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### IS YOUR MAIZE READY FOR HARVEST?

Remember the target whole plant DM% for most growers will be 32-34% and that typically whole plant dry down rate as maize approaches target dry matter is approximately 2% per week.

Simon Draper (MGA Agronomist) however is expressing some concern regarding members using standard milk line assessments of grain and standard dry down rates this year, due to the unusually dry summer and recent rain. The dry summer, where most of the country received significantly less rain than the maize would ideally like, in combination with soil type has resulted in some maize crops struggling. The recent rain has in some cases encouraged secondary growth and greening up, with both factors bringing into question the normal maize maturity logic. It is therefore very important to ensure that an accurate dry matter assessment of the crop is done. The best method will be to measure the dry matter of the whole plant (DO NOT RELY ON A COB TEST ALONE) and it should be done by harvesting a representative plant and drying it down in an oven, as described below.

When choosing a representative sample this is best done by assessing the cob which needs to be mealy ripe (a finger imprint can just be made) at least before commencing your oven testing.

**Oven tests Options** – Regardless of your chosen drying method the challenge is to get a consistent sample via use of the garden shedder or very careful mixing of cut maize. Ideally the whole plant will be dried down to avoid unintentional separation and selection of grain and stalk.

**Full Oven test** - A normal fan oven will work fine. Place the chopped up whole plant in the oven for 24 hrs at 100°C or for 16 hrs at 105°C.

**Microwave test** – where the dry down is speeded up and results can be gained within 20 minutes or so. Remember to put a glass of water alongside the sample to avoid the maize burning. The microwave is quicker than the full oven test, but can be less accurate and is more of a fire hazard!

**Air Fryer** – This new machine, designed to healthily 'fry' foods offers scope to DM test livestock feed quickly. We are testing machines this autumn and intend to compare their results with the alternatives during this coming harvest. Early tests are providing very positive.



Air fryer



### IS MY MAIZE READY TO HARVEST?

You are invited to a farm visit to talk maize harvest and over winter stubble management with Simon Draper (MGA Agronomist) and others from the Maize Growers Association on

**Monday 10<sup>th</sup> September**

Steanbow Farms, Pilton, Shepton Mallet, Somerset. BA4 4EH (courtesy of M/S Christensen)

Start time: 6.00 pm (prompt) until approx. 8.00 pm

Subjects up for discussion include

- Lessons to learn from the 2018 maize crop
- Infield assessment of maize maturity (DM%)
- Oven tests for maize maturity (DM%)
- Maize ensiling
  - Rolling
  - Sheeting
  - Additive use

All welcome – Please book your place with Jean at the MGA office 01363 775040

[info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk](mailto:info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk)

## COSTS OF FORAGE PRODUCTION AUGUST 2018 (A GUIDE TO THE ACCOMPANYING TABLE)

The latest in the Costs of Forage Production series is based on average yields and quality. Costs of production are assume contractors undertaking establishment and annual management tasks with crop nutrients being supplied by straight inorganic (bagged) fertiliser. No feed out costs or waste are included.

**Beware averages** – the use of average yield data and to a lesser extent average costs is fraught with issues. Yield differences, be they positive or negative, will have significant impact on the actual costs per tonne of food on the farm. Yield should be assessed from each field and actions put in place to address differences.

**Use of Organic Manures** – the use of home produced or imported organic manures be it livestock, digester or otherwise derived provides significant opportunity to cut costs of production. An opportunity exists to carry over any unused nutrient for following crops to further cut costs of production per tonne.

**Contractor vs farmer machinery costs** – While it is tempting to assume a farmer can operate machinery for a lower cost than a specialist contractor this is not always the case. If you know your full costs, including, labour, repairs, fuel, insurance and depreciation are lower than the contractor alternative then costs of production will be reduced. The likely yield increase, where biodegradable film is used, will typically cover the extra costs associated with the technique. Variety choice is vitally important if this extra yield opportunity from film is to be realised particularly in the mainstream maize growing areas. Quality differences can also be seen where film is used in more marginal areas.

Significant opportunities exist to lower the establishment costs of grazed forage crops. It is also important to note that feed out costs for grazed forage crops will be much lower than silage options. Wastage of grazed forage crops can be high.

**Summary** – The table should be used as guidance only and ideally growers should work out their own costs of forage production. Local climate, soil type and feedout options should be considered when deciding on the best crop for an individual farm if overall costs per utilised tonne are to be optimised.

### MGA OFFICE NOTICES

A new years BASIS & NRoSO points for MGA membership are now available, please ring or email the office for details.

The note on Dry matter testing over the page was emailed to members on Tuesday, if you aren't receiving the emails and would like them, please email jean at [info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk](mailto:info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk) and she will put you on her list.

On the other hand if you are getting the emails and are fed up with them please let Jean know.

**Last word** - It is that time of year again, we all start talking about Dry matter assessing our maize crops. I don't think it will be a case of waiting to see what the neighbours are doing this year. Every field of maize looks different from the next one. Our new Chairman John Jackson (Severn Trent Water) has given us his assessment of maize in Nottinghamshire.

*"A maize growing season 'not seen before' by ourselves in Nottinghamshire- with the maize crops falling into 4 categories after what was a maize drilling campaign 2/3 weeks later than normal due to a wet cold late spring;*

1. *Those crops that germinated well and because they are on a deep top soil over a water table that is only 2/3m down are keeping going and will produce an 'average crop' - which is very welcome considering a year of no rain since late May.*

2. *Those crops that germinated well-that now are a wave of different heights, due to some areas finding water deep down and other areas not successful in finding water in the soil profile-yields are expected to be 20/30% below normal across these fields.*

3. *Those fields that just do not have water reserves down in the soils profile will struggle to produce a crop of any quality and will end up being harvested early-50% reduction in yield?*

4. *Crops that have grown abnormally and then have suffered with storm damage. These crops will need harvesting very early to salvage what crop is left.*

#### **DM testing practicalities**

We have also had another method of dry matter testing maize from Gavin Davies (Lady Rothschild Estates). Gavin says

*"I thought it would be worth adding our system for assessing Dry Matters- we shred the maize using a garden shredder, then place it in a food dehydrator (bought for less than £30 online). Keep weighing the whole machine until it stops losing weight and then weigh off. Usually takes about 48 hours at its highest setting, but works accurately and we use it all through the year on a weekly basis to keep our nutritionist up to date with current fed silages and to keep on top of AD feedstock usage".*

## Maize Master

### Three fast growing Italians

Lasts two years  
Multiple cuts  
Soaks up surplus N  
Reduces soil erosion