

Stowmarket Monitor Farm Update

Meeting: Soil Management & an Introduction to Benchmarking

Date: 9 January 2015

Venue: Lodge Farm, Westhorpe, Stowmarket

Speakers: Simon Draper – Soil structure
Ian Robertson – Soil nutrients
David Eudall – Grain market
Tim Isaac - Benchmarking

Brian Barker
Monitor Farmer



Summary of meeting

- Increasing importance of sustainable approach to soil management
- How to assess soil condition and address soil compaction
- Methods for optimising nutrient availability in soil
- Grain market update
- Introduction to concept of benchmarking
- Explanation of HGCA CropBench+ tool



In field sessions identified extent of soil compaction problems and how to address them:



Key messages:

- Harsher penalties for soil erosion under new cross-compliance rules
- Use simple tools to assess soil condition
- Identify areas requiring remedial action
- Treat soil as a living organism
- Fine tune management to optimise nutrient availability
- Experiment with cover crops to assess costs and benefits

Back in the office, the following questions were posed:

- How do you know how good you are?
- How have you done compared with last year?
- How have you done compared to other similar farms?
- Which is your most profitable crop / rotation?
- Where could cost savings be made?
- Is every pound you spend reflected by higher yields?
- At what selling price do you make a profit?

Benchmarking gave the answers:

“the search for best practice that leads to superior performance”

To find out more about HGCA’s CropBench+ tool, contact:

Holly Howsam
Regional Benchmarking Officer – East England
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Next Monitor Farm meeting

“If you don’t measure it, you can’t manage it”

Lodge Farm, Westthorpe, Stowmarket
IP14 4TA

10am on Friday 6th February 2015

‘Seed & Crop Establishment’

Followed by

‘How to Benchmark’



Farm Summary

- 628ha of combinable crops – mixture of owned, rented and contract farmed
- Cropping includes wheat, barley, OSR, linseed, herbage grass & beans
- Family partnership
- Range of farm diversification enterprises
- Conservation work balanced with pushing arable yields
- Labour consists of Brian Barker, two full-time employees & various family when required