

MGA TIMES

Other inserts in this mailing

- *Weed control in forage maize - the main herbicides by Simon Draper*
- *HSBC/ADAS Unit costs of production for milk (our key sponsor HSBC provided this information - we felt this would be of interest to members)*

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Dear Member

I took over the Chairmanship of the MGA from Jeremy Courtney at our recent AGM and would like to use this MGA Times as an opportunity to introduce myself to you.

I farm in partnership with my family on a 700 acre tenanted farm in Oxfordshire with a further 100 acres taken recently on a ten year FBT. The farm is some 10 miles to the south west of Oxford with a mix of soil types, half is heavy Oxford clay with the other half being light easy working sand.

We milk 410 cows and have another 400 youngstock on the farm and this year will produce some 3.5 million litres of milk which is sold to First Milk. Calving all the year round we have a fairly level milk output although we are slowly moving towards winter milk production on a maize based system. Milk sold per cow averaged 8400 litres to the end of March on just over 2 tonnes of concentrate fed per head at a concentrate cost of 2.8 pence per litre. In normal years all other food is produced on the farm but this year we have used a considerable quantity of Brewers Grains to see the winter out. The cows are milked through a 60-point rotary parlour which was installed this last winter and has reduced milking time considerably.

Maize silage continues to grow in importance on this farm and forms the basis for the winter feeding of the herd. Up until now we have never been able to produce enough to buffer feed at grazing, but this year with the extra land we should be able to produce enough maize to allow buffer feeding and to feed most of the youngstock too. We have planted 218 acres this spring most of which was sown in mid April apart from one very wet field which we have just sown now in mid May. We grow later maturing varieties as on our light sand we can usually sow early and harvesting date is not really an issue. The average yield over the last 5 years has been 6 tonnes of DM per acre (14.8 tonnes DM/ha) at around 30% starch content with the crop being harvested in the last week of September. A mixer wagon is used to put the silage out along with grass silage, soya, rape and ground wheat.

Our plans for the future revolve around enlarging the herd to a starting point of 500 cows and then we will go from there. Now that the parlour is in place the rest of the farm infrastructure is where we are refocusing our efforts like improving access to grazing fields, improving youngstock accommodation and feed storage. All this is done only on the basis of reducing costs of production.

I take over chairmanship of MGA at a time when for those who have not lost their stock through Foot and Mouth the outlook for milk producers looks slightly brighter than in recent years. With the milk price now increasing to a more sensible level there will be some, if limited, room for manoeuvre in businesses. For beef producers the future is more uncertain but lets hope that recent events focus the minds of our politicians on the risks of relying on large quantities of imported food. Whatever you farm, it is the aim of the MGA to provide reliable, sustainable and practical advice on maize and wholecrop production and utilisation to enable you to reduce costs and the MGA Council and staff run the organisation with this constantly in mind. If you are critical of what the MGA are doing or have any suggestions as to how we can improve then I would like to hear from you - my contact details are given at the head of this letter. Please feel free to get in touch at any time.

Once the Foot and Mouth precautions are relaxed I look forward to meeting you at the events that we will run over the coming year.

With my best wishes,

David Christensen
MGA Chairman

