting, it was noticeable that in many crops, tuber numbers were low and so yields were always going to be limited. Despite the drought only 33% of the crops sampled were irrigated.

In the last 10 years only the yields of 2012 and 2018 were lower than the 2020 crop. As a result Rooster yielded lower than the 10 year average of 16.38 t/ac and Kerr's Pink also below the 10 year average of 13.80 t/ac.

Waste is slightly higher this year than it was in 2019 while the amount of small tubers is also higher.

Figure 1; Yield trends

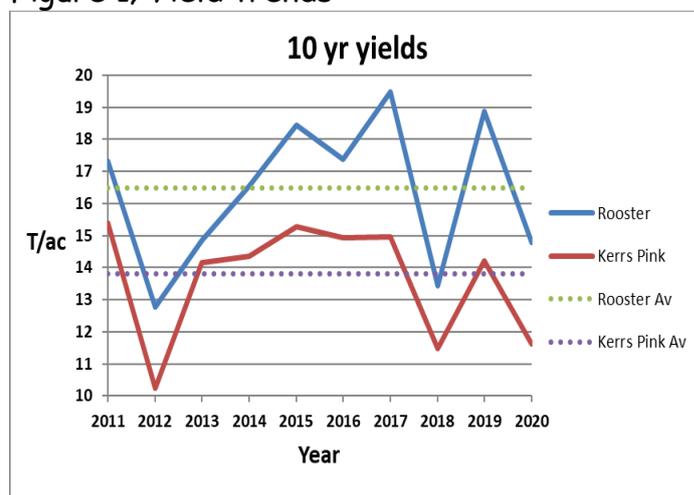


Table 3 below shows the percentage change from the previous years' yield digs. Again this helps to illustrate that crops in 2020 fell short of their potential, given the yields that we achieved in both 2017 and 2019, which were the two highest recorded harvests over the last 10 years.

Table 3 (% increase or decrease)

Year	Rooster	Kerrs Pink
08/09	-10	-13.5
09/10	+28	+20
10/11	-1	+1
11/12	-26.4	-33.5
12/13	+16.2	+38.2
13/14	+11.5	+1.4
14/15	+10.4	+6.1
15/16	-6.1	-2.3
16/17	+12.0	+0.2
17/18	-31.1	-23.3
18/19	+27.58	+18.75
19/20	-19.5	-21

The area of maincrop varieties planted in 2020 also increased slightly from 7,434 ha in 2019 to 7,817 ha this year. This represents a 5% increase in area. The areas of early season and seed crops also increased by 30% and 5 % respectively.

Overall production will be lower than last year but the effect of Covid 19 on processing and peeling markets may dampen demand. However the demand for Roosters and Kerr's Pink hopefully will remain steady through the spring.

BREXIT

There have been numerous stories in the media in the last while outlining the impact of Brexit on the potato sector, however as of the time of printing nobody yet knows the true extent of the impact. This makes planning for the coming season very difficult especially when it comes to planning what seed to order.

Most growers are in the process of

either taking delivery of seed or ordering their requirements for 2021. If not already done, organise your seed deliveries in the coming weeks before December 31st. There is no guarantee that seed from anywhere in the UK will be allowed into Ireland after January 1st no matter what deal is done. At the very least there will be delays in paperwork which will delay deliveries.

For varieties like Rooster most growers will know their seed requirements and can plan accordingly. For other markets that are supplied by imports e.g. fresh chip potatoes, you should have a discussion with you buyer to get commitment from them to buy your potatoes in 2021 before deciding on your seed requirements. Some have indicated that they will buy more Irish but many haven't made any decision yet.

MERRY CHRISTMAS

Finally on behalf of all our staff at Teagasc we wish you and your families a safe and happy Christmas and a prosperous New Year!



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