

MGA TIMES



Lloyds TSB
Agriculture

MGA 1988 - 2008 (so far!)
20 years of independent advice for farmers



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Agriculture

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- ◆ Maize dry matter guide.
- ◆ Governments response to NVZ consultation—John Morgan.
- ◆ Maize under plastic—John Whitby.
- ◆ Maize dry down rates—Briony Lennox.



Once again the MGA will have a stand at the 2008 Dairy Event. The nutrition story will feature our recommendations for ideal forage maize dry matter for Dairy cows. Given the exponential rise in fertiliser prices, the agronomy theme will be the Nitrogen predictor and how best to make use of home produced (or imported) manures. Members will be able to fill in N predictor forms and we can then process the figures and explain the results on the day. Help will also be on hand to discuss the new NVZ proposals and how they may impact on your businesses (Please also read John Morgan's technical note attached).



For those members who know N o e l l e Floyd, our previous office administrator, we are very pleased to tell you that she is getting married to Tim Nutman this autumn on 11th October.



AXE/TAW River CATCHMENT MAIZE MEETING REPORT

Early July saw the fourth of the six meetings planned at the Axe and Tamar demonstration sites. The focus of this months meetings were the herbicide demo's where pre and post emergence weed control options were reviewed on consecutive nights early in the month.

The field demo's gave members a chance to see how the full and half rate applications compared, as well as the benefit or not of pre and post emergence treatments. While most if not all the treatments controlled weeds well, Cadou Star pre emergence treatments shone particularly well, particularly at the Axe meeting, although the risks of high application rates and post emergence spraying were also clearly, if not intentionally, illustrated.

While in the field with Simon and John, those present took the opportunity to discuss some of the soil structure related problems being experienced this year as well as make comparisons with maize grown under plastic.

Both demo sites have been funded by the Catchment Sensitive Farming initiative and are aimed at increasing the agronomy skills of maize growers in the hope that maize's somewhat dodgy environmental image can be improved by good growing practice. The MGA thank the CSF for its ongoing support of this educational project.



CONGRATULATIONS

MAIZE DRY MATTER GUIDE

Following on from last month's note re-visiting the Milk Line Test for assessing forage maize harvesting dry matters; we have produced a laminated field guide. This aims to be a simple tool helping growers decide on the optimum dry matter to harvest their crops, without the need for burning out microwaves or creating domestic disharmony over the Aga. **Nevertheless, we would encourage you to use the milk line guide initially in conjunction with your own experience and/or the microwave/Aga test.**

GREAT SUPPORTER OF THE MGA SET TO RETIRE

Richard Phipps, one of the key drivers behind the MGA in its early years has retired from Reading University. The MGA would like to take this opportunity to wish him well and to thank him for his considerable input into the association over the years.

Richard, while working at NIRD, amongst others provided considerable scientific backing to the fledgling MGA, supporting the office team and running several of the associations research projects. This sound, fact based, grounding to all the things we try and do has stuck and is one of the reasons why the organisation retains real credibility with both farmers and the wider industry. The MGA would like to thank Richard for his support and wish him well for the future.



MAIZE MAZES

If you Google, (other search engines are available!) maize on the internet, maize mazes are at the top of the list and this year is no exception. Themes this year range from James Bond to Joe Calzaghe. They are obviously dependant on good weather, if the maize doesn't grow very high they have a problem and if the season is wet, wellington boots are a must. Maize mazes are a great tourist attraction and it is an excellent way of getting the public on to farms. The MGA would like to wish all maize maze farmers a successful and profitable season.

DAIRY CO START OFF ON THE RIGHT TRACK

It was pleasing to see that Dairy Co are starting off on the right track when they organised, together with the BGS, EBLEX and BSAS, a meeting in early June aimed at devising a strategy for Cattle Research entitled **Practical Solutions to Practical Problems**. John Morgan attended on behalf of the MGA membership.

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Industry representatives, including two farmers gave eight background presentations focusing on dairy and beef production, research and market sectors.

Three afternoon breakout sessions were run where smaller group discussion aimed to:-

1. Identify real research priorities that need addressing in the short term.
2. Identify the main issues affecting sustainability of cattle farming in next 3 – 5 years.
3. Ask whether cattle research be undertaken in a different model to that used at present.

John reports that the range of discussion was extensive productive and encouraging. He also welcomed the opportunity to keep up the profile of the MGA at such events.

Masstock
SMART FARMING

MAIZE MASTER drill after maize

50% diploid Italian ryegrass
50% tetraploid Italian ryegrass

Big 1st cut in May then back into maize
OR 3 cuts then into arable
Can keep for 2 years unlike Westerwolds
Soaks up surplus N
Reduces soil erosion
Sow at 14 kg / acre

For further details contact Brendan Paul 07767 310454

Who would have believed that this summer could have started off as badly as last year (well certainly down here in Devon). The Town Barton maize is now catching up after a very slow start, although it is in need of some sustained sunshine to achieve a harvest date before the middle of October. Every time

John Whitby sends more photos of his maize under plastic, (please read his valuable thoughts on maize under plastic attached) our hearts sink, especially when it was tasselling by



the end of June! However, every cloud quite literally has a silver lining in that grass growth has been excellent, with good covers across the grazing area and more silage to be made in paddocks next week. (Weather permitting!).