

POTATO DAY

EVEN ventilation is the key to good storage and there are a number of features which, according to Craig Wilson of Crop Systems, help keep air pressure constant in the Bubbs' new facility. Duct widths are tapered from 2 metres down to 700 cm while under-floor vents taper upwards, compensating for air leaving to access other parts of the store. The ducts can also be adjusted according to the state of the crop. To cater for drying poppies, which need very high ventilation rates, the laterals have splayed ends.

Refrigeration and reverse heating is also used, with four heaters and two cooling fans of 1600mm diameter. 'All these are run with inverters, which helps keep the energy bills down and allows speed to be matched to different requirements.'

The new store has hatch louvres rather than the bladed type which help with insulation in cold weather conditions. An interior access also helps, allowing the store manager to move the flower crop around as necessary without having to open the main doors.

POTATO Council marketing manager Kate Cox, speaking at the West Midlands Potato Day in June, admitted that year-on-year sales volumes of potatoes had dropped by 9% last season but insisted that it was not all bad news as the fall was balanced by steep price rises which boosted the value of the market

She told growers that part of the challenge for selling potatoes is that they have to stand up against big branded competitor carbs, such as 'Fajita sets', which have a loud marketing presence in-store. 'This is very tough for our sector, where the



Two-thirds of the host grower team, Jim Bubb (left) and brother John.

messages can be diluted. The result is that customers are buying fewer potatoes per trip and the number of trips has also fallen,' she said.

There is some relief as packaging messages are finally being adopted by the major retailers, she claimed. 'We now are seeing that King Edward packaging is consistently blue, Desirée is pink and Maris Piper purple, which gives the campaign some consistency.' On-pack stickers featuring the descriptive term 'fluffy' were also prominent in stores during the Maris Piper campaign.

'There are more fragmented meal occasions due to busier lifestyles and an increase in single household occupancy – this is having a knock on effect on potato consumption,' she added. 'But it's worth bearing in mind that fresh potatoes sales are worth one-and-a-half times that of rice, pasta and noodles combined.'

With one in five potatoes being wasted in the home through over-

prepping, cooking or incorrect storing, she said that the council has been working closely with WRAP to produce a case study and help manage the message. Figures published recently showed that while supply chain wastage had diminished, consumers need some assistance in this area as it may influence them not to buy potatoes if they think they will not be used.

PCN plots proved popular with growers and nematologist Ivan Grove from Harper Adams University discussed the advantages and disadvantages of different sampling methods. 'Nematode populations are notoriously variable across a field, with hotspots and clear patches, so you have to make sure your sampling technique is good enough to give you the best picture,' he said.

One of the problems is that population hotspots can easily be missed. For example, localised PCN foci can

Get more in...

Prevent your crop and your profits shrinking.

Visit www.grimme.co.uk for **10 good reasons** to choose Primus and Monsun precision irrigators from Grimme.

PLUS NEW FOR 2014: POWERFUL GRIMME PUMPS - TOP PERFORMANCE UNDER PRESSURE!



GRIMME
Irrigation Systems

Irrigators & Pumps



Grimme UK Ltd.

Station Road, Swineshead, Boston, Lincolnshire PE20 3PS