

# MGA TIMES

## Maize Growers Association

February 2021

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### CONFERENCE SPECIAL!! Don't forget - MGA Maize Conference

2021 is being held on 23rd February and 2nd March. It's not too late to book your place! It is being held via online webinar software so you have the perfect opportunity to attend if you haven't been able to travel in the past, or have not been able to commit to the whole day.

### TUESDAY 23RD FEBRUARY AND TUESDAY 2ND MARCH

10am - 1pm

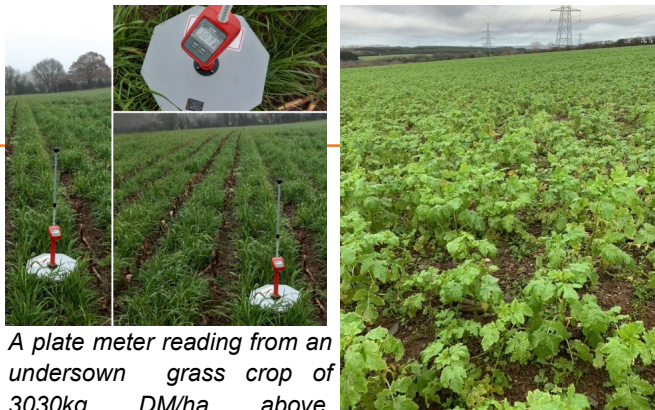
For access to the conference links, you must email the MGA office with your name and postal address. Once we have received your email and payment, we will post hard copies of the papers from each of the conference speakers and will email through the links to each event. The cost will be £10 to members, and £30 to non-MGA members. If you decide to join the MGA, the £30 fee will be removed from the first year's subscription. Both costs are plus VAT. The single fee will gain you access to both parts of the event. See overleaf for the subjects being covered on each day and some background on the knowledgeable and thought-provoking speakers that we have invited to speak this year. The conference this year is kindly being sponsored by Samco and Yara.



Your half-yearly reminder that we are happy to send mailings via e-mail if you would prefer! It would make a better impression on our and your carbon footprint! Drop us an email if you'd like to change to email mailings.

#### Sneak Preview: Photo Competition Winner(s)!

The judges have decided on not one but two winners for this year's photo competition! Very different methods and crops chosen to protect the soil over winter but the same result of nutrient retention and improved soil structure, among other benefits! Below are the two winning pictures! See our Twitter profile for more info, and look out for the photo competition break-down, including the details from these farmers, and the photo shortlist in the next newsletter!



A plate meter reading from an undersown grass crop of 3030kg DM/ha above.

Mustard crop broadcast on at 4kg/ac with a fert spinner to the right. Plate meter photo courtesy of Tom Land, LANDWRX Ltd. Mustard photo sent in by Richard Martin, Cornwall dairy farmer and MGA council member.

#### Classified Ads Corner

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## SUBJECT AND SPEAKER PLAN

| 23rd February  | 2nd March  |
|--|--|
| Wessex Water and MGA South West Trial Site Results with John Morgan  | Professor Andy Neal from Rothamsted Research on Understanding Soil Carbon    |
| Using Satellite Imagery to Aid in Agronomy Decisions with Helen Keevil, Hummingbird Tech                     | MGA Small Plot Trial Results: Drilling Depth, Seed Treatments and Fungicides |
| MGA Small Plot Trial Results: Herbicides and Plant Populations (Population trial supported by Future Biogas) | Professor Mike Wilkinson on the Carbon Footprint of Maize                    |
| Farmer speaker - Neil Edwards of Velcourt on How and Why They Farm the Way They Do                           | MGA Small Plot Trial Results: Cover Crops and Undersowing                    |
| MGA Small Plot Trial Results: Maize Nutrition - Biostimulants, Fertilisers, Nitrogen and N-inhibitors        | The Min-Till Debate with Jon Myhill, George Sly and Stephen Temple           |
| Research on Companion Cropping Maize and Beans with Dr. Willmar Leiser                                       |  |

### Getting to Know the Speakers

**The MGA Trials Team: John Morgan** heads up the MGA office team and has been taking the lead in the management of the Wessex Water and MGA South West Trial Site. John will be introducing us to the theory behind this new site, and the results seen in 2020. **Neil Groom** is MGA Treasurer and Trials Coordinator. He will be exploring some of 2020's trial results. **Oli Knowland** is an MGA council member and Suffolk arable farmer. He will be explaining some of the trial results and what we can learn from them.

**Helen Keevil** of Hummingbird Technologies Ltd has been working with MGA's John Morgan on collecting and using satellite images of the Wessex Water and MGA South West Trial Site. By using satellite technology to assess crops, it is thought that decisions can be made earlier and chemical inputs can be utilised more precisely and effectively, thus increasing yield and profit margin and enabling arable fields to be farmed more sustainably.

**Neil Edwards**, Farm Manager for Coppid Farming Enterprises LLP on the Crichel Down Estate in Dorset. Coppid Farming Enterprises LLP operates three farms across the south of England and is involved in maize production on two of the units. The Dorset farm is 1250 ha of the Cranborne Chase. They grow a range of combinable crops and have diversified into grain maize. Neil's team are proud suppliers of Rye to Ryvita and provide inputs for a large local milk producer.

**Dr. Willmar Leiser** is leading the State Plant Breeding Institute at the University of Hohenheim in Germany. He gained his PhD in sorghum breeding, but is working on breeding research for many crops. Since 2017 he is highly involved in breeding climbing beans for mixed cropping with silage maize. Through the efforts of many institutes and companies, the cropping system maize with beans is highly competitive and delivers more protein, higher yields in N-limiting sites and enhances biodiversity on the field. This "new" cropping system is currently gaining popularity and may be a good way of combining economy and ecology.

**Professor Andy Neal** is a soil microbiology research scientist in the Sustainable Agricultural Sciences department at Rothamsted Research. Andy has been partaking in research to determine the importance of soil carbon, and how using artificial fertilisers containing high levels of nitrogen and phosphorus may be affecting soil fertility and changing soil structure when compared with the use of organic manures due to changes in microbial behaviour in soils with different nutrient contents.

**Professor Mike Wilkinson**, MGA's Nutritionist since 2016, is a research manager and independent consultant to the agriculture industry. His research career has concentrated on improving grassland and forage crop use for milk and meat production. Mike has held university positions at Leeds, Reading, London, De Montfort, Cambridge and, since 2002, Nottingham, where he is currently an Honorary Professor in the School of Biosciences. He has published over 400 scientific and technical papers.

**Jon Myhill**, MGA's Agronomist, who also provides independent, professional advice on all aspects of growing, supplying, and using energy crops. Jon also runs a contracting business covering Norfolk and Suffolk. Members local to Jon may know him as a LEAF Open Farm Sunday ambassador for the Eastern Counties. Jon, as one of the MGA trials team, will be presenting some of the MGA small plot trial results from 2020, as well as being the 'conventional' maize farmer posing questions in the min-till debate with George and Stephen.

**George Sly** is managing director of Horizon Agriculture, but first and foremost for our conference, is a farmer and agronomist. George has had great success with min-till farming having implemented it on his 300 hectare family farm in Lincolnshire. George will be one third of the min-till debate and will be giving the argument for min-till by exploring his case study with us. He will be opening up about the advantages found since adopting a regenerative, min-till strategy, along perhaps with some of the trials and tribulations.

**Stephen Temple** is an MGA council member, dairy farmer, engineer, AD owner, and cheese producer in Norfolk. You will have seen mention of him in the December newsletter, along with his suggestions for YouTube videos and channels on regenerative agriculture. Stephen is well-read and practiced in the art of minimum-tillage maize farming, and will be another third of the min-till debate, arguing for min-till, and using his own positive and challenging experiences as his reasoning.