

# MGA TIMES



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The Biogas event has qualified for NROSO points. An application for BASIS points has been posted and we are awaiting confirmation as the mailing goes to print.



**MGA BIOGAS EVENT—14TH SEPTEMBER**

Within this mailing you will find an invite to the MGA biogas event at Stoke Bardolph, as well as a briefing note setting out what and why the plant is being built. Please let the office know if you are able to make the meeting to give us the best idea of numbers. The event will start at 10.30am. As well as a chance to see the AD plant, there are variety plots to look at, with Simon Draper on hand to discuss maize matters. There will also be a pig roast to keep our appetites satisfied.



Biogas plant at Stoke Bardolph

**John Jackson has asked that all delegates wanting to look around the Biogas plant must wear safety boots, i.e. steel toe caps to meet Severn Trent Waters Health & Safety standards.**

**BIG SEED or SMALL SEED – IS IT IMPORTANT?**

In response to papers presented at recent conferences by Danish researchers, the MGA, via the help of David Bright and his team have set up two seed size trials. The aim of each trial is to quantify any difference (if there is one) between the performance of big and small seeds of one variety of maize. The Danes research indicates better performance from bigger seeds over several trials and years. On both UK sites maize was drilled on two separate dates (27<sup>th</sup> April and 17<sup>th</sup> May) to see if there is a drilling date/seed size link. This picture showing David reviewing his teams handy work was taken on the 26<sup>th</sup> May. David reports (this week) that to date there seems to be little difference between seed sizes plots, but, as many would have predicted, the early drilled crops on both sites are doing better than those drilled later in the season. He added, that on one site the big seeded plots had got away better, but that on the other it was the smaller seeds which took the lead. By the time the maize got to one metre in height any difference had disappeared. The team are also running a third trial looking into seed size. Yield data will be collected at harvest and reported to members at the MGA conference. Members keen to know more should give the office a ring.



**COME AND MEET US AT THE DAIRY EVENT**

The move of the Dairy Event from Stoneleigh to the National Exhibition Centre nr Birmingham will no doubt be sad for some, but positive for others. Thinking positively, travel to and from the NEC will much better and the facilities within are second to none. On a sad note it is a shame that the Stoneleigh site, historically the centre for UK agriculture, will not be so in the future. The MGA are delighted to be at this year's event at Stand number **FF-099**. Members of the MGA office team, farmer council and technical staff will be on hand to answer members queries. We will also be on the lookout for more members, so please bring along any prospects for a chat.

**CULTIVATIONS TRIAL**

In an attempt to review the establishment options for maize, Grainseed led by Neil Groom have been contracted to review some of the cultivation options available to growers. The trial drilled on the 13<sup>th</sup> May in Cheshire, followed fodder beet which was grazed by out wintered cattle. Penetrometer readings have and will continue to be taken as the season progresses. Neil, in his latest update on the trial, reports the following order of establishment from best to worst. Time and results will ultimately tell which cultivation system delivered the goods.

The cultivation systems under review are:-

- Sub Soil, Plough, Power Harrow Drill
- Plough, Sub Soil, Drill
- Sub soil, Disc, Drill
- Sub soil (North/South), Drill
- Sub soil (East/west), Drill



plough, power harrow, drill



sub soil, east west, drill

**GRAIN MAIZE TALKS WITH HGCA**

Following a brief chat at the 2010 Cereals event this summer with Jim McVitte, HGCA Recommended Lists Manager (many members will remember Jim as head of forage variety testing at NIAB) John Morgan of the MGA office team recently visited the head quarters of the Home Grown Cereals Authority (HGCA) in Stoneleigh, to discuss with Jim what support, if any the HGCA could offer farmers growing this exciting crop. During the encounter John took the opportunity to outline the advantages of grain maize be they economic, labour and machinery use efficiency and environmental. Jim explained the focus of HGCA's work is the main UK arable crops such as Wheat, OSR etc, but did point out that resources are always set aside to work on up and coming, less main stream crops. It was felt that grain maize, at this current time, fell into this latter category of crop. With this available resource in mind, John was pointed in the direction of the HGCA undergraduate funding opportunities and after some discussion, the post harvest management of grain maize, such as grain drying and handling was singled out as an area for future work. The hunt is now on to find a student keen to research and pass on knowledge about post harvest management of the grain crop. Any ideas?



**GRAIN MAIZE AGAIN**

While trundling up and down the motorways picking up silage samples, Jean had a very good day in Dorset a couple of weeks ago. Norman Light, (founder member and past treasurer of the MGA) took her to 2 farmers near Ringwood. After having a very nice lunch with Norman and his wife, they went to meet Peter Bailey farm manager of Eastclose Farm. As well as maize silage for the dairy herd, he grows maize for grain. Peter produces a high quality sample of grain maize and has a market for the crop, but he did say that grain traders always come up with the comment that UK maize is not as good quality as continental crops and therefore they aren't prepared to pay a comparable price. Jean had also got this impression, speaking to merchants at Cereals events. According to Peter and judging by the sample of grain he showed her, the UK can match the quality of European grain and shouldn't accept a lower price. Coincidentally John Morgan was also talking about grain maize to the HGCA (see article above). With help from the HGCA and the expertise of Peter Bailey and others, UK farmers should be able to market their grain maize and expect a decent price for home grown grain.