

SEED

Good quality seed is the basis for good crops especially in potatoes. If you haven't started to source seed already start immediately. However firstly you have to ask the question, what markets do I have? It is pointless growing crop, as we see at the moment, if the market is over supplied. Is it possible to get new markets that might reduce the risk for the farm? This should form the basis of the amount and variety of seed you get. Avoid making last minute decisions when it comes to seed requirements.

Fields should be allocated at this stage and seed requirements calculated, even if land comes up later stick to the original plan.

Planting more area does not guarantee more money in fact it can be the opposite. The overall area planted in 2017 was the same as 2016, in both years supply was equal to demand, therefore it is unlikely that we can afford to plant a greater area in 2018 without having an effect on the overall market.

Treating seed for diseases is common practice for most crops however good coverage is essential in order to get the full benefit from each chosen product. Ensure that the seed is clean with no open eyes before treatment, to avoid the risk of damage to the chits, which can lead to uneven emergence. Table 1 below shows the approved seed treatments for 2018 and the diseases that they each control.

Table 1; Seed treatments for potatoes

Name	Amistar	Allstar [§]	Fungazil/Gavel	Maxim	Rhino
Active ingredient	Azoxystrobin	Fluxapyroxad	Imazalil	Fludioxonil	Flutolanil
Concentration	250g/L	300g/L	100g/L	100g/L	460g/L
Rate per tonne	3L/ha	0.8L/ha	0.1- 0.15L	0.25L	0.2L
Latest Timing	In furrow	In furrow	Before chitting	Before chitting	Before chitting
Diseases;					
Rhizoctonia	***	***		***	***
Silver scurf			***	**	
Black Dot	***				
Skin Spot			***		

Disease rating; Good control ***
 Some control **
 Poor/no control *
[§] New in 2018

You should also remember that good rotations are also very useful in controlling disease. Table 2 below shows the effect of increasing the number of years between crops on the levels of infection. Work carried by the British Potato Council (Nolan, Firman, & Allen, 2000) clearly shows that a gap of 6 or more years between crops has a significant effect in reducing the levels of infection.

Table 2: Rotation effect on disease levels

Years	No. of stocks	Sil. scurf	Black scurf	Com. scab	Pow. scab
% Disease					
4	17	12	0.4	3	0.8
5 - 6	18	9	0.5	4	0.6
6 +	11	4	0.1	5	0.1

Common scab appears to be the only disease where rotation had little or no effect.

SPROUTING

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 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. The crop should be fit for harvest in mid-September at 140 days growth. While most growers use sprouted seed to begin harvest

earlier, many are now looking to get late planted crops to mature earlier. As soon as the sprouting trays are emptied fill them up again with the next batch of seed. As a guideline, crops planted after the second week in May should be sprouted to ensure earlier harvesting. Even if you won't get the required time for full sprouting, you will still gain if the eyes are open versus planting seed straight out of the cold store.

When setting up the sprouting house make sure it is clean of any materials that could reduce light penetrating into all parts of the house. Boxes should be clean and damage free as they need to be stacked and not collapse on top of one another. Plan to make sure that all boxes have adequate light Pic 1.

Pic. 1



Where light is restricted long soft sprouts which are more prone to damage will develop. This can result in sprouts being broken off when loading the planter and consequently increased risk of infection and uneven germination.

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