

TPP, fluxmeters and disease control

Pukekohe, Manawatu and Canterbury growers have all hosted potato field days in the last few weeks.

In Pukekohe and Canterbury, the field days took the form of trials tours, viewing a number of research projects at different sites, while in the Manawatu, growers focused on trials at one site.

The Pukekohe event started in Pukekawa, looking at, among other things, the MPI SFF Rootzone Reality Project which is using fluxmeters to investigate nitrogen losses from the rootzone of a number of crops, including potatoes. Attendees also learned more about a project looking at in-furrow seed treatment for soil borne diseases. They then moved on to Pukekohe where they viewed tomato potato psyllid management trials and gained an insight into the Plant & Food Research potato breeding programme.

The following week Canterbury growers turned out in force to tour three trial sites. First stop was a large Plant & Food Research trial at Lincoln looking at bed formation, sub soiling and the irrigation effect on both. Then on to Southbridge where the region specific pest management trial elicited a lot of discussion around why mesh covers keep out psyllids, but fail to control aphid populations (similar to last season results). The trial highlighted noticeable differences between varieties with regard to expressing canopy TPP symptoms. It usually takes from 10 to 14 days for symptoms to show after infection, proving the value of a sustainable TPP spray programme. Last stop was the irrigation trial at FAR's Chertsey Arable Site. Rainfall this season has been very different to last year, but hopefully some valuable water use efficiency results will come out of this year's trial.

Just before Waitangi Weekend it was Manawatu's turn to host a potato field day. Growers gathered at Opiki to learn more about a three year project looking at increasing potato yields through understanding the impact of crop rotations and soil compaction. This three year Sustainable Farming Fund project includes sites in in Pukekohe, Manawatu and Canterbury. A good discussion was held around compaction and cultivation methods and their impact on potato rooting depth and architecture. TPP were also on the programme for the day, and the group showing support for the current region specific research.



Potato harvest going well. Storage and handling among some of the discussion had in Pukekohe region.



Nick Pyke of FAR discussing the industry wide fluxmeter project which is gaining valuable information for cropping systems on nutrient flows under various crops

A plant showing noticeable TPP symptoms



A lot of discussion around mesh as a control option or TPP however keeping the aphids out is proving difficult





Jen Linton of FAR discussing the research projects currently for the 2015/16 season and plans for research in the upcoming years.