



# Soil preparation

Soil preparation should produce a seedbed free of large clods and stone, without creating too fine a tilth and avoiding compaction or smearing. An ideal seedbed has at least 20cm of fine tilth free from large clods and stones.

When soils are too wet, serious compaction and clods can be created on all soil types. Delaying soil preparation by a day or two can reduce the risks.

## ACTION

- Pay attention to creating the correct bed width. A narrow width will lead to the harvester share picking up stones and clods from the wheelings increasing potato damage
- If using wide tyres with bed tillers or separators, check the degree of compaction to the edge of the bed. Sometimes wide tyres only make contact at the edges and not the furrow bottom, so any benefit of wide tyres is lost
- Try and avoid undulating beds after the separator. This makes accurate planting depth difficult
- Make sure the separator discharge is to the furrow bottom and not the drill side

## BPC National Bruising Survey

**81% of respondents recognised soil preparation as being a moderate influence or greater affect on crop bruising susceptibility.**

For further information on soil management see 'Harvester & Soil Workshop' notes in archived events at [www.potato.org.uk](http://www.potato.org.uk) or from the BPC Research Review - Potato Agronomy, from BPC Publications on 01865 782222.

### Potatoes are more likely to bruise.....

.....where soils are cloddy or high in stone content and following poor destoning.

.....where soils are compacted or smeared.

.....where poor soil preparation has taken place.

### Potatoes are less likely to bruise.....

.....in a uniform, clod and stone free drill.

.....where there is no compaction or smearing.