

MGA TIMES

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MAIZE GROWING UPDATE

How is your maize growing?

Due to the weather conditions some crops are now beginning to grow very rapidly but there are also areas where the crop is struggling.

The enclosed agronomy update by Simon provides management tips both for the struggling crops and those which are growing well.

If your maize has reached the 8-leaf stage most of the work to the crop should now be complete but due to the speed of growth many farmers still have a number of jobs to do. Simon has also included a newsletter on growing maize organically for those members who cannot use the conventional information.

MGA AGRONOMY ADVICE

Contacting MGA Agronomists

One of the benefits of MGA is that every member has access to agronomy advice from Simon. We are delighted that this service has been extended and Ruth Baker (who is very well qualified in maize agronomy) will become the first port of call for members

(07767 242721), any tricky questions being passed immediately to Simon. If Ruth is unavailable then please contact Simon directly as before (07836 234741).

Some members may have met Ruth who works alongside Simon and has been very involved with the organisation and progress of the MGA's Demonstration Sites for a number of years.

MGA MINERALS

Are you using the MGA Graze and Dry Cow Minerals?

We remind members of the availability of the range of maize minerals formulated by MGA. The MGA Graze Mineral (specially formulated to suit cows at grass) and the MGA Dry Cow Mineral (essential for building reserves and ensuring best health at a critical time) can be ordered directly from Mole Valley Farmers (01769 576231) who manufacture the minerals for us. Remember that we guarantee that what is on the label is in the bag.

The minerals are competitively priced and profits from sales go to research & development necessary to benefit members.

GRAIN MAIZE

David Bright / MGA Grain Maize Tour

Tim Gue (MGA R & D Committee Chairman) reports on this short tour to Landes in South West France, a region dominated by grain maize and Fois-gras production. The tour was led by

Oliver Crabos from Maisadour who are the regions Farmer Co-operative and are involved in every area of the regions agriculture...

'We began with a detailed review of Maisadour. We met the Maisadour vice-president who is also the president of the French MGA, which was very useful and should lead to further co-operation in Europe

Our next visit was to one of Maisadours grain stores but on the way we managed to make time for an armagnac tasting which tourists found soporific!

The grain store was massive, 150,000 tonnes, the store alone occupied 1 ha! The highlight of the tour however was a visit to a grower of 600 ha of maize yielding 13t ha with the judicious use of cheap irrigation. It was here that we picked up many tips that will lead to successful grain maize in the UK and some of which will lead to better practice in the forage crop too.

A very useful and enjoyable trip with many thanks to Maisadour for their hospitality and to David Bright for organising this.'

Tim Gue

NOTES FROM THE CHAIRMAN

Diary from the Chairman's farm ...

Further to David's introductory letter in the last MGA Times here is an update of how things are going on our Chairman's farm...

'With first cut silage now safely behind us we are in urgent need of a few good rainy days. The

dry conditions meant first cut was a much easier task than in the catchy conditions of previous years and we should have made some high quality, high dry matter silage to complement the maize for this winter.

Yields were only average however, so I was hoping for some rain to allow us to put a small area away for second cut to top up stocks. It hasn't rained here for some 6 weeks now and grazing covers are getting very low with silage aftermaths looking very wispy with no volume of grass in them.

I guess I should have expected that after the wettest winter on record we would be heading for a drought. For those of us who farm in the Thames Valley dry summers tend to be the norm but they don't usually start as early as mid June.

I was speaking with a member in Devon this morning who said the situation was not dissimilar down there so let us hope that the forecasters have got it right and that the predicted rain comes to some volume - but not all in a very heavy ten minute shower!

The dry sunny weather of course benefits the maize which is looking full of potential at the moment so if it keeps going will help boost silage stocks.

June and early July tend to be quiet months for Kingston Hill on

the routine side of the farm so we take the opportunity to spend some time on much needed maintenance around the place.

Getting enough water to the cows on these hot summer days is always challenging so we are putting more water troughs in paddocks to ensure that there is sufficient reserve when the cows arrive.

The situation has been exacerbated by the new parlour because with it only taking 30 minutes to milk each group of cows; they all arrive at the troughs in a very short period of time.

We have tried extra troughs around the new parlour but after milking, with fresh paddocks on offer the cows don't hang around. So we are putting two 500 gallon metal troughs in each paddock and then next year will look at increasing the size of the supply pipes.

There are also a multitude of 'finishing off' jobs that need to be done around the new parlour so we are gradually getting on with those. As always plenty to do!

In my first month as MGA Chairman I have enjoyed speaking to a number of members over the 'phone regarding various issues about the MGA and about what we are doing at Kingston Hill, so I will repeat what I wrote

last month - please feel free to call at any time. My telephone number is 01865 821238.'

David Christensen

PRINCE PHILIP AWARD

MGA collects award from Buckingham Palace

David Holdcroft (a past Chairman of MGA who farms in Burton-on-Trent, Staffordshire) went to Buckingham Palace last month to collect a Certificate of Merit for MGA's entry into the Prince Philip Award at the Dairy Event last year.

The overall award is presented for the most practical, relevant and technical exhibit at the Event.

David reported that Prince Philip was very knowledgeable about agriculture in general, and was also familiar with the MGA commenting that MGA must be doing something right as we have received an award or certificate each year for several years!!

MGA will be attending the European Dairy Event this year. This is taking place as a one day event on Wednesday 19th September.

