



SEED

The recent wet weather has delayed the start of planting of earlies, January and February have seen almost 2 times the normal rainfall for this time of year. Wait until ground conditions improve before you start, remember any compaction that happens at planting will affect the crop throughout the season. All seed intended for early planting should be moved outside to harden up the sprouts however avoid frosty mornings. This is an ideal opportunity to inspect the seed and remove any rots still in the trays. There have been reports of gangrene and dry rots in seed so remove them ASAP.

Seed costs have increased this year so proper seed handling and care is essential. Properly sprouted seed that is carefully handled during planting will often make up the extra couple of weeks. When sprouting, aim to get at least 250 day degrees before planting ie. the total number of degrees over 4 degrees celcius over a period. Seed that is trayed up for sprouting on March 1st will take seven days to break dormancy, then take an average daily temperature of 10 degrees for the next 44 days this is calculated as follows;
 $(10 - 4) \times 44 = 264$ day degrees.
 Therefore that seed is suitable for planting around April 20th.

FERTILISER

It is still not too late to get your soil tested for the coming season, on average results will take two weeks to come back. With fertiliser costs between €500 and €600 per ha on average, it is vital that growers know exactly what is required to get the maximum from the crop. Many of the common products may not be suitable for every field but blends can be made up to suit the exact requirements based on the results.
 (Rates shown are Kgs/Ha)

Table 1:

Crop	Nitrogen Index			
	1	2	3	4
Main crop	170	145	120	95
Potatoes: Early	155	130	105	80
Potatoes: Seed	155	130	105	80

Table 2:

Crop	Phosphorus Index			
	1	2	3	4
Main crop	125	100	75	50
Potatoes: Early	125	115	100	50
Potatoes: Seed	125	115	100	85

Table 3:

Crop	Potassium Index			
	1	2	3	4
Main crop	305	245	185	120
Potatoes: Early	150	120	90	60
Potatoes: Seed	245	185	120	65

To convert to units/acre multiply by 0.8



PLANTING

Mark Alison gave a very good paper at the recent Potato conference detailing the impact of compaction at planting on overall yields. The first thing to consider is to make sure that the land is dry enough to work at depth not just on the surface. He made the point that de-stoning at 25cm versus 35 cm made no difference to yield or quality of the crop. It also increases the work-rate per hour of each individual de-stoner, also consider not working in pairs but in different parts of the fields as the work-rate is dependent on the slowest machine when you work in pairs. In the UK they found that With 3 machines working in 'trandem', working time efficiency is only **77 %** for a 300 m field length @ 3.6 km/h.

It is essential to maximise yield that crops must be at or near full canopy but the 21st of June as yield formation is directly linked to the amount of sunlight captured by the crop. Anything that slows emergence therefore will have a negative effect on yield.

Table 1.

Effect of crop emergence date on yield

Date of crop emergence	Total yield (t/ha)
15 May	55.4
30 May	52.7
15 June	49.0
30 June	44.6

YieldCheck model
Long-term radiation for Dublin
Area under GC curve = 6500 % days
Tuber DM concentration = 22 %

Table 1 clearly shows the effect that delayed emergence has on yield, this will not be made up by applying extra nitrogen. There could be up to 0.1t/ac loss per day of not having full canopy by the 21st of June.

COSTS

Based on the Teagasc Crops and returns estimates it will take 11.5 tonnes of potatoes sold per acre @ €200 to breakeven before storage costs. With increased seed costs and land costs also rising growers need to do the calculations for their crops. Take into account a price drop, for example @ €150 per tonne it will take 15 tonnes per acre to breakeven. Therefore only the best land should be planted, soils in index 1 for N, P & K will cost approx. €80-100 ac. extra in fertiliser costs alone over soils that are in index 3.

SALAD POTATO PROJECT

The first meeting of the Bord Bia/IFA/Teagasc salad potato project will take place on Monday **21st of March @ 6pm in Oakpark.** Stuart Wale SRUC will be present.

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