

## MGA TIMES



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With wholecrop harvesting quickly approaching, Chris Savery has written a technical note discussing the value of cereal wholecrop in diets and how to make good quality forage. Also included in Chris's article is a dry matter guide to help you decide on the optimum harvest date.

## WELCOME TO NEW GRAIN MAIZE GROWING MEMBERS!

We would like to take this opportunity to welcome the grain maize-growing members who joined the MGA at the Cereals 2007 event last week. The MGA were kindly hosted at the Cambridgeshire event by machinery manufacturer CLASS, the office team took full advantage of a great position by signing up 8 new members as well as learning more about the machinery options for harvesting the crop. The backdrop for our presence at the event was a grain maize header as well as a fixed display unit showing the suggested alterations to the internal workings of the combine. We sincerely thank CLASS for their ongoing support of the MGA.

Recurring themes of conversations held throughout the event, included the general lack of awareness of grain maize as an economic cash crop. Discussions were also had with farmers who have drilled trial blocks of grain maize (very big trial plots in some cases!) keen to discuss the agronomy and marketing opportunities for their crops. Several interesting conversations were had, one in particular made us think, that being a discussion with a grain trader who claims to be in no mans land with a huge UK grain maize market potential, but insufficient quality UK grain maize on his books to start to service this market. A real chicken and egg situation, which we suspect may be sorted as growers become more aware of the opportunities.

A key focus of our discussions with members and non-members alike, was the net margin comparison sheet produced by the MGA office (copy enclosed). The comparison sheet outlined the financial potential of a true "take-all" break crop that, as a result of the lack of disease and pest problems, has comparably low variable costs.



## MGA/CATCHMENT SENSITIVE FARMING SITE 2007

In an attempt to answer the ongoing questions of farmers keen to prosper from the potential of such a great crop (forage or grain maize), as well as educating growers in the environmental challenges associated with maize production, the Maize Growers Association and the Catchment Sensitive Farming team invite you to a series of on farm demonstration visits at its purpose drilled site adjacent to the M5 nr Exeter.

We plan to run five events coinciding with the key areas of crop development, the first of which is on the evening of **Thursday 26th July starting at 7.00 pm.**

The focus of the July event is to review maize establishment. We will focus on variety choice, drilling date, seed rate, weed control and the use of livestock manures/bagged fertilisers.

As always we have had considerable help in establishing the site and would like to thank the Catchment Sensitive Farming Initiative, Troy Stuart contracting, David Bright Ltd and Mark Pethick. Full details and directions will be sent out nearer the time, so put the date in your diaries.



**ENERGY MAIZE GETS DOUBLE BOOST**

Members keen to explore the potential biogas generation opportunities from crop-fed anaerobic digesters, will no doubt be delighted to hear that the technology is set for a further significant financial boost. In the Department of Trade and Industries (DTI's) consultation on the reform of the Renewables Obligation (the governments main mechanism of financially supporting the production of renewable energy), anaerobic digestion, along side other emerging technologies, is set to receive the highest level of support. Historically, each unit of renewable power, what ever its source, has been allocated an equal Renewable Obligation certificate (ROC) value. In the future, in an attempt to boost the investment in new and potentially more efficient technologies, the consultation proposes to band technologies into four groups with differing ROC values. The table below, taken from the DTI consultation document, sets out the proposed banding and confirms crop anaerobic digestion to be in the 2 Renewables Obligations Certificate (ROC) category. In effect this means that from April 2009, when the proposed measures are set to take effect, the "subsidy" paid to producers of energy derived from anaerobic digestion could be doubled.

**Table showing proposed Renewables Obligations Certificate banding.**

Band	Technologies	Level of support ROCs/MWh
Established	Sewage gas; landfill gas; co-firing of non-energy crop (regular) biomass	0.25
Reference	Onshore wind; hydro-electric; co-firing of energy crops; FFW with combined heat and power; other not specified	1.0
Post-demonstration	Offshore wind; dedicated regular biomass	1.5
Emerging technologies	Wave; tidal; solar advanced conversion technologies (anaerobic digestion, gasification and pyrolysis); dedicated biomass burning energy crops (with or without CHP); dedicated regular biomass with CHP; solar photovoltaic; geothermal	2.0

Members keen to learn more of the proposals can get copies of the full document by contacting the MGA office.

**MGA DIGS DEEPER INTO THE POTENTIAL FOR BIOGAS PRODUCTION IN THE UK.**

In anticipation of the imminent consultation on the Renewable Obligation system, a delegation consisting of the MGA chairman, three members and John Morgan of the MGA office team, met up with executives of Scottish and Southern power to discuss the micro generation via maize fed anaerobic digesters. We received a really positive and warm welcome, hearing from the "horses mouth" how the ongoing and ever increasing Renewables Obligation will continue to bolster the economics of renewable power generation for the short and medium term.

Further discussions are on the cards and members keen to learn more should contact the office.



The MGA are proposing to organise a tour to Germany in the Autumn, following in the footsteps of the European Maize Meeting in 2006. The focus will be on maize as an energy producing crop, concentrating on the economics and research work as well as the implications at farm level.

Further details will be posted as soon as an itinerary and dates have been finalised. We anticipate this will be a popular event, so please contact the office if you wish to register your interest.

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For further details contact Brendan Paul mob 07767 310454

**29TH JUNE—DEADLINE!**

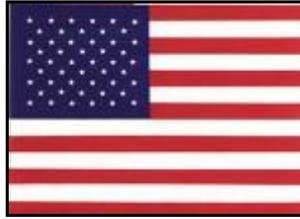
For those members in a priority catchment as part of the English Catchment Sensitive Farming Delivery Initiative (ECSFDI), the **29<sup>th</sup> of June** is the last day to put an application in for a grant. These grants (up to a maximum of £10,000 per farm) are available for various capital improvement works, depending on the particular catchment you are in. Typical high priority items (most likely to be approved) are: -

- Fencing stock out of streams (and relocation of troughs).
- Yard work for clean & dirty water separation.
- Roofing manure stores and stock gathering areas.
- Cattle & farm access tracks.
- Biobeds.

To check on your eligibility, log on to the ECSFDI website – [www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf](http://www.defra.gov.uk/farm/environment/water/csf) or give the office a call and we can check for you.

**US MAIZE AREA SOARS**

“USA maize plantings are set to be 15% higher than in 2006 if farmer predictions are to be believed” reports the United States Department of Agriculture. This is the largest area of maize planted since the Second World War. The increase appears to be at the expense of soybeans, cotton and spring wheat. Interestingly the predictions also suggest an increase in total cropped area of 1.6 Million hectares, suggesting land is being taken out of conservation programs to grow crops!.



Maize plantings are predicted to be 36.61 million hectares in 2007. This compares with the UK area of 120 thousand ha. US Soyabean areas are 11% lower and Cotton areas 20% down.

This years maize increase will just about overhaul last year’s reduction in stocks. In contrast, the reduction in soyabean yield will eat into a surplus of stock and as a consequence, is predicted to have little impact on market prices.

The dramatic increase in area is apparently driven by the demand for maize to produce ethanol. The increased heightened demand has boosted prices. Interestingly, the higher maize prices have had a knock on impact on land prices, with reports suggesting that US agricultural land values have shot up.

**CLIMATE CHANGE**

After attending a Defra stakeholder meeting in London concerning climate change, David Munday from the MGA Office has written an informative article included in this month’s mailing. As agriculture will be seriously affected, David discusses the implications for British farmers in the years to come.



Due to the success of our advertisement space on page two of the MGA Times, we would like to offer other commercial members of the MGA the opportunity to advertise on page 3. Brendan Paul of Masstock sends a new advert for each mailing, you can email your advert to the office and we will slot it into the space below.

**Table 1 USDA Prospective Plantings**

	Prospective 2006 Mha	Actual 2006 Mha	Prospective 2007 Mha	2007 Pros /'06 Actual %	2007 Pros /'06 Pros %
<b>Maize</b>	<b>31.57</b>	<b>31.70</b>	<b>36.61</b>	<b>115.5</b>	<b>115.9</b>
<b>Soyabeans</b>	<b>31.12</b>	<b>30.56</b>	<b>27.17</b>	<b>88.9</b>	<b>87.3</b>
<b>Winter wheats</b>	16.76	16.42	18.01	109.7	107.5
<b>Spring wheats</b>	6.36	6.79	6.39	94.1	100.5
<b>Cotton</b>	5.92	6.18	4.92	79.5	83.0
<b>Sorghum</b>	2.62	2.64	2.88	109.0	109.7
<b>Oats</b>	1.75	1.69	1.63	96.7	93.2
<b>Barley</b>	1.48	1.40	1.50	107.3	101.0
<b>Rice</b>	1.20	1.15	1.07	93.2	89.0
<b>Other major crops</b>	3.07	2.93	2.82	96.3	91.7
<b>Total major crops</b>	<b>101.87</b>	<b>101.45</b>	<b>102.99</b>	<b>101.5</b>	<b>101.1</b>

Source: USDA

Other major crops, generally exceeding 400,000ha include sunflowerseeds, canola, sugar beets, peanuts and dry edible beans

**Last word!** - What a difference a month makes. At the beginning of May we were wondering if there would be any rain to get the maize germinated. After only 2 mm of rain in April down here in Devon, we have had 110 mm in May and have already 59 mm up to the 19th of June. After its usual hesitant start, the maize is now well away and is knee high well before July! At Town Barton Farm the maize has only needed one application of herbicides this year apart from about an acre of one field that suffered with a bindweed problem. One six acre field was attacked by slugs early on but slug pellets dealt with them. Easy for us but not so simple if you are an organic grower. If you are an organic maize growing farmer and have a few minutes (hours) to spare, an article on your experiences with organic farming would make a very interesting article for a mailing. Thanks in anticipation.



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For further information contact the MGA office on 01363 775040

