

# MGA TIMES



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**Mole Valley  
Farmers**

## MGA CONFERENCE—THURSDAY 25th FEBRUARY At PETERBOROUGH ARENA

### In This Issue

- ◆ Research update—Sulphur trial results & conclusions.
- ◆ Conference programme.
- ◆ Nitrogen predictor form.
- ◆ MGA Site & Maturity group selector explained.

The significant number of trace element/micro nutrient crop supplements available for growers continues to be the background to a very regular question asked by members, that being What, if any benefits do these “extras” provide? To better answer this question we have asked Professor Philip White

from the James Hutton Institute in Dundee to tackle the subject. Philip has recently sent us the outline for his conference paper, which looks like being just what we are after. Having defined what is in fact a trace element Philip plans to outline what they do within the crop and how they are best taken up by and transported within the crop. Likely deficiencies will be identified, as will the techniques, be it soil or folia for diagnosing shortages. Meth-



*Prof Philip White*

ods of trace element application will be discussed, as will the likely crop yield and quality implications associated with such supplementation. So to get a considered and independent view on where you should and perhaps should not be worrying about trace/micro nutrients, you know where you need to be. Just to be sure, Peterborough Arena, East of England Showground, PE2 6XE on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February.

A copy of the full programme and booking form is include in this mailing.



### CHRIS SAVERY ANNOUNCES HIS RETIREMENT

It was with surprise and a little sadness that early in the new year we learnt from Chris Savery, MGA Ruminant Consultant, that he intends to retire in April from his roles, both with the MGA and the Dairy Group. Our surprise was due to Chris clearly not being old enough to retire (surely you got your dates wrong Chris!) and sadness as with his departure from the industry we will be losing one of the truly independent thinkers in the livestock nutrition sector.

Throughout his career as an advisor and researcher with ADAS and latterly the Dairy Group Chris has stuck to his well considered and thoughtful assessment of the facts going on, to focus on making real farmer focused change on the ground. We hope to maintain contacts with Chris in his retirement and before his departure hope he will give members his views and observations on the industry he leaves better educated than when he joined it. The MGA wishes you well Chris.

### MGA SITE AND MATURITY GROUP SELECTOR

Contained within this mailing is a technical note written by John Morgan of the MGA office team setting out the logic behind the recently updated MGA Site and Maturity Group Selector. The update has been produced in response to the ongoing need for all growers, be they MGA members or otherwise to chose the most suitable fields and varieties in order to minimise the risk of soil related challenges associated with late harvest. Please take a few minutes to read the article and use the selector on your 2016 maize fields. The selector may throw up some surprises and used alongside the recommended variety lists received recently, provide you with the best information to allow informed decisions as to what you should grow where in the coming year. Your feedback on the Selector tool and MGA work in this area is always appreciated and listened to.

**MGA RESEARCH REVIEWS**

Following feedback from members regarding the lessons learnt from members funded research we plan over the following months to set out and get out to members the conclusions of the various small plot research trials conducted on members behalf. The view is that while the research is wonderfully summarised by Simon Draper, Neil Groom and latterly Oliver Knowland at the conference (Chance for another plug! - Peterborough Arena, East of England Showground, PE2 6XE on Thursday 25<sup>th</sup> February!) it would be good to commit the results to paper for ongoing reference of members throughout the year. Members will have noted that we have already started this process, following the release earlier in the month of a technical note written by MGA council member Neil Groom, outlining the work behind and results of the recently completed maize under film variety trials. Within this mailing you should find a summary of last year's sulphur for maize trials and in following months results of the herbicide trials, weed control under plastic film, seed rate and row width, starter fertiliser, over sowing and fungicide work. Watch this space!

**TIME FOR A TALK!**

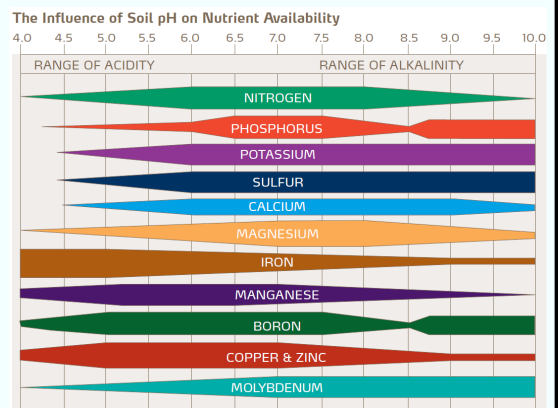
Cold/Wet/Dark winter days provide an ideal opportunity to review past and plan for future field activity. It is time for a talk with your key team members and where maize growing is under the spotlight, the contractor charged with establishing your crop should not be immune from the hot seat. Before sitting down to draw up the coming years work plan get him/her outside to see the fruits of last year's hard work in the clamp. You will be surprised how rare this clamp inspection is, particularly when problems are not the reason for discussion. Talk through ideal chop length and the need to crack grains. Explain the role of the maize in the livestock or digester ration, always aiming to impress on the contractor that unlike him/her you're interest in the crop continues for every day of the year. Dare I say it but thank them for there good work if in fact you are pleased with the silage.

Back inside, with coffee in hand, talk about the importance of even spacing and sowing depth of the seed. Remind the contractor that speed of drilling is not your key driver, even if it is theirs. Focus on the need for the ideal seedbed, with fine tilth next to the seed and a more knobbly soil surface. Use their experience as to how best to achieve the perfect seedbed. Last but not least on your list should be your slot in the drilling programme. You need to be drilling based on soil temperature and soil conditions and need to impress on your contractor how important this is. Discuss incentives for you to get to the top of the list. One great way is to pay the team up front, or as they leave the yard. The old saying that "money talks" continues to be true in a sector prone to real bad debt pressure. Now is the time for talk to ensure action later in the year is directed in the right way.



**Soil pH**

I cannot believe I need to say this to maize growers, but to be on the safe side I will! Acid soils, particularly those under grassland, continue to be one of the biggest barriers holding back production from farmers most precious and valuable asset that being the land that their businesses depend upon. Now is the time to get out with the soil auger to test as many fields as your budget will run to. Focus initially on getting pH to the target levels of 6.5-7 at which the bulk of the macro and micro nutrients required by your maize will be available to the crop. Only having got pH levels on track should you focus on the other much needed crop nutrients. The figure below shows the availability of key nutrients depending on soil pH. The wider the band the more nutrient is available for crop growth.



**AND THE WINNER IS.....**

**Rubiera kws**

It's so early the kids will only have just gone back to school

ONLY FROM



Last summer we asked members to fill in a questionnaire. An incentive to take the time to fill in the form was for the first 2 names out of the hat to have the chance to go to the Annual MGA Maize conference on 25th February at the Peterborough Arena. The winners are:- SW Maundrell Ltd, Ogbourne Down, Wiltshire. John Dickinson, Manor Farm, Scaftworth, Doncaster.