

MGA TIMES



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MGA/ NATURAL ENGLAND DEMONSTRATION SITE 2007

We are delighted to announce that the MGA will be running a national Maize Demonstration Site during 2007. The site, which will be run by the MGA with the help of Troy Stuart, Farmers Weekly Contractor of the Year 2005, and funding from Natural England, will be located in a field adjacent to the M5 near Exeter.

The 15 acre site will feature Forage, Grain and Energy Maize and have the objective of improving the physical and financial performance of growers crops in an environmentally sustainable manner.

Grain maize will feature strongly with the impact of harvest date on soil structure being demonstrated by different maturity maize crops being drilled on two dates and under various fertiliser regimes.

Energy maize demonstrations will focus on the very specific final market requirements for energy maize crops. Forage maize plots will concentrate on low cost, environmentally sustainable maize growing.

Six demonstration days, reviewing the site pre, at and post harvest are planned, more of which will be reported in future mailings.



CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING

Members may well have started to hear about Catchment Sensitive Farming now that the package of advice and capital grants associated with the project is rolling out across the country.

CSF or to put it correctly, the England Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI) aims to address diffuse pollution arising from agriculture. Diffuse pollution from agriculture includes loss of nutrient from fertiliser and manures and soil/sediment related issues which may lead to erosion and flooding.

The ECSFDI has been launched to help us achieve our obligations within the Water Framework Directive (WFD), as well as the UK target that 95% of our Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) are in favourable condition by 2010. With these two objectives in mind 40 priority catchments have been identified (see map).

To achieve the initiative's objectives, a programme of activity is being targeted at farmers within the 40 priority catchments. Activities include:

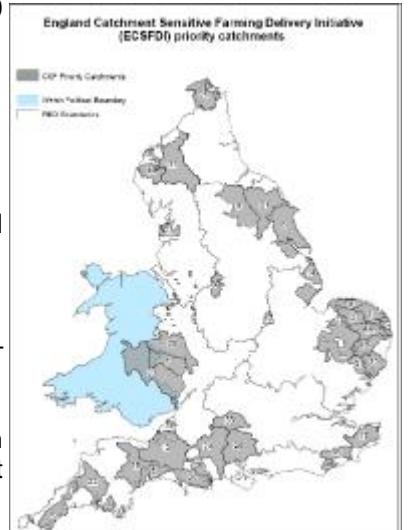
- Employment of Catchment Sensitive Farming Officers in each of the 40 catchments.
- One to one general environmental audit visits.
- Production of soil, manure and nutrient plans.
- Farmer workshops focussing on manure and soil management.
- Capital grant scheme (to be launched in April 2007).

Members keen to learn more about CSF and what it may mean to their individual business, should visit the DEFRA catchment sensitive farming web site www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf

or contact the:

Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Team, Room 207, 55 Whitehall, c/o 3 – 8 Whitehall Place, London SW14 2HH or via email csfarming@defra.gsi.gov.uk

In addition to work in the priority catchments the ECSFDI is supporting projects in additional catchments. These Associate CSF projects, aim to promote catchment sensitive farming more widely.



DO LAPWINGS NEST IN YOUR MAIZE?



Lapwings generally nest in damp, grazed pasture or spring-sown crops such as spring cereals, spring beans, and increasingly maize. When lapwings are looking for prospective nesting sites in March and April, they are attracted to the bare ground of maize stubbles or land cultivated in preparation for maize. Seeing lapwing performing their distinctive, cart wheeling display over a field is a sign they are intending to breed. Nesting birds make a shallow scrape in the ground, and usually lay four eggs, which

hatch four weeks later. Lapwings only rear one brood per year, but may lay a replacement clutch if an attempt fails.

The breeding success of lapwings in maize fields is very dependant on field management. If machinery operations e.g. slurry spreading, cultivations etc are spaced out over the nesting period, the first and replacement clutches can be destroyed. If possible, cease field operations after mid March, and condense all further work into a short period around sowing, ideally within a week. This may provide lapwing with sufficient time to hatch chicks off, or at least ensure only one clutch is destroyed, and failed pairs can nest again in the sown crop. Once chicks have hatched, they may move to nearby insect rich feeding areas. Adjacent grazed pasture, a damp hollow/field corner or shallow sided ditches can be very important in providing a good feeding habitat for chicks.

The RSPB recognises that many farmers are already taking action to help lapwing and other wildlife. A competition is held annually to reward and help publicise some of this effort.

For further information on any of the above, please contact Gethin Davies on 01597 827 416, or e mail lapwings@rspb.org.uk.

MEMBERSHIP BENEFITS

Belonging to the MGA entitles members to claim BASIS & NRSo points.

Each year you will be able to claim 1CP & 1PD BASIS point.

NRSo points allocation for 2007 is 1E & 1CP

Please ring the office to ask for the reference numbers.



MGA HERBICIDE STAR GUIDE 2007

In this months' mailing we have included the MGA herbicide star guide. This year we have identified the weeds to look for in the maize crop. The chart has been laminated so it should be farmer friendly and survive a few weeks in the farm truck! Simon, in his article has mentioned pre emergence herbicides and will, in the next mailing talk more about the post emergence sprays available to use.

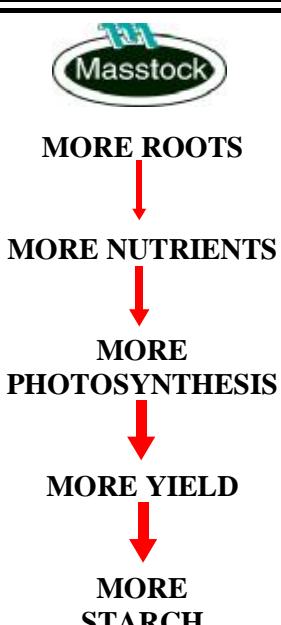


We continue to have a great response from companies wishing to include inserts into the mailings. The money generated from commercial mailings enables us to finance the cost of the postage and stationery as well as providing further funds for other MGA R & D activities. Please take some time to read them, we limit the number to keep the mailings in balance. Using our database we can also offer companies regional mailings if they are required with the cost depending on the number of members in that specific area.

Your livestock partner

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For more information, please consult your Massstock contact or call Brendan Paul on 01280 848848



The MGA Office is busy at the moment processing member's N Predictor forms. Included in this mailing is an explanation of how the predictor works. One difference in the returned forms this year is rainfall. Last year nearly all the forms ticked the low rainfall box and this year it is the high rainfall that is more common. If Average rainfall is 0, low rainfall is 20 units less N required and high rainfall is 20 units more N needed. At Town Barton, since using the N predictor, subsoiling the ground is now always done after ploughing, this will save 20 units of artificial Nitrogen.

If you have lost or mislaid your input form, please contact Jean at the office for a replacement.



Sub soiling before drilling—April 2006