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Crop desiccation/spray out

Crop desiccation is not a common practice in sunflowers; however, it has been used in some seasons to speed up or to even out maturity of a crop. Diquat is the only product registered for use as a harvest aid in sunflowers.

Desiccation of a sunflower crop can only commence once the crop has reached physiological maturity. A sunflower plant has reached physiological maturity when the bracts surrounding the head have turned brown. At this point, the seed should be mature and the moisture content <35%.¹

For an uneven crop, or where harvest needs to be brought forward, desiccation is recommended with:²

- product: diquat 200 g/L, Reglone®
- rate: 2–3 L/ha
- timing: when seeds are mature and of <35% moisture content

Reglone® is the only herbicide registered for pre-harvest desiccation in sunflowers. However, the APVMA has approved a minor use permit (PER13118) to allow the use of glyphosate for sunflower desiccation and late in-crop weed control in all States. This permit is valid until 31st March 2015.

Drying

Sunflower is easily dried due to the large air spaces and low grain density permitting an easy airflow. Care needs to be taken with samples that contain a lot of fines, which will readily ignite when exposed to direct heat. Always be prepared with fire equipment and act quickly in the event of a fire.

Because high temperatures are not usually necessary, a temperature of 45°–50°C is preferred to reduce fire risk. If the moisture content is close to 9%, aeration only will be required.³

1 L Serafin, D McCaffery, S Thompson (2014) Sunflower. Summer crop production guide 2014. pp. 80–92. NSW DPI Management Guide. NSW Department of Primary Industries. <http://www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/agriculture/broadacre-crops/guides/summer-crop-production-guide>

2 Australian Sunflower Association (2004) Harvesting and storage. The New Big Black Sunflower Pack. p. 30. Australian Oilseeds Federation

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