

MGA TIMES

Maize Growers Association

March 2021

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CONGRATULATIONS!!

The MGA team would like to congratulate council member John Cottle on his achievement of winning the 'High Feed Efficiency Award' in the 2021 Cream Awards. John's well-deserved win was for many reasons, but his impressive 6000 litres of milk per cow from homegrown forage, and attention to detail in monitoring and



benchmarking cow and crop performance really stood him out from the crowd – and rightly so! You may recall our case study on John's farm back in July 2019; if you would like another copy to find out John's secrets to success, drop us an email!

Drilling Webinar

On 6th April, we will be holding a 1hr webinar at 7pm with MGA agronomist Jon Myhill on getting ready for maize drilling to include a Q&A session during which Jon will be on hand to answer your specific drilling questions. It will be free to attend for MGA members. See the enclosed invite for more information and email the office for the link to watch. Kindly sponsored by



Call for Undersowing Contractors

It is the time of year when we like to update our list of undersowing contractors around the country to make it easier for growers to find a local contractor that can help them out. If you offer an undersowing service, or know someone that does, please email me with contact details so that I can add them to our current list. The MGA aims to encourage the practice of undersowing in order to prevent excessive soil loss and nutrient leaching during and after harvest, and believe that there is a great opportunity to grow a crop that can be grazed or incorporated the following spring without the requirement for substantial additional nutrient input.

Conference Review

Thank you to everyone that registered for the conference and joined us for the events or listened afterwards. We had a record 170 sign ups, with over 100 listeners joining us live each day. We hope that some of you that are not normally able to travel to the conference took this opportunity to listen in and that you learned some helpful tips! We had some fascinating speakers covering subjects from companion cropping maize and beans, to satellite mapping maize fields, to increasing soil carbon in the soil. And we had our annual trial results presentations with valuable take home messages that we look forward to seeing in practice this year! Also, a huge thank you to our sponsors Yara and Samco who enabled such an event to take place so successfully. If you did not register but would like to listen back to the recordings and see the papers, please email us and we will send an invoice through for £12 along with the papers and links to re-watch.

Nitrogen Predictor Form

We have included an entry form for the nitrogen predictor in this mailing. Fill it in and send back to the office (ideally via email) to find out what our nitrogen recommendation is for your maize fields. A digital form is available upon request.

Soil Temperatures

In connection with the above mention of drilling, I thought it a good time to let you know that we will be collating soil temperatures again this year. I intend to start measuring on 22nd March on a weekly basis at first but then more regularly moving through April. We would love you to get involved by sending me your temperatures via email at 9am on a Monday morning. It is recommended to measure to 10cm deep and test in the same spot of your maize field each week. I will endeavour to send out regular updates on the temperatures around the country for those that are not able to measure to give an indication of how quickly the ground is warming up pre-drilling. If you have any questions, do let us know. Otherwise we look forward to your readings!



Picture Competition

You may recall that we shared the two winning photos in the last newsletter. This month we have decided to share a number of entries along with their stories.

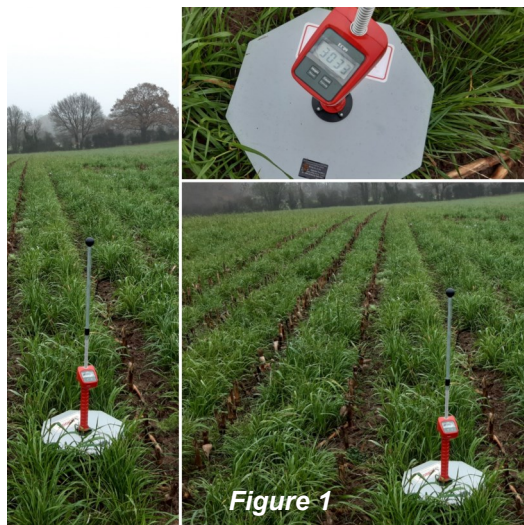


Figure 1

You will recognise figure 1 as one of the winning photos. It was sent in by Tom Land of LANDWRX Ltd. It shows plate meter readings of 3030kg DM/ha. The field went on to be grazed by sheep in December. The Italian ryegrass strips grew entirely from scavenged nutrients from the maize crop and had no effect on the maize yield. They were drilled into the maize on 26th June at 18kg/ha. Figure 2 shows the undersown grass on 19th July. The farm is particularly concerned with soil erosion and have not always been able to get onto the ground to cultivate after harvest so saw under-sowing as their best option. Their plan is to take a silage cut too, before destroying the crop and re-drilling maize.



Figure 2



Figure 3

Figure 3 from Chris Appleton tells an excellent story of the practical benefits of undersowing. It was taken on 13th November following heavy rain, on a field which it would have been unheard of to travel over winter. Soil structure and drainage since the farm began undersowing with ryegrass have improved immeasurably. Their key reasons for undersowing were so that they could travel the field earlier the following spring, to prevent nutrient loss into watercourses surrounding a number of their fields, and to provide over-winter grazing for sheep. They will destroy the crop, then strip till this year's maize crop into it.



Figure 6

Figures 4 and 5 (you will notice that figure 4 was our joint winning photo) show mustard broadcast into maize stubble on dairy farms in Cornwall at 4kg/ac (fig 4), by Richard Martin, and Somerset at 5.5kg/ac (fig 5), by Mike Christensen. Broadcasting seed through a fert spinner after harvest is a low-cost way of holding soil and nutrient in place over the winter months.



Figure 4

Figure 6 is an example of the 'after' photo of a grazed undersown crop. This crop was grazed by sheep in January and will be allowed to re-grow before being destroyed ready for the following crop. The photo was taken by John Morgan on a farm in East Sussex during Maize Charter visits. Undersowing a crop that can be utilised pre-destruction appears more costly at first, but if established early and well provides a great deal of overwinter feed, allowing grazing fields which will be used later in the season to be rested for a little longer.



Figure 5



Figure 7

The last picture picked from a myriad of excellent entries is to the left. Figure 7 is from Sherborne Castle Estate Home Farm. This undersowing was done with funding from the local water company, Wessex Water, in order to reduce soil erosion and nutrient pollution in local watercourses. The grass was undersown at 18kg/ha on 17th June and the water company think that there is scope to reduce the seed rate, further reducing cost but without losing the benefits. It is worth investigating whether there are similar funding opportunities available near you to help cover costs of undersowing.

We had a brilliant variety of photos entered into the competition, all of which show the practical benefits of protecting your soil over winter, regardless of the method

chosen. We hope that some of these on-farm experiences, along with advice from ourselves should you require it, encourage you to give cover crops a try this year!