

Storage advice you can trust

So you think you are getting the best in potato storage with high airflow fans and inverters?

This may not necessarily be the case, warns Ray Andrews (right) - managing director of specialist potato storage company Crop Systems Ltd.



High airflow comes with a caveat, as it needs a corresponding system to deliver it correctly, he advises. "Get it wrong and you could be worse off. Putting high airflow into a restricted system can be a recipe for disaster, simple things like shutting down half of your laterals, quadruples the pressure in the system.

"So when you have a storage problem you could be adding to it," he stresses.

If an inverter is added to the mix then store operators will get a reduction in energy used by running fans slower, continues Ray. "It's simple to say that running a fan at 60 per cent can give a massive 78 per cent reduction in energy, when adjusted for output this equates to 38 per cent true saving, and remember you only get 60 per cent of what the fan supplies at full speed, full load and at the time of season, sometimes that is just not enough."

He points out that, recently, his

company measured a modern store designed for 50 cfm (cubic feet per minute airflow per tonne) but it actually tested out at 35cfm. "The system was incorrectly designed and the fans were unable to supply air at the correct pressure and the crop was lost," he says.

"Finding this out after the event is too late to do anything about it," adds Ray.

Where storage systems are not working efficiently, his advice is not to blame problems on factors such as the weather, harvesting conditions or varieties, but take a good look at the system that is being operated. "Good storage doesn't cost more. Whether it

is a new store or a simple upgrade, investing in a well-designed system will result in value for money, and money that is spent wisely."

He concludes: "When considering different systems, growers should ask themselves; if it sounds cheap and it's going to 'save' them a lot of money, what's the catch?"

"They need to know exactly what they are getting, not what they think they are getting. Losing money over the lifetime of the store can easily cost more than the store itself.

"Get in touch with Crop Systems for good, honest, technical advice about potato storage systems and take control of your crop." ■