



Soil moisture at harvest

Soil moisture at harvest is a well known, key factor in relation to the levels of bruising. Extremes of soil moisture, such as very wet or very dry, will challenge the harvester operator. In very dry conditions there is difficulty in achieving adequate soil cushioning for tubers on the webs or at transfer points. In wet conditions extra cleaning is required to remove clods without causing damage to tubers. All soils are different and your own experience will have taught you how they behave under different conditions.

ACTION

- When soils are dry, consider whether additional irrigation will ease the harvesting process. Take account of weather forecasts so that irrigation is not scheduled ahead of a forecasted rainfall
- Where irrigation is not available and if the risk of bruising susceptibility is high, consider delaying harvest until after rainfall
- Check harvester settings are appropriate to soil conditions

BPC National Bruising Survey

80% of respondents thought soil moisture at harvest had a major or very major influence on bruising. Furthermore, 25% said they would consider irrigating prior to harvest if shown proof that soil moisture could make a real difference to crop bruising.

For further information on harvester settings, see the BPC Guide, available by completing the fax back form or calling BPC Publications on 01865 782222.

Potatoes are more likely to bruise.....

.....when harvested in dry conditions with little soil cushioning on the primary web.

.....when harvested in wet conditions where increased agitation and separation is needed.

Potatoes are less likely to bruise.....

.....when soil cushions the tubers travelling on the primary web.

.....when there is adequate soil moisture.

