



# MGA TIMES

Correspondence Address: Town Barton Farm, Sandford, Crediton, Devon. EX17 4LS. Telephone: 01363 775040 Fax: 01363 776938  
 E-mail: [info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk](mailto:info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk) Website: [www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk](http://www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk)

- In this issue
- ◆ Soil protection review.
  - ◆ Late season weed control 2006—Simon Draper.
  - ◆ Observations on the LINK project—Angus Golightly.
  - ◆ Best use of maize & whole-crop over summer—Chris Savery.
  - ◆ Maize drilling demonstrations—update.
  - ◆ Cereals 2006 report.
  - ◆ Websites of the Month.
  - ◆ Diary dates.

## TIME TO HARVEST WHOLECROP

If making fermented wholecrop, - the time for cutting is very close. Chris Savery gives us some timely advice. Cereal crops should be cut when the grain is changing from being soft to becoming firm.

The target plant dry matter should be close to 45%.  
 When the whole plant is still green, DM % is too low (< 40%)  
 When the whole plant is just yellow, DM % is too high (>50%)

Be ready in good time. Check the contractor is prepared. It is essential to look at several different areas of the field as ripening can be variable. Dry matter can increase by 2% / day in hot weather. Check the dry matter % in the lab, if required, but the sample must be representative.



- Crops should be direct cut.
- Ensure the crop is chopped well (30mm)
- Use an additive - to control aerobic spoilage.
- Fill in thin layers with good consolidation
- Good airtight sealing and weighting down is essential

The size of the clamp and particularly the face area should be related to the planned rate of use. If crops get too dry (grain hard) don't panic. You must then use a harvester with a grain processor – and ensile with an additive appropriate for the high dry matter. Further tips on wholecrop harvesting are in the attached note from Angus Golightly.

## MGA DEMONSTRATION SITE 2006

All demo plots have been successfully established and will be available for viewing at our open evening at Town Barton on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> July (Details on the enclosed invitation). The evening, kindly sponsored by HSBC Agriculture will be a great opportunity to discuss all aspects of maize growing, including the hot topic raised at the conference of maize as an energy crop. Simon Draper will be leading the event and the office team will be pleased to meet as many members as possible together with your non-member neighbours (they need to be signed up!). We will be having another event on Thursday 14<sup>th</sup> September which will be held during the day, so put the date in your diaries.



## MAIZE HERBICIDE AVAILABILITY

This is the first year of the Atrazine ban, so for many a completely new approach to weed control has been adopted. One repercussion of this has been an increased demand for the newer herbicides. New residual herbicide, Calaris, is still available, but only small stocks of Callisto are in stores. The main problem is availability of the grass weed herbicide, Samson, which appears to be sold out. If you are desperate, then phone calls to neighbours for surplus chemical might be the answer. Please read Simon's note on late weed control for more information, or give the office a ring.

**CEREALS EVENT & GRAIN MAIZE THOUGHTS.**

The MGA had a presence at this year's cereals event at Nocton, Lincolnshire. Although not normal forage maize territory, there was a great interest in the crop for maize grain production on arable units looking for profitable break or main crops.

The market potential for the crop is excellent, both in the ruminant sector as the moist, crimped form and as dried grain.

**Crimped Maize**

We met several MGA members marketing crimped grain maize successfully to Dairy, Beef and Sheep farmers all over the country in wrapped bales or bulk. The benefit of crimped maize over other moist products seems to be securing a reasonable premium and making it a profitable enterprise. A word of caution perhaps before launching in to this area. As with all new cash crops, securing your market at the onset is vital, which at the early stages of development of the crop can be quite straightforward. With compound feed prices on the increase and the nutritional benefits of maize well known, it certainly has a place with full loads of a high energy product making distribution to livestock areas an economic option.

Quality of product and efficiency of service will be a key to maintaining premium prices.

**Dried Grain**

A huge potential market, 1.4 million tonnes of grain maize is imported in to the UK each year. Speaking to a number of maize buyers (corn-fed poultry, flour mills etc) at the cereals event brought this message home. With the benefits of UK crop assurance and GM free status, there certainly is a place for the crop in the UK, with

prices openly talked about over £100/tonne ex farm.

The big downside however became obvious as the event progressed – ***Drying the crop!***

From the grower's perspective, the cost is evidently a huge issue, with the crop typically being harvested at 30% moisture and the cost of drying ranging between £10 and £20 per tonne. Although on most arable units drying facilities are available and not in use during the autumn harvesting period.

From the buyer's perspective, the big problem appeared to be the variable quality of the grain sample being offered for sale. One trader for example, buying 4000 tonnes/year, has switched from sourcing part home grown grain to all French imports because of high mycotoxin levels found in a large number of the UK samples. He has attributed the problem to poor drying procedures and a lack of conditioning of the grain post drying.

There is obviously an issue here and if we want to market this crop successfully in the UK, then this will have to be addressed.

The MGA has a major role here and will be researching all aspects of grain maize production. Over the next few months, we will be reporting to members' results of our research through regular mailings, on the website and via various open days throughout the year.

**The main event concentrating solely on Grain Maize will be at Elveden Farms in Suffolk on Thursday 16<sup>th</sup> November.** More details of this event in the next mailing.

**GROWERS GUIDE INSERTS** Included in this months bumper mailing are 2 new inserts for your Growers Guide. We have included a new chapter on Grain maize.

This gives an insight into the varieties, establishment, drying, storage and markets for grain maize. As we now have a new chapter, we have updated the contents page to include grain maize and correct MGA Office details. Please insert these into your Growers Guide.

**ADVERTISE HERE**



Let the managers of **175000 dairy cows and 250000 ha of maize, grass and arable crops** know what you have to sell by filling this space in future mailings with your advertisement.

For further information contact the MGA office on 01363 775040

**WEBSITE OF THE MONTH**

Having hosted a LEAF farm Sunday walk a couple of weeks ago the Website of the month this time has to be:-

[www.ukagriculture.com](http://www.ukagriculture.com)

There is so much information about farming in an easy to understand format. This site is produced by Living Countryside Ltd. a "not for profit" company

Its aim is :

- To advance the education of the public in all aspects of agriculture, the countryside and the rural economy.
- To promote greater public understanding of the role of agriculture in the countryside.
- To conserve and protect for the benefit of the public the countryside as a whole.

Living Countryside Ltd. is a small organisation that cares deeply for the countryside and believes in its preservation through a viable agricultural industry. It is run by dedicated and unpaid volunteers.

**MGA COUNCIL MEMBERS**



As you may all be aware, a voluntary farmer committee (MGA Council) runs the MGA. We at the office thought it important for members to know who they are at present. As you will see, there is a great cross-section of the farming industry with a wealth of experience in all aspects of growing and feeding maize.

§ **CHAIRMAN**

**Graeme Cock**

Dairy farming partnership covering 1,100 acres near Ashburton, Devon, milking 450, 10,300 litre cows and growing 170 acres of maize.

§ **VICE CHAIRMAN**

**John Jackson**

Farms manager for Severn Trent Water Authority, Nottingham. Managing 4500 acres over 3 farms. Includes a 350 cow Dairy unit.

§ **TREASURER**

**Barrie Bryer**

Dairy farming on the Somerset levels near Langport in Somerset. Milking 120 cows with his wife Rosemary and daughter Rebecca.

-----  
**Andy Allan**

Farming 200 pedigree South Devon sucklers on the Portman Burtley Estate, Buckinghamshire. Currently selling to Waitrose and under organic conversion.

**John Cottle**

230 cow Dairy-farming Company near Chester, Cheshire. No grass silage, but relying on maize and fodder beet for winter forage.

**David Hardy**

Farms director for the Royal Agricultural College in Cirencester, as well as MD for Agrarian Management Services contract farming company.

**Simon Leach**

Currently livestock manager for Anglia Farmers in Norfolk, the largest farmer-buying group in the UK.

**Mark Osman**

Until recently farm manager for Syngenta Ltd at Jealotts Hill Berkshire. Now Farms manager at Royal Farms Windsor.

**Robbie Taylor**

Livestock technical director of Velcourt, overseeing the management of 6000 high yielding cows in UK Dairy herds and 450 in Hungary.

**John Whitby**

Farming a typical lowland family unit in Buckinghamshire, currently milking 185 Jerseys. Growing maize under threat of the Diabrotica beetle.

**DIARY DATES**

Sunday 9th to Wednesday 12th July  
BGS SUMMER MEETING in Cheshire.

Tuesday 11th July  
OPEN EVENING at MGA Office Farm, Devon.

Thursday 14th September  
OPEN DAY at MGA Office Farm, Devon

Wednesday 20th & Thursday 21st September  
DAIRY EVENT at Stoneleigh.

Wednesday 18th October  
MGA/BGS MINI CONFERENCE at Ardingly, Sussex.

Thursday 16th November  
MGA GRAIN MAIZE OPEN DAY at Elveden Farms, Suffolk.

**Last Word:** - The above piece about the current MGA council membership serves as a reminder of the effort that goes in to running an organisation such as this. One name not now on the list is that of Angus Golightly who has recently retired from the council. Angus has been a stalwart of the MGA for many years and has put in a huge effort behind the scenes. His technical note this month gives a hint of the number of hours he spent collecting wholecrop samples from around the UK. His contribution to the running of the office has been fantastic over the years and just because you have retired Angus, don't think the phone calls will dry up! We will be pleased to see members at Town Barton Farm on 11th July, please bring your neighbours and thank you to HSBC Agriculture for sponsoring the evening.