

MGA TIMES

FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Message from incoming Chairman, David Hardy

Having taken a moment out of this hectic existence, managing a complex farming business linked to an educational establishment (Royal Agricultural College) and as (self-appointed) MD of a company, I am about to start to reflect on what I have let myself in for as MGA Chairman! When I think back through the years of my involvement with MGA and of the past Chairmen, including notable individuals such as John Gerring, Gordon Newman and many others – I cannot help but feel a sense of pride that I have been a part of such an illustrious organisation. The pressure mounts though in conjunction with MDC, two more recently in David Christie, Charles Moore and last year Tim Gue.

Above all, in my year as Chairman, I want to ensure that members continue to receive the same service that they have enjoyed in the past together with access to Simon Draper (latest agronomy note enclosed) and Ruth Baker for agronomic advice and Chris Savery for ruminant advice (protein note enclosed). This will present its own challenges in the short term as we come to terms with Noelle's decision to move to pastures new. Noelle's contribution to the MGA over the past 10 years has been huge and the wheels have turned without so much as a squeak due to her diligent efforts, often un-noticed, behind the scenes. Show stands will never be the same without Noelle and Sarah (Harrison) to provide that magnetic attraction to existing and potentially new members! We wish Noelle all the very best in her new role.

Charles Darwin said, "Change is constant. Nothing is permanent but change. The species that succeeds is not the biggest or the one with the sharpest teeth, but the one which adapts best to change...". We now have an opportunity at MGA to implement some changes to streamline the organisation and ensure its ability to continue to provide an invaluable service to maize and whole-crop growers throughout the UK. This is typical of the opportunities currently facing our industry – a period of rapid change always presents a wealth of opportunity to those that can move with the times – in this case the MGA Times!

The environment and its management is becoming increasingly everyone else's problem almost to the point of ignoring the necessity of food production in the developed western world. Thus, farmers as the grass roots custodians of the countryside, have to cope with the inevitable political interference that ensues. Maize growers are now faced with a big challenge from 2005 – life without Atrazine. Many of you would have heard or read Simon's résumés of the weed control options available to growers without Atrazine. They provide more complicated, far less flexible and potentially less robust weed control strategies that will also be more expensive. MGA are demonstrating one of Philip Garford's precision inter-row weeders next week at Harnhill – see below, which might be of interest to growers considering other weed control strategies in the future. Why not come along and have a look and chat with like-minded growers! We have also helped MDC locate farms on which to host some whole-crop meetings, commencing next week – further details are enclosed

Another challenge we face will be the guidelines for the protection and maintenance of soil that will become more stringently controlled under MTR. At this stage, it is still unknown whether this will come under the general cross-compliance conditions or under the Entry Level Scheme. Wherever they eventually are, they will impose on maize growers site-specific restrictions on the growing of maize (e.g. based on the degree of slope) as well as latest permitted harvest dates – the latter being a real brain teaser in a wet spring when drilling is delayed with inevitably deferred harvest date. Can you think of any recent wet springs where this has occurred?

So...keep up with MGA. As I find there are always more questions than answers and at least with MGA, you have access to some answers and possible solutions to problems on your farm that you otherwise would find impossible to solve. I look forward to meeting you at the various events we have planned for the coming year. With best wishes for a good season...and a small prayer for some more rain now (in the south!).

HOEING DEMONSTRATION

As mentioned above, a demo of the Robocrop Vision Guided Hoe, working in maize, will take place next Tuesday from 11 a.m.

WHOLECROP MEETINGS

to 2 p.m. at Harnhill Manor Farm,

Near Cirencester

Do come along and meet other growers, Philip Garford, David Hardy and Ruth Baker will also be in attendance.

On-farm Wholecrop Meetings

In conjunction with MDC, two

meetings have been arranged to

take place on members farms next

week. Full details are enclosed.

