A new benchmarking tool from AHDB to help you fine-tune your farm business

• One system for your whole farm
• Dig down into detailed costs of production
• User-friendly format
• Compare like-for-like
• Learn from others and identify best practice
• Develop business competitiveness in volatile markets

“It’s logical, easy to use and helps you benchmark to improve your business”

J. Gold, Hendred Farm Partnership

Now incorporating cereals, oilseeds, beef, lamb and potatoes
Find out more at www.farmbench.org.uk
Letter from the Editor

Reading one of the *In your area* pages for this edition, I was struck by how little difference there is between farmers and astronauts. How so?

American astronaut Chris Hadfield wrote in his autobiography, *An Astronaut’s Guide to Life on Earth*, about the skills and philosophies that made him a success in NASA and, ultimately, kept him alive.

It was his mantra, ‘sweat the small stuff’ that really made the difference to his career. He and his colleagues did endless preparation, mission run-throughs and worst-case-scenario planning, building up a vast array of knowledge and expertise that would keep them safe on the International Space Station.

This crucial planning and attention to detail is something that farmers in our industry and astronauts have in common. It’s absolutely vital for the survival of both astronauts and farmers, whatever the universe throws at them. Within this edition of Grain Outlook you’ll find details of AHDB’s research and events that can help you plan the ‘small stuff’ of your business for the next year and beyond. As always, please don’t hesitate to get in touch with any feedback.

Eleanor Perkins
Editor

View from the chair

Recently, a major cereals customer in Scotland shared their concerns with me over Brexit. While we don’t know precisely what will happen, two things are for certain. Firstly, we will have to aim to be the most competitive producer of cereals in Europe. Secondly, AHDB is now better placed than ever before to work as one and provide a strong lead during this period of change within the industry.

The Agronomists’ Conference launches our new theme, ‘Inspire, Innovate, Integrate’, and following the Grain Market Outlook Conference, will continue to help prepare us for the new agricultural world. I hope it will reflect, as the Outlook Conference did, the great passion we all have for our work in the cereals sector.

The level of change and challenge agronomists face has never been greater. This is one of the reasons AHDB places enormous value on investing levy funds into researching the problems faced by growers.

One of the major successes of the Monitor Farm network has been how it allows AHDB to connect practically with regional issues; not to mention the value of sharing problems and solutions to decisions on cropping, cultivation and risk management. It also plays a valuable role in targeting our activity to best meet arable farmers’ needs.
News in brief

Krazi Baker
AHDB’s Grain Chain teamed up with Mark Douglas, AKA Krazi Baker, at the Balmoral Show in Northern Ireland, to teach children where their food comes from and the importance of bread and cereal products in a healthy, balanced diet. Krazi Baker’s award-winning presentation showed children how to bake bread and explained the journey of wheat from seed to plate.

The beetles: We can work it out
We’ve commissioned our most significant piece of research into the integrated pest management (IPM) of cabbage stem flea beetle (CSFB).

Through a mix of innovative trials and data analysis, the ADAS-led work will explore the complex relationship between CSFB, its environment and winter oilseed rape. The project will improve IPM approaches – including those based on spray thresholds – and develop practical guidance.

cereals.ahdb.org.uk/neonics

New face in Scotland
You told us we needed to work harder to get our relevant messages out to growers in Scotland. And we’ve listened. We now have a communications manager dedicated to Scottish growers. Sarah Hunter-Argyle, who was previously the Acting Head of Communications at SRUC, has taken up the position and is based at our office in Edinburgh.

Embrace the slug challenge!
This year we are promoting the Metaldehyde Stewardship Group’s call for advisors to report on metaldehyde usage to help inform water abstraction decisions. Slug control remains largely dependent on metaldehyde, discovered 75 years ago, so stewardship of this valuable active is essential. cereals.ahdb.org.uk/slugs

The harsh realities of modern farming
More than 380 farms in the UK opened their gates to visitors from town and country this Open Farm Sunday.

One of the 260,000 visitors said:

“Visiting a farm on Open Farm Sunday is a really valuable experience for our next generations. A ‘behind the scenes’ look at the harsh realities, the joys, and pitfalls of modern farming right in front of you...[It] will inspire people to really think about how food is produced.”

New rules for bait rodenticide
Since 30 September, you must be able to demonstrate compliance with the UK Rodenticide Stewardship requirements before you are allowed to buy and use bait rodenticides. For more information on the new requirements, visit rodentcontrolonfarms.co.uk

Variety open days
Nearly 400 people attended our Recommended Lists (RL) Variety Open Days in England this summer. At these field-based events, our top variety specialists give tours of on-farm trials of current and new crop varieties grown to the RL protocol. The days are part of our continuing commitment to provide guided access to our evidence-based crop trials.

cereals.ahdb.org.uk/slugs
Adapting to climate change
AHDB’s Mike Storey helped produce the LWEC (Living with Environmental Change) Agriculture and Forestry Climate Change Impacts Report Card.

The Report Card gives an overview of how climate change is affecting agriculture in the UK, focusing on both threats and opportunities and aiming to improve understanding of the scale of possible change.

potatoes.ahdb.org.uk

This is dairy farming
AHDB Dairy’s social media strategy continues to engage and educate the public about the importance of the industry. The Thisisdairyfarming facebook page has now exceeded 8,000 followers and there are over 17,000 @Thisisdairy twitter followers.
dairy.ahdb.org.uk

Greater transparency for beef
A lack of transparency throughout the British beef supply chain is affecting returns for all. To help rectify this, AHDB Beef & Lamb is making changes to price reporting systems to make it easier to monitor pricing trends.
befandlamb.ahdb.org.uk

An alternative source of protein
Results from a combined academic and industry study, titled ‘Environmental and nutritional benefits of bioethanol co-products’ (ENBBIO), has found dried distillers grains and solubles (DDGS) to be a viable protein source for livestock farmers throughout the UK.

Professor Phil Garnsworthy from the University of Nottingham reports that “In balanced diets (both ruminant and non-ruminant) DDGS performed equivalent to conventional soya rich diets, and has proven to have consistent nutritional value, as well as being highly palatable.”
pork.ahdb.org.uk
Interesting times: exceptional surplus masks vulnerability in global grain markets

Grain markets are entering an unprecedented fourth year of surplus but all is not as it first appears.

With comfortable stocks and record production continuing to put pressure on world prices, a dramatic shift in global supply dynamics could add vulnerability to the market. For the UK though, the depreciation of the pound since June has prevented domestic prices from falling as much as global values.

Transparency is gradually being lost, as countries with patchy data increasingly dominate the marketplace. And though the market is over-supplied on paper, the risk of price shocks should not be underestimated.

So said lead analyst Jack Watts during his keynote presentation at the AHDB Grain Market Outlook conference.

The event, themed ‘getting ready for a new agricultural world’ was held on 12 October in the City of London.

In his 2016/17 Grain Market Outlook presentation, Mr Watts demonstrated since the 1972 ‘Great Grain Robbery’, the US has lost significant market share in wheat trade, mainly to Russia and post-Soviet states.

In addition, Chinese figures are skewing perceptions of global stocks-to-use, with a far lower ratio emerging when these are removed from the equation, even more so for the world’s top six wheat exporters.

A poor European harvest against record Russian production also means Russia is set to overtake the EU as the world’s largest wheat exporter.

This may be a warning light to the market in the medium-term given the inconsistency of Russian wheat production, which has varied between 38Mt and 72Mt over the past five years.

UK situation

At UK level, Mr Watts said we were living in ‘interesting times’ from both a market and political point of view.

“Protein content is higher but the quality and functionality of that protein is more challenging this season with lower specific weights impacting flour extraction and yield.”

Last season, markets were driven by high yields and high exports into the feed wheat market but for 2016/17 availability is lower and quality improved.

Based on provisional Cereals Quality Survey results, increased plantings of nabim Group 1 and 2 varieties mean close to 20 per cent of UK wheat is likely to meet minimum bread wheat milling specifications.

But Mr Watts urged caution when looking at the figures. He said:

“Protein content is higher but the quality and functionality of that protein is more challenging this season with lower specific weights impacting flour extraction and yield.”

Barley continues its renaissance in the UK, thanks to the rotational requirement for spring cropping and its benefits for black-grass control, a level of production consistency not seen since the late 90’s. On paper, a large surplus of UK crop looks promising for exports but low specific weights may hamper progress.
What could Brexit mean for cereals and oilseeds markets?

New analysis on the implications of future trade policy scenarios for the UK’s farming and horticulture industries was launched at the event.

The latest Horizon report explores how trade deals with the EU and the rest of the world following Brexit may impact UK agriculture and horticulture on a sector-by-sector basis. It profiles each sector’s current trading position in the global arena and highlights the opportunities and threats associated with various potential terms of trade.

AHDB’s Head of Strategic Insight David Swales explored these themes in his presentation at the conference. He also outlined the place of tariffs in contributing to UK competitiveness, the likely impact of any reductions in agricultural support and consumer attitudes to food shopping choices.

He concluded with a warning that: “UK farmers and growers cannot rely on consumers being willing to spend more on British products so the industry needs to focus more on price competitiveness.”

Download the Horizon report at ahdb.org.uk/Brexit

Watch list...

Five other market trends to keep an eye on

1) Brazilian maize: Production of the far-riskier second crop has overtaken first crop in the last few years, meaning weather events could impact supply later in the season.

2) Russian import ban: As the ban on EU food imports continues, Russia is speeding up self-sufficiency ambitions with domestic consumption forecast to rise significantly for the sixth year running.

3) Global oats markets: EU import tariffs on oats have meant we have never had to compete at a global level so some intensive market development may be called for post-Brexit.

4) UK plantings: renewed interest in Group 1 and 2 varieties has squeezed Group 3s but the characteristics of these varieties remain popular with importers, a USP for the UK in exports markets.

5) Changing shape of rapeseed trade: new patterns are emerging, with sharp falls in production in western EU offset by uptick in supply from Romania and Bulgaria.

Keep up to date with Grain Market Daily – subscribe at cereals.ahdb.org.uk/markets.

Also on the agenda

Christophe Cogny, Biofuel & Oilseed Market Analyst at Tallage, gave an oilseeds market outlook for 2016/17. From a global context this season, meal markets are going to display a bearish sentiment driven by record soyabean output. For vegetable oils, markets are likely to be tighter but crude oil is thought to cap price gains.

Samuel Ferreira Balieiro from Agri Benchmark, spoke about exploring international competitiveness in grains and oilseeds. He gave an overview of how profitable wheat and maize production is around the world as well as identifying the cost leaders.

All videos from the event will be available on the AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds youtube channel.
What’s in your pot?

“Scotch whisky is one of the UK’s premier economic and cultural assets. It adds more than £5bn in value to the UK economy, supports around 40,000 jobs across the UK, boosts growth, supports communities across the country, and combines the best of the traditional and modern.” So says the Scotch Whisky Association.

The market is huge: the UK exports almost £4bn of Scotch whisky every year to over 200 markets around the world – that’s a quarter of the UK’s total food and drink exports.

And the industry uses around 1.5m tonnes of cereals per year, around half of which is barley, bought by the distillers through grain merchants and maltsters. To give that some perspective, the total amount of wheat milled each year is around 6m tonnes.

- 52% of all UK maltsters’ sales goes to distilling
- 87% of the Scotch whisky industry’s malted barley, over 675Kt, comes from Scottish sources

Distillers choose malted barley on a range of criteria such as handling, processability, alcohol yield and, of course, price.

Alison Galbraith of the Scotch whisky Association said: “Protein content is especially important: excessive levels can impair processing in maltings and breweries.”

For pot still (malt whisky) distilling malting barley, the total nitrogen content will not normally exceed 1.65%, whereas most brewers require a grain total nitrogen content of 1.55-1.85%.

For grain distilling the nitrogen content will be higher – 1.8% or more.

Despite export concerns in the current climate, the industry seems to be going from strength to strength: according to the Scotch Whisky Association 40 new distilleries are planned for the future.

2016 Provisional results (GB)
High Quality Bread Wheat 2016 (Group 1, 76.0 kg/hl Spec Wgt/250 Hagberg/13.0% Protein)

Sample size: 5159

Looking at all of the samples across the groups analysed in the second provisional results for 2016,

- Average specific weight at 76.7 kg/hl is provisionally the lowest since 2012
- The average Hagberg Falling Number is 309s, ahead of the three-year average
- The provisional average protein content at 12.5% could be the highest since 2012

Visit cereals.ahdb.org.uk/markets for more survey results.

Harvest Results 2016
Yields in the AHDB Recommended Lists (RL) for cereals and oilseeds trials in 2016

Average yields t/ha

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Long-term*</th>
<th>2016</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Winter wheat</td>
<td>10.62</td>
<td>10.71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter barley</td>
<td>9.36</td>
<td>9.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter oats</td>
<td>8.66</td>
<td>8.65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter oilseed rape N</td>
<td>5.31</td>
<td>4.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Winter oilseed rape E/W</td>
<td>5.34</td>
<td>4.39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spring Barley</td>
<td>7.61</td>
<td>7.63</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Provisional data. Long-term yield average based on the percentage mean of control varieties. For cereals, based on the period 2012-16. For winter oilseed rape, based on treated gross output and the period 2013-16.
Safeguard the quality of UK grain

Growers can take pride in the fact that UK grain is produced to some of the highest standards in the world. Dr Dhan Bhandari reports on how AHDB investment helps to maintain quality in the grain supply chain.

Contaminants are never far from the headlines and our challenge is to contribute to a robust evidence base to help inform decisions on the management of contaminant risks and the protection of public health.

But what is a contaminant? Well, put simply, it is the presence of something unwanted. This can be biological (eg microorganisms and their products), chemical (eg pesticide residues) or physical (eg stones).

For many contaminants, legal limits exist and AHDB funds monitoring of UK-grown cereal samples destined for milling, malt production and animal feed. It’s all part of an independent monitoring programme that stretches as far back as the 1980s.

The programme, along with extensive testing in the supply chain, helps make sure cereal-based foods and feeds are safe for consumption. The work also provides an invaluable source of data for food standard authorities when current practice and legislation comes under review.

Case study: Glyphosate

20 samples* were analysed for the presence of glyphosate and none exceeded the maximum residue level (MRL). Most samples (95%) contained detectable levels of glyphosate but, crucially, all were well below the MRL.

Download our Pre-harvest glyphosate application to wheat and barley publication from our website at cereals.ahdb.org.uk/weeds

*Latest published data (2014)

Mycotoxins monitored

Infection of crops by fusarium species increases the risk of mycotoxins entering the food and feed chain. During the winter wheat flowering period, we monitor fusarium infection risk to help the industry manage mycotoxin risks. For further information, visit cereals.ahdb.org.uk/mycotoxins

Risk results

Fusarium infection risk results for the GB winter wheat area (harvest 2016):

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Risk level</th>
<th>Probability</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Low risk</td>
<td>10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moderate risk</td>
<td>73%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High risk</td>
<td>17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Very high risk</td>
<td>&lt;1%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Got ergot?

Caused by a fungal infection, ergot can reduce yields and contaminate grain destined for both feed and human consumption.

For cereals, maximum levels for ergot sclerotia exist and legislation for maximum levels of ergot alkaloids could be introduced as early as 2017.

As laboratory testing for alkaloids is relatively expensive and slow, AHDB has commissioned a review to improve knowledge and this could help develop a cost-effective rapid test.

Further information on ergot, including prevention and control, is available in our Ergot in Cereals publication. Get it today, via cereals.ahdb.org.uk/disease
Inspire, innovate and integrate

Black-grass? Take the strain off your chemistry

Black-grass has taken root across swathes of UK arable land. With the weed digging its heels in – fuelled by complex herbicide resistance mechanisms – new leads on control solutions are very much in demand.

In July, AHDB published results from its latest round of black-grass trials which has helped quantify the effects of chemical and non-chemical approaches used in both isolation and combination.

Dr Paul Gosling, who manages weed research at AHDB, said:

“The work found most of the black-grass control advantage came from delaying sowing of winter wheat from mid/late September to early/mid October.

“The most important finding was the consistent control advantage associated with improved pre-emergence herbicide performance at later drilling dates.”

The full report and control information can be accessed at cereals.ahdb.org.uk/blackgrass

Evolutions in nutrient management

The findings of an extensive review of the Fertiliser Manual RB209 will be published by AHDB this winter. It signifies the start of the evolution in nutrient management recommendations and a revolution in the way information can be accessed.

The review findings will now be pored over by the AHDB-led UK Partnership for Crop Nutrient Management to make sure each and every recommendation is evidence-based and appropriate for modern farming businesses focused on productivity.

Many changes have been proposed, including recommendations for additional crops and updated information on the nutrient content associated with organic materials.

The successor to RB209 – the AHDB Nutrient management guide – will be available from May 2017, in hard copy and interactive electronic format.

Split into seven colour-coded sections, the guide will be easy to navigate and allow cherry-picking of information to suit the needs of growers and advisors.

Throughout 2017, AHDB will explain the key developments via events and online media. In particular, an innovative nutrient management area is being developed for Cereals 2017.

cereals.ahdb.org.uk/nutrients

George Lawrie, who chairs the UK Partnership for Crop Nutrient Management steering group, said: “We’ve left no stone unturned during the review. Every aspect of nutrient management has been revisited and scrutinised.

“Advances in nutrient management have been incorporated and the new guide will provide evidence-based nutrient management recommendations that growers can trust.

AGRONOMISTS’ CONFERENCE
7 - 8 December* Peterborough Arena

1-day ticket: £45+VAT
2-day ticket: £80+VAT

Booking and information
* cereals.ahdb.org.uk/agconf
* potatoes.ahdb.org.uk/agconf
* or email events@ahdb.org.uk

*The event has been expanded to cover work funded by AHDB Potatoes (day one) and AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds (day two).
integrate

To sustain arable farming, constant small-scale evolution peppered with the occasional large-scale revolution is required. Commencing at the Agronomists’ Conference 2016, our latest ‘triple I’ theme will look to inspire on-farm change – in both small steps and big leaps. In this special feature, we take a look at both evolution and revolution...

**Wheat bulb fly: When to treat your wheat**

Products containing chlorpyrifos were withdrawn from the market earlier this year and pest management strategies will require tweaking, including to tackle the pest which can result in ‘deadheart’ symptoms in wheat and barley – wheat bulb fly (WBF).

Late-sown winter wheat crops and spring crops are more vulnerable to WBF because the tillering window is short. In fact, many crops only have a single tiller when the fly hatches early in the year.

With the loss of authorisations for egg-hatch (chlorpyrifos) and deadheart (dimethoate) sprays, greater attention needs to be paid to cultural options and seed treatments.

Where WBF populations exceed 100 eggs/m², crops sown November to December could benefit from a seed treatment. But crops sown in January to March could benefit from a seed treatment even in the lowest pressure situations (<100 eggs/m²).

**Are you taking cover?**

There has been a resurgence in interest in cover crops. And no wonder: they are often billed as the solution to all manner of things. But finding the right cover crop species or mix for your farm can be a daunting task. And that’s why we are sharing farmers’ experience of cover crops.

Earlier this year, we published seven ‘experience’ publications. East Anglian farmer Russ McKenzie is one farmer featured. Russ, who farms on heavy clay, has drawn on his Nuffield Farming Scholarship and Monitor Farm experiences to make cover crops work in a no-tillage system. Trailering a range of multi-species mixes, he’s found that most worked really well. Russ even reports a 1.3t/ha yield increase in his direct drilled spring barley after a cover crop (compared to shallow minimum tillage and no cover crop).

Calling all cover crop fact finders: visit cereals.ahdb.org.uk/covered

**Distribution of wheat bulb fly**

For an indication of this autumn’s WBF pressure, which is forecast to be low, and for information on cultural control, visit cereals.ahdb.org.uk/chlorpyrifos

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**The ‘BLACK list’ – facts and figures on our research findings**

- 33% fewer plants per metre squared*
- 92% reduction in black-grass plants emerging from spring wheat**
- 26% greater control from pre-em herbicides*
- 52-month programme of work
- Led by Rothamsted Research and NIAB
- <28% black-grass suppression from increased seed rates
- 49% fewer heads per plant*

*Black grass control achieved by delaying sowing of winter wheat (from mid/late September to early/mid-October). Means of five field trials.

**Compared with September-sown wheat

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**Can cover crops really do all this?**

Russ McKenzie
In the field: **Monitor Farms**

Farmer-led and farmer-driven, Monitor Farm groups across the country have been looking at topics you chose to cover. Knowledge Transfer Manager Emily Smith looks back at the key topics from the last 12 months.

**Soils**

**Colchester:** The Monitor Farm group compared the benefits and limitations of plough-based, min-till and zero-till systems. With the plough, there was good disease and weed control, structuring of heavy soils and a greater tolerance of high crop residue and FYM levels. However, preparing a seedbed in heavy soils can damage the soil biology; fuel costs are higher and output lower. A reduced-tillage system gave greater flexibility and soil health, but did require more management. One clear message - soil conditions are critical when it comes to crop establishment, regardless of drill choice.

**Black Isle:** At the July open day, visitors discussed the importance of using tyres at the correct pressure for field operations, using a 200hp tractor with a mounted fertiliser spreader to illustrate the point. The off-side tyre pressure of 16psi, or approximately 1 bar, had significantly less impact on the loose carrot field than the near-side tyre on the tractor which was set at road work pressure. The ideal solution was to specify tyres with a width and profile suitable to safely transport a load to the field and also to carry out the operations with minimal soil damage.

**Bath:** With higher solar radiation and rainfall in the South West than many other parts of the UK, wheat should have a good opportunity here to achieve its genetic yield potential. However, poorer soils and increased disease pressures often cancel out the weather advantages. The Bath Monitor Farm developed a ‘South West Action Plan’ covering yield-enhancing factors within the farmers’ control. This includes variety selection, seed rate and fertiliser strategy, improving soil structure, and timeliness of drilling and harvesting.

**Hereford:** Mark Wood and the Monitor Farm group used field data (rotation history, yield maps, soil conductivity, and cultivations) to identify the two main yield-constraining factors as organic matter and headland management. Strategies to overcome these challenges included incorporating grass leys into the rotation, straw chopping, organic matter testing, soil biology assessments, cultivations, cover cropping, identifying areas of compaction and tyre selection.

**One industry, many views**

Joe Dunstan attended his first Monitor Farm meeting at Truro this summer. He said:

“Really good to see and hear all the different views of people in the same industry. I found it really interesting that, right from the first discussion about how to incorporate the cauliflower waste, there were so many views...”

To find upcoming meetings in your region and previous meeting reports, visit cereals.ahdb.org.uk/monitorfarms
Andy Howard has completed his AHDB-funded Nuffield Scholarship looking at the potential for intercropping on UK arable farms.

"Intercropping is a tool that could help us transition to low-input farming. It’s not a new tool – there is evidence it was used from 5,000 years ago. My great-grandfather would be more familiar with the concepts in my Nuffield final report than many of the recent generations.

I visited farmers in North America, Europe, Africa and the UK to find examples of intercropping in highly-industrialised farming, low-input farming, and farming in similar climates to our own.

What I discovered was that intercropping has huge potential for the UK. There are so many different options, that I don’t think there would be a farm in the UK that wouldn’t benefit from some type of intercropping, though it isn’t a magic bullet. Intercropping is a practice that needs to be very well planned and managed, with careful thought before any seed is ordered, let alone planted."

Considerations for potential intercroppers:

- Is there a market for the produce and what are the specifications?
- Cultivar choice: choose for harvest date and height
- How would the intercrop fit with the wider rotation?
- Which intercrop component should dominate?
- What are the soil fertility and nitrogen levels? This determines the ratio of legumes to non-legumes needed
- Does your tillage system need adapting? Will you need to mechanically control weeds?
- Do the crops need to be drilled at different times, depths and row spacings?
- Which crops would benefit the soil the most? (Mycorrhizal association)
- Would intercropping worsen any weed, disease or pest concerns? Some pesticides may be unavailable for intercropping
- How would intercropping affect harvest logistics, in terms of separation and storage?
- What difference would it make to total income?

A global view on intercropping

Photographs from Andy’s intercropping adventures.

1. Trees and annual crops
2. Andy with Joel Mansson, Sweden
3. Wheat planted with lentils, Egyptian clover, vetch and beans
4. Spring beans drilled between three-year grass seed stand.
Market insight

There’s some evidence that both rapeseed oil and whole grain products are benefiting from a wider consumer trend towards eating more healthily. Research done by YouGov, Mintel and IGD shows that a large proportion of the UK population believe it’s increasingly important to eat healthily. Boosted by a healthy, versatile and affordable profile, standard rapeseed oil saw value increase by 43% and volume by 40% in GB the year to May 2016.

Sales of more specialised cold-pressed rapeseed oil in GB increased by 23% in value. New product development in cereals and bread has been aimed at improving taste and nutrition through innovations such as including whole and ancient grains. Also, a number of the UK’s favourite breakfast cereals are having makeovers, with packaging and advertising focusing on the fact they’re 100% whole grain.

Wholegrain goodness revamped

AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds has launched improved websites, WholeGrainGoodness.com and RapeseedOilBenefits.com, to promote the culinary and nutritional benefits of whole grains and rapeseed oil and to inspire people to use these ingredients in everyday cooking.

Pop-up chef duo Terry and George blazed the way for these two new sites this September with a media event for London’s finest.

The revamped sites will:
- Improve internet search engine rankings and attract more visitors
- Make the sites mobile friendly
- Improve user experiences and encourage wider exploration within the sites
- Integrate oat content from the sister website AllAboutOats.com

GB sales of specialised cold-pressed rapeseed oil increased by 23% in value

GB rapeseed oil sales up 40%
Planning for the future

By the time you read this, all will have been revealed for this year’s harvest. You will know what you have in your sheds, and you will have a good idea of what it’s worth. It’s good to have at least some level of certainty in what is a very uncertain world and now is a good time of year to take what you know and use it as a basis for planning next year.

A good plan, or budget, doesn’t give you any greater degree of certainty – but it does better prepare you and your business for what you might be up against. The process of preparing a plan forces you to think about what you’re going to do and in so doing you begin to think about ‘what if’ scenarios. The natural progression is then to start looking at what you can do to avoid or capitalise on these ‘what if’ scenarios, if or when they actually come to pass.

There has never been a time of more uncertainty in agriculture in my life than there is today, and that uncertainty has mostly been presented by media and the establishment in a negative manner. However, I think there is room for some optimism. Whenever there is change – and we are about to embark on a period of considerable change, irrespective of your views on Brexit – then there will always be positive opportunities too.

At the moment we can only speculate on what these opportunities may be – openings for the next generation, expansion, new and alternative markets, re-structuring and consolidating businesses, joint ventures and collaboration, to name but a few. However these opportunities will only be available to those who have prepared themselves and are ready to grasp them. Good planning is a key part of that preparation.

The other key component is the ability to have an open mind-set and to think outside the box. “Aye done it this way” is one of the greatest hindrances for our industry. Farmers need to be making informed business decisions with confidence, and be excited to adopt and manage change. Every aspect of your business should be analysed with the aim of improving technical efficiency, raising market awareness and embracing innovation. The individual gains may be marginal but cumulatively they will create efficient, innovative and progressive farm businesses.

It’s easy for me to say all the above when I don’t have to do it, but help is at hand from various sources. One of the best, in my opinion, is the Monitor Farm programme which is for farmers, by farmers, learning from shared experiences and knowledge. There will be nine new Monitor Farm projects starting this winter across Scotland from Shetland to the Borders. They are funded by the Scottish Government and EU, and overseen by AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds and QMS. So come along and make sure you’re one of the businesses ready to grasp the opportunities which will surely come over the next few years.

Further details on all the winter meetings can be found at:
cereals.ahdb.org.uk/monitorfarms or to book your place, please contact me.

Gavin Dick
Scotland Manager

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