

MGA TIMES



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- ◆ Gordon Newman Memorial details.
- ◆ Conference Ticket booking details.
- ◆ Feeding 2008 maize & wholecrop silage—Chris Savery.
- ◆ Getting the land ready for 2009 maize—Simon Draper.
- ◆ 2008— The maize crops Annus Horribilis—John Morgan.
- ◆ Nitrogen Predictor input form.

GORDON NEWMAN—MEMORIAL SERVICE

A Memorial service celebrating the life and work of Gordon Newman is being held in the College Chapel at The Royal Agricultural College, Cirencester on the 24th March at 2.00 pm. Please could you let Jean at the office know if you are hoping to attend as there will be tea, biscuits & cakes following the service at about 3pm in the Bathurst suite. The Bathurst suite has been reserved from 12 noon, so if people arrive early they can meet in there.

GLOBAL FINANCIAL CRISIS HITS MAIZE SEED PRICES

NITROGEN PREDICTOR

We would encourage as many members as possible to use the well researched and tested MGA Nitrogen Predictor to calculate this years crop requirements. The Nitrogen Predictor is based on MGA and other research, which provides a site-specific recommendation. With ever tightening regulations in relation to Nitrogen applications (NVZ's etc), we have had to remove the "on-line" N Predictor and deal with all forms through the office to ensure regulations are not breached. Please fill in and post or fax (01363 776938) the enclosed input form to Jean at the office (there is also an input form on the MGA website which you can download and email to the office). We will get it back to you as soon as is possible.

The dramatic fall in the value of the pound against the Euro over the last couple of months is having serious implications on the price and ultimately availability of maize seed and seed dressings for the 2009 growing season. Figures sourced from Dairy Co show the extent of the devaluation. Fig 1 shows the value of sterling in Euro over the last 13 months and clearly illustrates that the pound had lost 23.5% of its value on January 1st 2009 compared to the same date last year.

Fig 1 Value of Sterling compared to the Euro during 2008 and early 2009
 (Source Dairy Co)



The devaluation has in effect increased the import cost of seed and dressings by the same amount. Maize seed prices for the new year are being quoted at between £3 and £14/pack higher than last year. What is also concerning is the fact that due to the ongoing currency value fluctuations, seed suppliers are understandably reluctant to commit to large import orders without firm commitment from customers, the result being that seed supply may also be an issue. Prices of seed dressings will also increase and farmers are being encouraged to order Cruiser pre the end of January and Poncho/Gaicho by the end of February. The message is therefore clear. Get thinking about maize seed and seed dressing requirements sooner rather than later and to use the information contained within the MGA variety book as the base for your decisions. Remember that the varieties in the MGA book are independently tested by NIAB and that while other untested and therefore unlisted varieties may be cheaper, you have no certainty as to what kind of silage or grain they will produce.

GETTING THE LAND READY FOR NEXT YEARS MAIZE CROP

This note, written by Simon Draper aims to provide some advice that may prove helpful when thinking about next years maize ground.

Ploughing for Maize

It has been accepted that frost is a great help in breaking down heavy land over winter. For this reason I recommend those with heavy soils to plough as soon as possible to make use of what cold conditions we have to come. Land should be ploughed up and left as high on the plough as possible to allow the frost to get in deep.. Once frosted, land will break allowing for better drainage, as well as producing a ground frost mould and in turn a better seed-bed.

Where FYM and/or Slurry has to be applied, then both should be spread as soon as possible.

Slurry and dung should be incorporated into the soil as soon as possible after application, as nitrogen loss is considerable even in the first 6 – 24 hours.



Subsoiling

It is likely that the soil at subsoiling depth (more than 10 – 12 inches) will be much too wet. However, where identified pans are shallow, then it is worth checking to see if subsoiling will achieve the desired result. In the majority of situations it will be best to hold off for as long as possible until the soil dries out and soil cracking rather than smearing is achievable. As a rule early ploughed land will dry out earlier and as a result be more suitable to early subsoiling.

Maize and the New NVZ Regulations

With the NVZ regulations now in force there are three main points to consider in relation to maize.– Number one, focusing on the use and storage of manures and slurries we won't go into here and generally there will be time to consider this. But number two and three focus on the nutrients we apply to maize fields and are current for those in existing NVZ's from this spring. Those new to NVZ's in 2009 have a year to get to grips with these rules.

Field Justification

For each field of maize grown you will have to justify the nitrogen applied before applying it. In effect you will have to produce a fertiliser plan for the crop in which you take account of the soil nitrogen supply as well as that supplied via organic manures. **The MGA Nitrogen Predictor** included in this mailing, meets this requirement and we anticipate a big uptake of the service this year.

Nmax Calculation

In addition to the individual field calculation, for all maize crops grown on your farm within an NVZ, the maximum average nitrogen applied must not exceed 150 kg/ha. This 150 kg Nmax limit must take account of the manure and artificial nitrogen applied.

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For more information, please consult your Masstock contact or call Brendan Paul on 07767 310454

MGA Conference
Wednesday 25th March
RAC Cirencester. Details enclosed.

GRAIN MAIZE TRIAL RESULTS

Members growing grain maize will no doubt be pleased that the variety comparison data has been further updated during 2008. The tables, included in this mailing, gathered from data produced by NIAB, list the overall yield, adjusted grain yield at 15% moisture and moisture content of grain at harvest (maturity) of a group of common grain maize varieties. The summary list for the years 2003-08 is shown.

WANTED

Grain maize growing farmer prepared to work with southern England company keen to develop market for maize cob husks. For more information please contact the office.

TOO LATE FOR WINTER WHEAT WHOLECROP ?

Poor autumn weather has delayed drilling in many cases and has prompted members to ask if they should still drill the winter wheat seed in their barns or move to spring crops. Simon Draper has some words of advice.

Winter wheat can be sown up until the end of February for many varieties. Different varieties require differing cold periods in order for the become 'vernalised' (allowing the grain to set). All varieties are safe to sow until the end of January but after this you ought to ask you seed merchant as to the latest sowing date for your specific variety.

Listed below is an abbreviated list of varieties and their latest safe sowing date. For a more detailed list we recommend members speak to their agronomist or give me a ring via the office.

Latest safe sowing date/variety	End of January	Mid February	End of February
	Solstice	Soissons	Xi 19
	Hereward	Deben	Robigus
	Malacca	Oakley	Glasgow
	Einstein	Alchemy	
	Consort		
	Humber		

Seed Rate

If drilling anytime between now and mid February do ensure that the seed rate is kept high – seed rates should be at least 2 Cwt/Acre (250 Kg/Ha) and increased further if the seedbed is poor.

Spring Crops

Wheat sown after mid February can provide disappointing results, and other crops such as forage maize, spring barley or spring oats may produce higher bulk yields (although these need to drilled as early as possible to provide the maximum yield).

TO TREAT OR NOT TO TREAT - THAT IS THE QUESTION

With imported seed dressing costs increasing primarily as a result of the weak pound, we would draw members attention to the technical note sent out to members in November 2007. Copies are available on the MGA web site

www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk

or from the office if you ask Jean nicely enough!.

Simons note summarised the use of seed treatments to counter soil borne pest and diseases as well as playing a part in the fight against Diabrotica. He noted that where bird damage was a real risk Mesurool should be used.

The technical note summarised two year trial data, showing that average yield increases of 9% were achieved when Cruiser or Poncho are used, compared to untreated seed. Simon also comments on data that shows similar yield increases when 50:50 treated/untreated mixes are used.

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*Source: NIAB Descriptive List of Forage Maize varieties 2009

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