

# MGA TIMES



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Following last months mailing which included a fax back questionnaire from Briony re her "Gordon Newman Travel Award" sponsored research into grain maize, Briony has asked me to thank all the grain maize growers who replied, the information is be very useful and will be included in her final report due to be published later this year.

## LAST CALL FOR THE 2009 MGA CONFERENCE

Tickets for this years Maize Conference are selling fast, if you have lost the programme there is another one included in this mailing. Just to remind you of the speakers once again we are fortunate to have **Tim O'Donovan from Ireland** speaking about their trials with different maize varieties and how well they perform under plastic. The Irish have also done a lot of work on eyespot control, Tim will also talk us through their results and conclusions. **Simon Marsh**, from Harper Adams College will be reporting on the College trial on the "Effect of concentrate feed levels on the performance of maize silage fed bulls". **Mark Roach**, Managing director of Grosvenor farms with four dairy herds totalling 1400 cows, including the Gold Cup winning herd 2006 will talk about their farming system and the use of maize in the system. **Richard Smith**, Environment Agency has been heavily involved in the impact agriculture, in particular maize growing has on the wider environment and he will report on the EA findings and how farmers can prevent runoff from maize stubbles. **Jonathan Blake**, from the Forage Analytical Assurance Group will explain to delegates the trial being run at Reading University and involving the MGA, looking at finding a more accurate way to get reliable maize silage analyses. Briony Burge, has been sponsored by the Gordon Newman Travel Award to look at the ever increasing interest in grain maize in the UK, the costs of growing maize for grain and the opportunities and markets available, the MGA Team will report on her findings. **John Whitby** will talk about the excellent MGA trip to Denmark. Last but certainly not least! **Simon Draper** will review last years MGA research programme, which included herbicide work, eyespot trials, and nitrogen/sulphur trials.

## SOIL TEMPERATURE GUIDE

Last spring we recorded the soil temperature from early March until the middle of May here at the MGA office in Devon. The cumulative temperature was published on the front page of the website, quite a few members used this as a guide to when to drill their maize. This year I would like to be able to let members know the soil temperature in other regions of Great Britain. If you would be interested in helping me with this project, give the MGA office a ring, I can probably provide you with a soil thermometer, as long as you send me the results each day, so that I can put the results on our website. I think this could be a useful service for members and may encourage others to join the Maize Growers Association. Most of us look at the dry matter at harvest guide in the Farmers weekly, I would like farmers to use an MGA soil temperature guide in the same way. It is important to have the right conditions when drilling maize in the spring. When the soil temperature reaches 8 degrees centigrade for 5 days in a row maize drilling scan start. This is one of the most important factors to es-

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A recent request for updated maize growing costs from a member keen to negotiate the contract growing of maize by his arable farming neighbours, prompted a review of what it costs to grow different forage costs. The full MGA comparison of maize, wholecrop wheat, grass silage and grazed grass is available from the office. Just give Jean a ring and she will send or email you a copy.

Table 1 sets out the growing costs of maize on a per ha or per acre basis. The big changes from costs in the past are the increased power and machinery charges and reduced fertiliser costs. Working on an assumed yield of 42tonnes/ha or 17 tonnes/acre growing costs work out at £20/tonne of fresh maize or £66/tonne DM. Please note that no land cost has been included in the costs.

Maize Growing Costs		
	£/ha	£/ac
Ploughing	50.0	20.2
Cultivations	42.0	17.0
Sowing	42.0	17.0
Seed	135.0	54.6
Lime	70.0	28.3
Fertiliser	215.0	87.0
Sprays	62.0	25.1
Fertiliser applications	20.0	8.1
Spraying	11.0	4.5
Sheets	4.0	1.6
Harvest	182.0	73.7
<b>Total Annual Cost</b>	<b>833.0</b>	<b>337.1</b>

Those considering the role of maize in their rations should first work out what their own farm maize growing costs are then compare this cost with the alternatives available remembering that the alternatives must offer similar benefits to the ration.

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Source: 2009 NAB titled constant analysis, favourable sites.

**RATS!**

Rats are a problem on most livestock farms and especially when maize is involved in the rations. In this mailing we have included a questionnaire from BASF about rats.

**GRAIN MAIZE STUDY**

The MGA office are preparing a paper for the MGA conference for members growing or thinking about growing grain maize. The paper will focus on information found by Briony Burge whilst studying the subject funded by the Gordon Newman Travel Award. Although grain maize is a relatively new and niche crop in the UK, according to the US department of Agriculture figures for 2007/2008 more grain maize was produced in that year world wide than rice and wheat (see graph). With this in mind we have looked at detail at three UK grain maize producers and identified important factors that influence the success of the crop in the UK. We have then looked at advice being given to European farmers in these areas to see what lessons can be learned from the continent, a far larger producer of the crop than ourselves.

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