

STORAGE OF ORGANICALLY PRODUCED CROPS

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The main objective of this review was to establish best storage practice for field vegetables, potatoes, cereals and top fruit. A literature review was carried out and information was also gathered from the industry. Information relevant to growers and farmers has been drawn together to provide a comprehensive base from which technical advisory leaflets can be produced. The costs of different storage methods are provided, and case studies used wherever possible.

In general, organic crops can be stored using the same methods as conventional crops but there is an increased risk that sometimes there will be higher storage losses because pesticides and sprout suppressants are not used. On the whole, specific problems with pests and diseases can be avoided using good organic husbandry techniques and by storing undamaged, healthy crops. In the case of cereals storage at correct moisture content and temperatures can avoid pests and moulds. However, there are some areas where more technical development or research would be useful and these have been identified.

Relatively few organic growers store vegetables, but in order to maintain a supply of good quality UK produce throughout the year, more long term cold storage space is required (either on farm or in co-operative type stores). Based on the limited data available, economic analysis revealed that long term storage of organic vegetables has generally not been profitable. However, as the market expands in the future, it is likely that storage will become as essential for vegetables as it is for organic cereals and fruit.

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