

MGA TIMES



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VARIETY CHOICE 2015 – USING THE 80/20 RULE

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The key element of this mailing is the 2015 MGA Recommended Maize Variety List booklet. The booklet contains truly independent data and supporting information and should help educate all involved in what continues to be an important decision. The data is generated by NIAB and funded by the British Society of Plant Breeders (BSPB) and comes from multiple, replicated trials over five years and as such is the most reliable independent data available to you. It is simply the best out there for UK growers.

The advice when considering varieties is that for the bulk (in the region of 80%) of your maize area you should grow what you know yields well on yours or other local units. New contenders for the remaining cropping area should be considered, based on the independent data presented in the MGA booklet and following discussion with other growers and the team promoting the variety. This 80/20, low risk, approach should ensure you do not get caught out by something unforeseen, but at the same time is not so safe that nothing new is considered and no progress is made over time.

When considering variety choice, it is also vital to remember that while lots of glossy booklets are produced to support variety choice, the decision as to which one to grow is not nearly as important as how it is grown. Careful seedbed preparation and the even spacing of the seed, both within the row and in terms of seed depth will have a far bigger impact on the final crop yield. It is simply impossible to optimise potential yields if seed is unevenly drilled, so careful drill set up and driving is very important.

Alongside data for favourable and less favourable forage maize varieties, the booklet contains information and descriptive lists of maize varieties selected for film, biogas and grain maize production. For the first time, ratings are also provided for eyespot susceptibility. Please use the booklet and contact the office team if you have queries when making the coming year's variety decisions.

MAIZE TRAINING DAYS REPORT

Monday 15th December saw the second of two open maize training days, this one run at the excellent Grange Farm, Churton, thanks to Grosvenor Farms. The meetings, funded by DEFRA primarily to disseminate the results from the large scale two site trial focused on contrasting ground cover and establishment techniques for maize, provided an ideal opportunity for Simon Draper and John Morgan to update growers on the latest maize growing recommendations.

ADAS soil scientist John Williams, who headed up the DEFRA project team, kicked off the event by setting out the logic behind and treatments included in the trial, before moving on to review the results in terms of soil nitrogen, soil loss and nitrogen leaching. John's presentation will be put on the web site for those interested to know more. John's contact details are also available via the MGA office.

Simon chose to focus on identifying maize quality requirements, the need for starter fertiliser, nitrogen requirements and herbicide options, during his typically practical and research based presentation. John M introduced the new variety booklet and its contents, before Simon finished the session off with a quick review of the fungicide options and logic.

Numbers attending were counted at 30 which combined with the 50 who attended a similar meeting at Pilton, Somerset on the 11th confirms the ongoing demand for further meetings in due course.

With further meetings in mind, watch this space for dates for additional training days during the spring of 2015.



Maize being harvested at the Fakenham trial site during the 2014 harvest

CUTTING DATE COMPARISON TRIAL

MGA council member Oliver Knowland recently passed on a summary of the results from the split cutting date variety comparison work done by NIAB/TAG, on behalf of Future Biogas/MGA. The randomised, replicated trial looked at the yield and quality difference between 20 varieties harvested on two days approximately two weeks apart. The first harvest took place when the mean dry matter of varieties was 31.57% DM (27.2-37% range) with DM yield and DM% being recorded. DM yield mean for the first cut was 17tDM/ha. By the second harvest date, mean DM% had increased by 5.27% to 36.84% (33-44.3% range) and mean yield had increased to 17.88 t/ha. Yield increased on all but three varieties between the two cutting dates, suggesting that cutting maize too early could be compromising overall DM yield. Perhaps most interestingly was the apparent speeding up of maturity (dry down rate) at higher DM%. Those keen to know more about the trial should contact the MGA office.

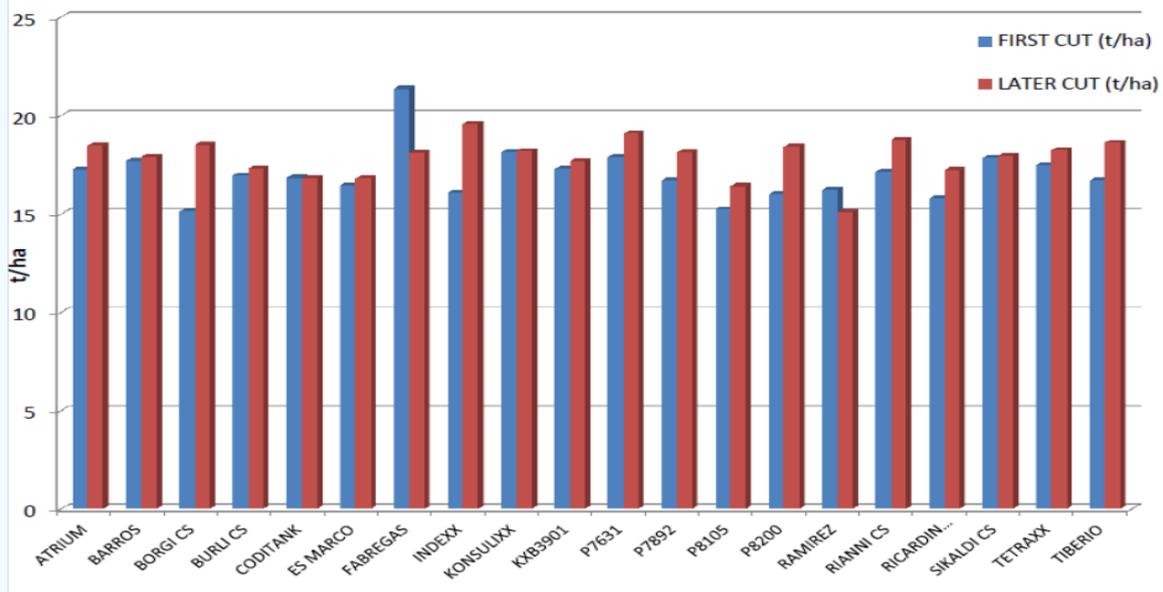


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Yield overview of both harvests.



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Every biogas plant will need a range of hybrids to spread harvest. For many, harvesting in conditions suitable for drilling the following wheat crop, is essential.

Agrii have specialised in managing earlier maize harvests to address this issue.

FieldStar is one of the most widely grown varieties and is one of only 15 on the BSPB lists for both favourable and marginal AD sites.

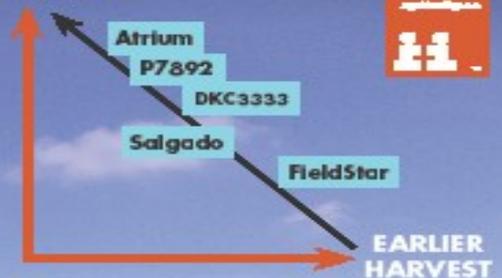
DKC3333 is a new Monsanto hybrid with medium maturity and a high fresh weight and energy yield.

Salgado from KWS has been on the BSPB List longer than any other variety. For all producers concerned about eyespot when growing maize after maize Salgado has by far the highest tolerance at 7.7 out of 9.

Atrium has unique properties in that it breaks down faster than any other maize variety. The energy product is huge. If you are growing energy maize for yourself and not to sell on a fresh weight basis this is the variety for you.

P7892 is the first variety from Pioneer which is a genuine replacement for Justina. A large hybrid suitable for silage or early biogas.

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