

MGA TIMES



Correspondence Address: Town Barton Farm, Sandford, Crediton, Devon. EX17 4LS. Telephone: 01363 775040 Fax: 01363 776938
 E-mail: info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk Website: www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk

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A MESSAGE FROM THE NEW MGA CHAIRMAN

John Whitby was confirmed as the new Chairman of the MGA at the AGM in late May. He takes over from John Jackson who will now take the lead in membership recruitment.

John hails from a family farming business in South Buckinghamshire, having been involved with the MGA Council since 2003. The farm has 200 jersey cattle, a fledgling Sussex beef herd and grows arable crops. Rowley farm is ideally suited to growing forage maize, whilst grain maize under plastic has been successfully trialled for crimping.

Farming with his brother and sister in law, John has seen the family farm successfully diversify into agricultural and amenity contracting, a large horse livery business and a venture into biomass aggregation and supply.

Speaking of his new role as Chairman and acknowledging the work of his predecessor, John relishes the challenge of continuing the traditional work of the MGA as well as promoting and researching emerging uses in grain maize and anaerobic digestion.

“The MGA is still vibrant and increasingly relevant in today’s fast moving farming market” says John. “The Association continues

to be run by farmers for farmers and as such provides a unique and independent voice. Its ongoing challenge will be to disseminate its work amongst the wider maize growing community”.



WANTED!

150 hectares of forage maize/year wanted in the Didcot area of Oxfordshire. The MGA Office have had a request from a Company wanting maize. If you are interested, please give the Office a ring and Jean will put you in contact with the Company.

THANKS for the SILAGE!

I would like to thank all the MGA members and non members who have kindly donated the 30 samples of the 90 needed so far. Everyone has been very helpful with the loading of the samples. One of the observations I have made so far, is that farmers using the relatively new idea of clingfilm under the black sheet have been delighted with the results and have had virtually no wastage on the top of the heap. The dry matters of the samples has varied from 25.12% - 41.82%, the average of the 30 samples so far is 30.27%.

TIME TO TAKE STOCK

While the prolonged warm dry weather continues to offer great days at the beach for those lucky enough to be able to make the most of it, the resultant lack of moisture is starting to take its toll. The low yielding, rapidly heading, second cut silage fields are having to be added to the grazing rotation on many farms and as such are not likely to make up the shortfalls in first cut silage resulting from such a cold spring. Now is the time to take stock and make some decisions as to summer and winter forage provision.



The most obvious and immediate opportunity is to take cereals as wholecrop, rather than combined grain. Wholecrop offers a low cost opportunity to fill up clamps with great quality feed. The enclosed wholecrop technical note should provide all the info you need to get started. If you would like to discuss your options further then please give John or Chris a ring via the MGA office.

THE NEW RB209 PUBLICATION

A break from this years MGA stand at Cereals provided a timely reminder of the penalties of getting crop nutrient supply wrong and the subsequent importance of good fertiliser advice. The simple demonstration on the KALI stand, comparing healthy wheat plants with those suffering nutrient deficiency provided a great illustration.



Control Plants



Sulphur Deficient Plants

With crop nutrition in mind it is pleasing to see that at long last the replacement to the “bible” that is the DEFRA publication Fertiliser Recommendations for Agricultural and Horticultural Crops (RB209) has been published. The new “Fertiliser Manual” follows a similar format to RB209 with a few notable exceptions. The biggest change is the controversial complete rewrite of the grassland section, which has adopted a systems approach to recommendations, rather than the original Nopt method.

The maize section within the manual has also seen some changes, with higher recommendations for all three key nutrients in low soil index fields. Usefully the manual also sets out the process for adjusting P & K requirements according to crop yield.

New “Fertiliser Manual” recommendations for maize crop.

	SNS, P or K Index				
	0	1	2	3	4 and higher
	kg N/ha				
Nitrogen (N) All mineral soils	150	100	50	20	0
Phosphate (P ₂ O ₅)	115	85	55	20	0
Potash (K ₂ O)	235	205	175 (2-) 145 (2+)	110	0

Members can download a copy of the manual direct from the DEFRA website. <http://www.defra.gov.uk/foodfarm/landmanage/land-soil/nutrient/nmu01.htm>. Members keen to discuss how the new recommendations will impact on their maize crops can also contact John or Simon via the MGA office.

MAIZE LOOK SEE

June is a great month to take a good look at your maize crops to re-view establishment success. As a result Simon, Ruth and John are kept busy looking at what has and has not worked on the various demo sites around the country. One such successful site funded by the Catchment Sensitive Farming project near Tipton St John, Devon has been particularly successful with the first of many open days run on the site earlier this week. The site has demonstrations focusing on variety maturity class, drilling date, differing nitrogen levels as well as numerous cultivation/establishment choices and can be visited by interested growers throughout the season. Early indications show massive difference in crop establishment between maize drilled on the 14th April and 18th of May. Similar variation can be seen in crops established with different cultivations.



IT AINT HALF HOT!

Last July Chris Savery wrote an article about heat stress in cows. Typically as soon as the mailing went out the weather turned wet and horrible. This summer is starting to resemble 1976, with talk of hosepipe bans etc. Chris’s note will be worth digging out and reading. If you can’t find your copy, there is a copy on the website or give me a ring in the office and I can send you one.

Temperature Humidity Index (THI)									
Relative Humidity %									
C	20	30	40	50	60	70	80	90	100
22	66	66	67	68	69	69	70	71	72
24	68	69	70	70	71	72	73	74	75
26	70	71	72	73	74	75	77	78	79
28	72	73	74	76	77	78	80	81	82
30	74	75	77	78	80	81	83	84	86
32	76	77	79	81	83	84	86	88	90
34	78	80	82	84	85	87	89	91	93
36	80	82	84	86	88	90	93	95	97
38	82	84	86	89	91	93	96	98	100
40	84	86	89	91	94	96	99	101	104

No heat stress

Moderate heat stress

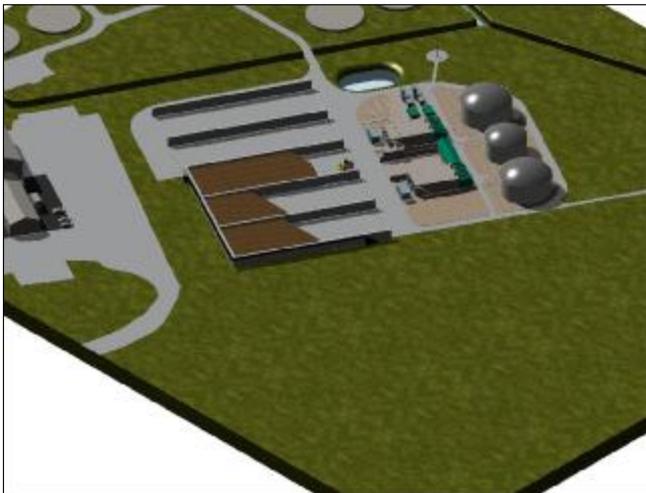
Severe heat stress

Dead cows

MGA BIOGAS MEETING

September 14th sees the first official MGA Biogas focused event to be held in the UK. The MGA members only event, to be based at Seven Trents Stoke Bardolph site will cover all things biogas, with presentations from Simon Draper and other office team members, on the growing of maize (including on site herbicide trials), variety choice for biogas production including a review of the 36 varieties on trial plus comments on last year's variety demonstrations and digestate use. A key feature of the event will be a full tour of the recently commissioned biogas plant by farm manager and MGA council member John Jackson. The plant, constructed by Germany company Schmack Biogas AG, will use 34500 tonnes of maize and 2500 tonnes of whole-crop wheat silage to create an estimated 15 GWh of electricity per year. The days agronomy discussions will focus on the growing of suitable maize for biogas production and is a must for those considering maize fed digesters. Simon and others will discuss issues raised on study tours to Germany and Denmark to highlight key differences between traditional silage maize and biogas maize. The 35 or so maize varieties grown on site will be used to demonstrate the key requirements for biogas production as will herbicide trials conducted on site. The opportunities and challenges associated with the use of valuable digestate will also be reviewed.

Attendance at the event is free for MGA members. Non members are welcome working on the assumption that they join the association before the event.



DRAWING OF BIOGAS PLANT

CEREALS 2010

John & I headed eastwards to Cereals 2010, this year being held at Chrishall Grange, near Royston in Cambridgeshire. We arrived there to put the stand up on the Tuesday afternoon to be met with a sea of mud, although the rain was very welcome for some drought stressed crops, it wasn't really what we wanted that day. We unpacked our newly acquired Marquee, (bought for the princely sum of £86 from MAKRO, other discount warehouses are available!). I hope members will be proud of us for our economy, some of the stands at Cereals must have cost an absolute fortune to erect and man. I'm sure you have all experienced the frustration of opening a silage sheet to cover the pit, only to find that the wind gets up just at the wrong time. Well, erecting tents seems to have the same effect, John & I had to anchor it down with ropes that night and hope that it would still be there on the Wednesday morning.

All was well next morning and with the help of Ruth Baker and Simon Draper we had a successful two days, talking to a lot of farmers and gaining some new members. A discussion with a feed merchant wanting to source British dry maize grain for animal feed reminded us that there should be a valuable market for our products as long as we get the quality right.



MGA STAND AT CEREALS 2010

GRAIN MAIZE REPORT

May saw the publication of Briony Burges review of UK grain maize production, a preview of which was presented by John Morgan at last February's maize conference. Briony's review, funded by the Gordon Newman's Travel Awards, focused on two distinct areas, the first of which being the world balance between grain maize supply and demand and the second being UK grain maize growing practicalities. Inevitably with such a wide remit, the report poses as many questions as it answers, that said it does provide an interesting insight into the opportunity that is UK grain maize.

Gordon Newman



Travel Awards

Supply and demand data was picked up via an internet / telephone search, with the maize growing information gathered during three farm case study visits, as well as the questionnaire sent to growers late last year. Electronic copies of the report are available from the MGA office. Paper copies can also be supplied at printing cost.



Briony in Grain Maize