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<p>In this Issue</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ MGA Irish Trip programme ◆ DEFRA Trial update ◆ Weed control—Simon Draper ◆ Nitrogen Predictor reminder ◆ Update on ban on insecticides. 	<p>MGA TRIP TO IRELAND – BOOKING FORM INCLUDED</p>
<p>Events for your diary 22nd May— Farm walk in Norfolk. 3rd & 4th July—Livestock Event at NEC, Birmingham. 9th-11th July—MGA trip to Ireland. 3rd & 4th September—MGA Nutrition training days. 2nd October—The Dairy Show at Shepton Mallet.</p>	<p>Plans continue to take shape for this year’s MGA study tour to Ireland to learn from the scientists and growers over the Irish Sea how to consistently grow maize in marginal areas.</p> <p>We hope to focus on maize under plastic as well as weed and disease control.</p> <p>Full details of the trip as well as booking slip are enclosed in this mailing. If you want to join us please return the slip and deposit and book your flight as soon as possible..</p>

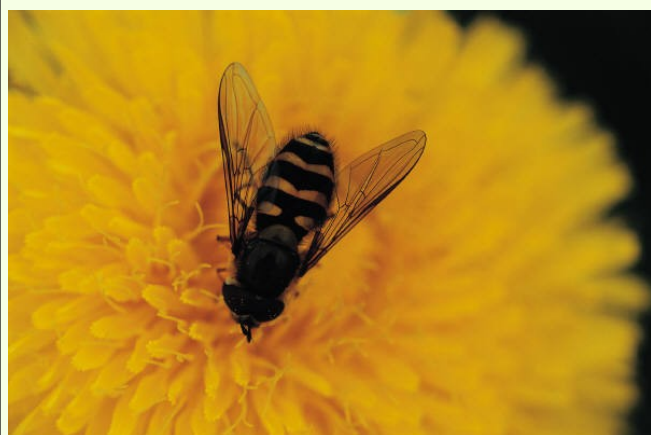


Maize drilling under plastic in South Devon

WITHDRAWAL OF NEONICOTINOIDS LIKELY FOR 2014

The difference of opinion between scientists against the ongoing availability of insecticides within the Neonicotinoid family and those supporting their use, appears to have had very little impact on those within the European Union charged with granting farmers permission for their ongoing use. Despite the divided opinion and the consequential split in voting within the member states on a potential ban, the European Commission appear determined to move ahead with a two year moratorium on the use of these insecticides, with the ban likely to come into effect at the end of this year.

The contentious point appears to be whether the results from lab based research, which appears to show a link between bee deaths and the insecticide use, are repeatable when field scale experiments are undertaken. Perhaps not surprisingly those against the use of the insecticides cite a significant number of trials linking bee death to use of the insecticides and that those against, including key manufactures Bayer and Syngenta argue that many other factors such as pests, virus, weather patterns, bee management, amongst other things could be the main issue and that to ban the use of a proven insecticide without definitive field scale evidence is premature.



Whatever the rights or wrongs of the decision making process, it looks like maize growers will have to live without seed dressings containing the active ingredients next year. Key losers, as a result of the ban, will be growers and Bayer Crop Science UK who’s Poncho (active ingredient – clothianidin, one of the three Neonicotinoids under scrutiny) dressing is widely used to protect seed from attack by wireworms, leather jackets and other soil born pests. Let’s just hope those making the decision are right, bearing in mind the challenges and inevitable cost they have given growers in coming years.

Members can rest assured that the MGA will be following up the story and will make members aware of their options for their 2014 maize crops.

DEFRA TRIAL PROGRESS

By the time you read this the two sites involved in what is the biggest maize trial undertaken in the UK for several years should be drilled and set on their way to provide some valuable information as to the production, biodiversity and soil related questions often asked of maize.

Five different establishment plans have been followed for maize on the sites located in Norfolk and Devon. Alongside standard ploughing and harrowing, strip tilling into sprayed off rye grass and an unsprayed bio diverse mix (predominantly legumes) and non inversion cultivation will be investigated. Growth characteristics of and wildlife counts within the crops will be taken throughout the growing season. Post harvest measurements for water and soil runoff will also be collected.

The work funded by DEFRA, is being undertaken via a partnership consisting of ADAS, Rothamstead (North Wyke) and the MGA. The MGA role is to provide agronomic advice throughout the trial and to aid the transfer of information to farmers once the results start flowing. Watch this space for more information, or contact the office if you would like to know more sooner rather than later.

We will be looking at the site in Norfolk on Wednesday 22nd May. Details are on the MGA website.



Trials team inspecting the site in Devon last Autumn

N PREDICTOR REMINDER

With lots of maize now in the ground it is time to start thinking about top dressing requirements. As with most crops Nitrogen is a key factor affecting yield in maize grown for forage, grain or biogas. Unlike most crops however, Nitrogen recommendations for maize are not well represented in the industry Fertiliser Manuel (RB209) and it is for this and other reasons the MGA have developed a Nitrogen Recommendation service, MGA Nitrogen Predictor, which in return for completed input form will produce field specific N recommendations for your crops. As well as taking into account soil type and structure weather factors and organic manure applications are included.

For those still to decide on how much Nitrogen to apply to their crops we would urge you to use the Nitrogen Predictor service to work out how much to use. Nitrogen Predictor input forms are available via the office or website.

Thinking about how much Nitrogen to apply, then perhaps you should also be thinking about sulphur. MGA research in 2012 showed a yield response to elemental sulphur. Give Jean a ring in the office and she will direct you to Simon Draper or the trials contractor to ensure you know all there is to know.

BIOGAS INTEREST GROUP

After the last mailing we have had a good response to the idea of the MGA forming a Biogas Interest Group. The first meeting is being organised for October, we will be sending details to members shortly and if you would like to become involved, please give Jean a ring and she will put your details on the database so you can be kept up to date with progress.

Last word—This spring has already thrown up some erratic weather patterns, lets hope it doesn't turn into another 2012! It can't possibly can it?

I would like to thank all the volunteers who sent me the soil temperatures every day for the last couple of months, I hope members have found it a useful guide to what is happening to soil temperatures. I feel I have got to know these contributors very well and we have exchanged some good information, one particular member finished one of his emails off with "lol", I told my husband that I had an admirer, but it wasn't until John Morgan said lol means "laugh out loud" that I realised my mistake!

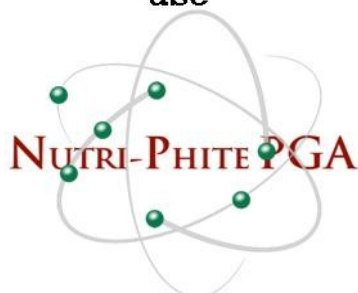
Simon Draper has updated the MGA weed star chart, which is included in the mailing, its a very useful, easy to use guide.

We look forward to seeing you at the Livestock Event, our stand is in the feed and forage area **No. FF490.**

Don't forget it is on 3rd & 4th July this year. Its a busy year, Stephen Temple's farm visit next week, the Irish trip, Nutriition training days in September and the South West Dairy Show in October.

Prevent May delay

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