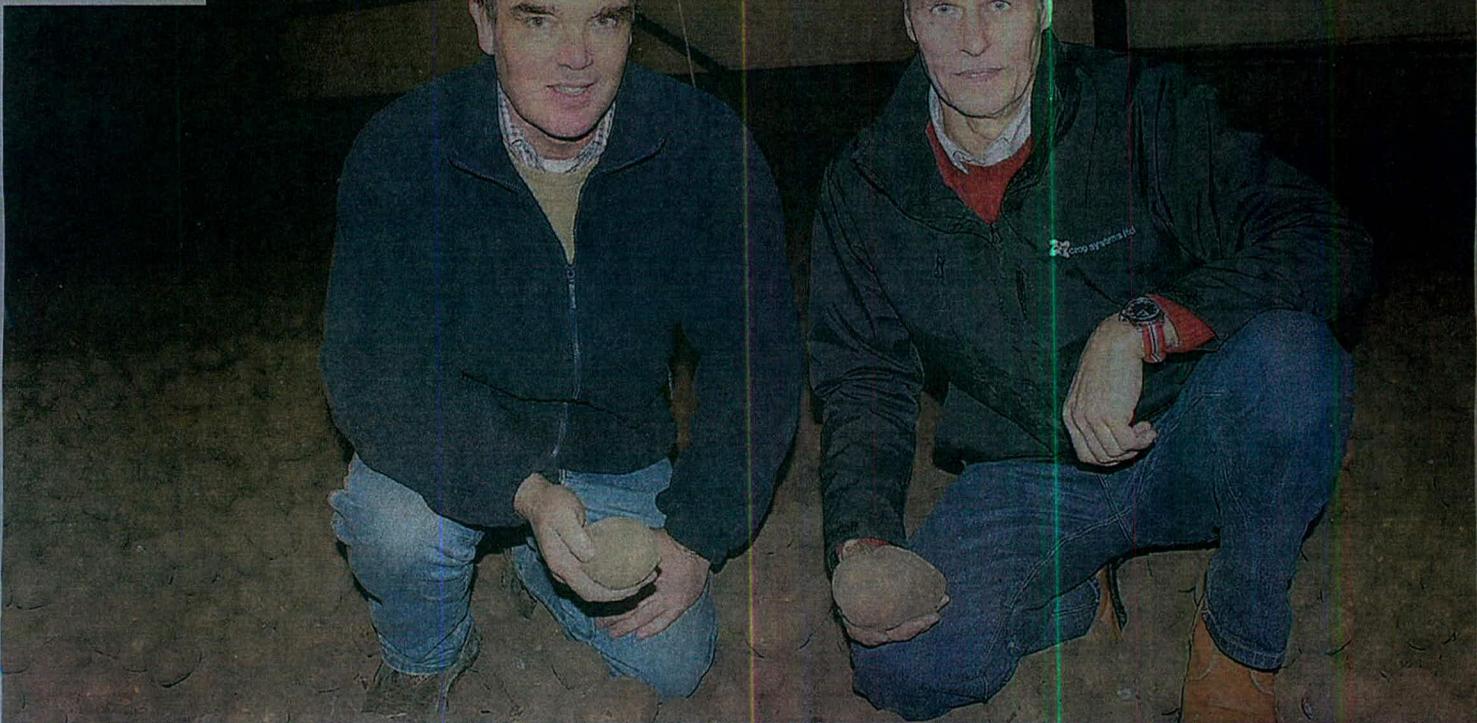


■ Ray Andrews, right, of Norfolk-based Crop Systems, with farmer Stuart Stark.



# Crop store technique cut costs of keeping quality potatoes

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A new technique pioneered by a Norfolk storage specialist has achieved dramatic improvements and reduced overall costs.

Ray Andrews, of Crop Systems, of Gimmingham, near North Walsham, said that the TaperStor has given total control over stored crops and the environment and also cut storage costs per tonne.

It has also made it possible to make the maximum use of the total volume for storage, he added.

With more accurate airflows, it allows crops to be loaded to a greater height and by eliminating tight corners achieve more complete fill.

The system has been installed in a store in North Yorkshire. Fridlington Farms, near York, has loaded 3,000 tonnes – divided with the varieties Royal and Innovator, and the other half with Fontaine.

Farmer Stuart Stark has been impressed. “We used to rent stores but were never happy that they were good enough. The cost of growing potatoes is so massive we feel we must do everything we can to store them correctly, and we believe this store offers that.”

The store design includes Norfolk specialist’s GuardedSlot system, which maintains even air flow throughout the store. Airflow to laterals can be managed individually using proportional adjustable lateral slides.

As the housing in which the fans are located is tapered, this has eased loading and unloading and enabled the store to be filled to six metres – a total of 3,200 tonnes of potatoes instead of 2,400 tonnes in a conventional store.

The store uses “a specific design of fan, which provide a gentle air flow – which proved ideal for ensuring fogging treatments and chemicals are applied evenly,”

**“We believe it represents a significant step change in store design**

Ray Andrews,  
Crop Systems

said manager Matthew Wallace.

“We fogged for the first time in November and there was less than a 5pc difference between the gas levels at the front of the store and the back, and in the laterals. The computer system provides a huge amount of information which makes it very easy to manage the treatments,” he added.

Andrew Wagstaffe, of Superfog, said that the store’s design helped to eliminate wastage. “The fans in this store turn very slowly and push the fog gradually and

consistently through the store. After the treatment we could see no deposition on the blades, and there are very few points where leakage can occur, so the level of wastage was minimal”.

The store’s flexibility is a key asset, said Mr Andrews. “Most stores are loaded over a period of time, and changing weather and ground conditions mean potatoes come into store at different temperatures, moisture levels and states of cleanliness.”

“We believe it represents a significant step change in store design. It is totally flexible and can safely store any crop – no matter how dirty or wet – in any year. It is constructed entirely in concrete, so there is no wood to rot or deteriorate.

Mr Stark, added: “We have a store that has surpassed our expectations and it is exciting to be involved in such a pivotal development in crop storage.”