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REQUEST FROM READING UNIVERSITY

Reading University are involved in another similar analysis project to the Maize LINK study and are looking for samples of a grass/clover mix with the clover at 10-60% of the mix. Can be either white or red clover. If you would like to get involved or know more about the project, please give Jean a ring on 01363 775040 and she will give your details to the University.

MAIZE DRILLING UPDATE AROUND THE COUNTRY

Our Chairman, John Whitby reports that he started drilling maize on 29th March in warm and dry conditions. (none under plastic). "We have been drilling a few fields at a time week by week and are now 85% drilled up.(17th April)

The colder weather and some sharp overnight frost have not done any damage yet, as seeds have not emerged. I will be worried if they continue. Looking underground I have found germinated seeds showing good root shoots. We have only had 6mm rain total, but still a little moisture found in seedbed. The big dilemma has been whether to go with pre emergence Pendamethalin given the dry conditions. Latest news is that we have now sprayed later sown fields".

Stephen Temple in North Norfolk has drilled half of his maize ground using the strip tillage system. The rain has been very welcome. Stephen's drill is pictured on the right.



Neil Groom reports that "welcome rain in East Anglia has really perked up arable crops and helped grass take up the nitrogen applied for first cut, although plant growth has slowed as soil temperatures plummet. We record soil temperatures for MGA every day and these have slumped from 9°C at the turn of the month to 5°C on 18th April. Once fields do dry up, then growers will be finishing off seedbed preparation and drilling – I don't know anyone yet who has drilled and the seed is better off in the barn, than in a cold wet seedbed. The light land boys will plough manures in and drill quickly to conserve moisture, whereas most of the heavier soils are sitting on the plough and weathered down nicely for a quick cultivation prior to drilling. Remember the MGA work on cultivations in the last newsletter that highlighted the difference in speed and diesel use from setting up the tillage kit to its optimal – it doesn't have to be a power harrow every time, discs and tines can do a better job".

John Jackson in Nottinghamshire tells us that he has 200 acres in. Jasmic @ 115,00 seeds/ha- as of up to 17th April -but rain stop play!!

"Glad to have the inch and a half of rain but had enough now and want warm sunshine with dry conditions. Seed beds excellent with good moisture, unlike last year when they were very dry and lead to uneven germination- therefore drilling depth only 1.5 to 2 inches this year". John is 1 week behind compared to this time last year and has 2200 acres left to drill, with 2 drills.

Hugh McClymont in Dumfries reports that on 31st March, Nancis was drilled at 38000/acre under Samco Grey Plastic.

On April 1st Kentaurus was drilled at 38000/acre under Econverte Plastic. Both these fields are planned to be back into grass in late September this year ready for Scotgrass next May!!



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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

John Whitby

The Whitby family has farmed Rowley farm for the past 30 years and the centre of operations for farmland both in hand and share farmed of around 400ha in the South Bucks and East Berks area. The farm is owned by Bucks County Council and sits surrounded by two popular Country Parks. The farm still carries a number of traditional core farming activities including an increasingly renowned herd of 200 Jersey cows and the growing of arable crops such as Winter Wheat and Winter Oats. Maize and Grass provide the forage component of the rations for the cows. There are 45ha of maize, which is fed year round. Later varieties are sown early to maximise the growing time on this ideal maize site and both crimped maize grain and maize earlage have been trailed to good effect in recent years.

§ VICE CHAIRMAN

Hugh McClymont

Hugh is currently Research Farm Manager for SAC at Crichton Royal Farm in Dumfries where I have been based for more than 30 years in various positions. The Farm business is Dairy farming with 500 cows on 2

units, 300 followers and area farmed is 310 ha. Crops grown are Grass, Maize, Wheat, Spring Beans, Lucerne and Red Clover. Staffing consists of 7 fulltime and 7 part time.

TREASURER

John Cottle

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

Graeme Cock

Dairy farming partnership covering 1,100 acres near Ashburton, Devon, milking 450, 10,300 litre cows and growing 170 acres of maize. As well as being a member of the MGA Council, Graeme is also the Chairman of Mole Valley Farmers Ltd.

Michael Christensen

Farming in Partnership with his Father and Brother at Pilton in Somerset. The business consists of Dairy, Poultry and Arable units covering over 1100 acres (600 acres owned). A lot of their ground is taken over at Glastonbury Festival time.

Neil Groom

Neil is Technical Director of Grainseed Ltd based in Eye Suffolk, but supporting growers all over the country to ensure maize is a success on farm whether grown for silage, crimping or as a feedstock for Biogas. He formally worked for NIAB as Forage Expert running the Maize Descriptive List trials, grass trials and fodder beet trials before joining the commercial world with Grainseed. He operates his own variety and agronomy trials throughout the country, to select new varieties for UK and improving crop husbandry.

John Jackson

Farms manager for Severn Trent Water Ltd. He is charged with managing 3 main farms across 4500 acres, which includes a 2.1 MW energy crop plant near Nottingham that uses 34,500 tonnes of maize silage and 2,500 tonnes of whole crop wheat silage each year.

John has gained great knowledge of converting silages, especially maize, into energy and has put on trial many specific bio gas varieties on his farm in the East Midlands.

Stephen Temple

Stephen farms in Norfolk, milking cows, rearing youngstock and growing 160+ ha's of mixed crops. Alongside the farming and other enterprises, including the Barn Owl grainstore monitoring system and successful cheese making venture, Stephen has in 2009, commissioned a farm based anaerobic digester using maize, slurry, fodder beet and whey to produce biogas and ultimately electricity, via the 140 kW Combined Heat and Power Unit.