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MGA CONFERENCE DATE & VENUE

Due to the success of the last two conferences at the Peterborough Arena, we have decided to hold the 2017 conference here again. The proposed date is **Thursday 23rd February**. Speakers have yet to be confirmed, but if we manage the same standard as the previous conferences we will be very pleased. Of course we will be reporting on all the MGA trial results for 2016 along with any other trials that are relevant to maize growing and feeding. As always we are grateful to our sponsors and the companies that take up stand space.

ANY THOUGHTS ON WHAT MAIZE RESEARCH IS NEEDED?

As members will no doubt know, each year the MGA commission a series of small plot research trials, the aim of which is to identify opportunities to improve the performance and utilisation of maize and wholecrop be it for silage, grain or anaerobic digester feedstock. Decisions as to which subjects to investigate are discussed at MGA council meetings, with ideas matched to budget in February each year.

The purpose of this note is to not only remind members of how your subscriptions are being spent, but also to ask what areas of research you would like us to consider in the coming year. Should we focus on disease issues, row spacing, fertiliser, and/or establishment? Should we be thinking about something very different? Please let us know your thoughts however way out they may be. While we cannot promise to undertake research in all the areas, we do promise to read and seriously consider all your suggestions.

SILAGE ANALYSIS

As always once the maize is harvested it is important to know the constituent value of the crop for either animals or biodigesters.

The MGA have an arrangement with Scientec Laboratories and if you require sample bags, please do not hesitate to contact Jean in the MGA Office and she will send you the appropriate packs.

MAIZE MATURING QUICKLY!

We would urge members to go and check your maize crops, as the favourable growing conditions have speeded up maturity to the point that harvest may be sooner than you think.



MGA COUNCIL MEMBERSHIP UPDATE

As you will see on page 2 we have updated the MGA Council membership and you will no doubt note that since the last update we have three new members of the committee. The one retirement (sadly) is Hugh McClymont, considering he is based in Dumfries, Hugh's attendance at meetings was excellent, he very rarely was unable to attend and his input into the MGA was second to none. Hugh certainly did the MGA and indeed Scotland proud when he hosted the 2012 European Maize meeting. We also had a very successful conference at Dumfries during Hugh's Chairmanship. We will miss Hugh's input at meetings, but look forward to catching up with him at events around the Country.



Hugh at the European Maize Meeting.

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MGA COUNCIL MEMBERS

As you may all be aware, a voluntary farmer committee (MGA Council) runs the MGA. We at the office thought it important for members to know who they are at present. As you will see, there is a great cross-section of the farming industry with a wealth of experience in all aspects of growing and feeding maize.

CHAIRMAN

A. Stephen Temple—Stephen farms in Norfolk, milking cows, rearing youngstock and growing 160+ ha's of mixed crops. Alongside the farming and other enterprises, including the Barn Owl grainstore monitoring system and successful cheese making venture, Stephen has in 2009, commissioned a farm based anaerobic digester using maize, slurry, fodder beet and whey to produce biogas and ultimately electricity, via the 140 kW Combined Heat and Power Unit.

TREASURER

B. John Cottle—John runs a 230 cow Dairy-farming Company near Chester, Cheshire. No grass silage, but relying on maize and fodder beet for winter forage.

C. Graeme Cock—Dairy farming partnership covering 1,100 acres near Ashburton, Devon, milking 450, 10,300 litre cows and growing 170 acres of maize. As well as being a member of the MGA Council, Graeme is also the Chairman of Mole Valley Farmers Ltd.

D. Michael Christensen—Farming in Partnership with his Father and Brother at Pilton in Somerset. The business consists of Dairy, Poultry and Arable units covering over 1100 acres (600 acres owned). A lot of their ground is taken over at Glastonbury Festival time.

E. Neil Groom—Neil is Technical Director of Grainseed Ltd based in Eye Suffolk, but supporting growers all over the country to ensure maize is a success on farm whether grown for silage, crimping or as a feedstock for Biogas. He formally worked for NIAB as Forage Expert running the Maize Descriptive List trials, grass trials and fodder beet trials before joining the commercial world with Grainseed. He operates his own variety and agronomy trials throughout the country.

F. John Jackson—Farms manager for Severn Trent Water Ltd. He is charged with managing 3 main farms across 4500 acres, which includes a 2.1 MW energy crop plant near Nottingham that uses 34,500 tonnes of maize silage and 2,500 tonnes of whole crop wheat silage each year.

John has gained great knowledge of converting silages, especially maize, into energy and has put on trial many specific bio gas varieties on his farm in the East Midlands.

G. Oliver Knowland—Oliver has been working with Future Biogas Ltd to find suitable feedstock for the companies anaerobic digesters. Future Biogas has 7 AD plants producing 16 megawatts of electricity or gas. The versatility of the anaerobic digestion process enables a wide range of feedstocks to be used and currently hybrid maize, rye, energy beet and grass are fed in varying proportions at different plants. But we are also looking at perennial feed stocks.

H. John Whitby—The Whitby family has farmed Rowley farm for the past 30 years and the centre of operations for farmland both in hand and share farmed of around 400ha in the South Bucks and East Berks area. The farm is owned by Bucks County Council and sits surrounded by two popular Country Parks. The farm still carries a number of traditional core farming activities including an increasingly renowned herd of 200 Jersey cows and the growing of arable crops such as Winter Wheat and Winter Oats. Maize and Grass provide the forage component of the rations for the cows. There are 45ha of maize, which is fed year round. Later varieties are sown early to maximise the growing time on this ideal maize site.

I. Joe Foot—The Foot family has been farming at Bincombe near Weymouth in Dorset since 1878. The farm comprises 2250 acres of which half is rented from Gonville and Caius College, Cambridge and the rest is owned. Joe and his Brother Sam the fourth generation Foots involved in the family business which now trades as David Foot Ltd.

The farming enterprise has expanded to its current position milking 630 cows on four different units, an arable operation of 1000 acres of cereals and 250 acres of oilseeds. 250 acres of maize are grown for silage with the remaining 750 acres in grass. There is also a flock of 400 Pedigree Poll Dorset ewes, established in 1886. Ewes lamb in September, grazing surplus dairy grass, with lambs sold through Waitrose as Dorset Lamb under the Farm House lamb label.

J. Innes McEwen—Innes is the Head of Farming for Future Biogas, which has built and continues to operate/feed 9 AD plants in Norfolk, Lincolnshire, South Yorkshire and Nottinghamshire. Innes ensures a mixed feedstock profile is delivered to each plant with an emphasis on the highest quality silage and clamping, suitable cropping opportunities for partner farmers and improving farming systems through judicious use of AD feedstocks and digestate. Alongside some manures, the majority of crop feedstock is maize, rye, grass and suitable co-products.

K. Richard Martin—Richard is one of the four directors of Martin Dairy Ltd. They have currently got 950 Holstein milking cows and grow 420 acres of maize all for forage for the milking cows, that is mixed with grass silage and concentrates. The Martins farm around 1600 acres altogether, 230 acres of cereals, 17 acres of winter barley crimped for youngstock, 33 acres winter wheat wholecropped for youngstock. The rest of the wheat will be maxxamom treated to improve the protein content for feed to the milking herd to cut out buying in concentrates. All the rest of the land is grass for grazing youngstock and low yielders from the end of March through to end of October.

