

most important element alongside optimum airflow to improve store performance.

This is particularly the case as stores have become bigger and large potato units may have multiple stores spread over some distance which are sometimes only checked once every two to three days.

Without a decent control system, problems may not be detected until

“A good auto-control system may only cost 2% of a decent harvester”

Ray Andrews



it is too late, resulting in significant crop losses.

“A good control system may only cost 2% of a decent harvester, or less than 1% of the crop value going into the average store for more than three years,” explains Mr Andrews.

OPTIMISE COOLING

Systems can easily be fitted to old and new stores alike and optimise drying and cooling of the crop, control CO₂ levels and control fan speeds – significantly reducing the risk of problems occurring and trimming energy costs.

Mr Cunnington says all available systems are capable of doing more than enough for most stores, but the limitation for many is end user education and the store managers' ability to get the most out of them.

“You can have all the bells and whistles, but if you don't understand how to use them, it's a waste of time,” says Mr Cunnington.

“Some are too complex and haven't put enough emphasis on tailoring the system to the end user, but there are a few companies now offering a more user-friendly package.”

LOWER CIPC USE

Airflow key to compliant CIPC use

■ Even airflow and efficient CIPC application go hand in hand. Growers should make this a priority before the total maximum dose of the sprout suppressant is reduced further in 2017.

Growers will only be permitted to use 36g/t and to counter the threat of residue exceedances and Ray Andrews believes it is possible to work well within the lower limit and still achieve good sprouting control.

“In one modern bulk store, keeping a crop from September to June, we have seen we can use just 22g/t of CIPC and believe we can go lower.”

That was in a modern store, but Mr Andrews says for £2,500-£3,500 in an existing 1,000t store, an inverter can be fitted to slow fans down and reduce the risk of fog accumulating in the roof space.

The issue is a little trickier in box stores, where getting an even airflow and active recirculation – which will be a CIPC label requirement by 2017 – can prove more of a challenge when running slow fan speeds. “A suction wall will do a very good job for about £6,000-£13,000 depending on existing fans and costed on a tonnage basis, it is peanuts. It will pull air back through pallet openings, so it circulates evenly, but you need to ensure it is blown the right way so it doesn't short-circuit,” says Mr Andrews.

He adds designing and planning box layout is crucial and overloading the store should be avoided, with room to move air over the top of the boxes essential. “The potato business relies on CIPC and without it, we would be in trouble, so growers should be duty-bound to look at these issues and address the problem,” he adds.

■ Be CIPC Compliant is the potato industry stewardship initiative, for more information go to cipccompliant.co.uk.

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