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MGA HEAD WEST ON STUDY TOUR – 9<sup>TH</sup> – 12<sup>TH</sup> JULY 2013

The increasing interest in the use of Plastic to shorten the growing season of maize grown in marginal areas combined with last years very challenging weather has prompted the MGA to organise a visit to Ireland this summer. The study tour, centred around Dublin, is planned for the 9<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> of July. We will visit farms and research centres and be addressed by maize researchers from both south and north of the border. Areas for discussion include the potential for plastic, varieties to use under plastic, weed control and other agronomic challenges. While maize under plastic tends to currently be grown in marginal areas, the trip also offers potential for those on more favourable sites to explore the potential for the technique to boost yields and quality too.

**PLEASE CONTACT THE OFFICE TO PROVISIONALLY BOOK YOUR PLACE AS NUMBERS ARE LIMITED.**



## MGA BIOGAS SPECIAL INTEREST GROUP LAUNCHED AT CONFERENCE . (CALLING ALL AD PLANTS!)

John Jackson, Farms Manager at Severn Trent Water took the opportunity at this years MGA conference to launch a new Biogas special interest group. The aim of the MGA members only group is via discussion, site visits and external expert speakers, to provide valuable business information to members. In recent year's a considerable number of Anaerobic Digester plants have being commissioned with the majority using considering the use of maize as a feedstock. MGA membership has been boosted in this area with operators keen to lean about maize growing for feedstock production. We therefore believe it makes sense to harness this enthusiasm and interest via this new group. If you are interested or want more information, please give the MGA office a ring or an email and Jean will put your name down to be kept in touch with developments.



Severn Trent's Maize Silage Fed Biogas plant at Stoke Bardolf (source Severn Trent)

## NITROGEN PREDICTOR FORM

It will soon be time to think about fertilizer requirements for this years maize. We would like to remind members of and encourage you to use the MGA's own nitrogen prediction service, N Predictor. The N predictor software developed over 10 years ago, works on the basis that high yielding crops need appropriate N fertilisation and that the current public recommendation tables do not match crop requirements. To use the N Predictor service, members need to return to the office either via post, fax or email a completed input form. The field data is inputted into the computer and a field specific recommendation is produced and returned to the farmer. The N predictor also includes a predicted N max calculation for those of you in Nitrate Vulnerable Zones (NVZ). Farmers growing maize in an NVZ should not exceed their N max, to stay within the law. N Predictor input forms are included in this mailing or are available from the MGA web page.

## MGA CONFERENCE REPORT 2013

Farmer and commercial members met for the annual MGA conference at Cirencester to hear papers from a range of farmer and associated industry speakers. Hugh McClymont kicked off the event with a summary of the lessons learnt from the European Maize Committee meeting which was held in Dumfries last September. Brendan Paul (Chairman of the BSPB maize panel) followed with a very educational and challenging, to the MGA anyway!, review of the existing maize variety testing program and resultant lists produced from it. Our first farmer speaker followed when Michael Christensen talked about the challenges of farming people, cows and maize on the Glastonbury festival site. After coffee independent nutrition consultant Diana Allen provided a quick overview of the world with maize feeding as her focus. Her challenge for the MGA being to revisit the lessons learnt from Brittany what must be 15 years ago. Our second farmer John Jackson talked about the lessons learnt after two years of running the country's biggest maize fed anaerobic digester nr Nottingham. Learning from John's experiences should save others hassle, time and money. I think they call that a Win, Win, Win! After lunch Simon Draper and Neil Groom set about reviewing the 2013 MGA research program results as well as trying to clarify the lessons learnt from last year's challenging weather. Their double act was followed by the ever popular and informative short and sweet sessions where eight of our commercial members used their five minute slots to update us options available for the coming year. The event proved to be a great success.

**We would like to thank our principle sponsors Bayer Crop Science, as well as Syngenta & Biotal who have kindly agreed to sponsor the conference papers, which will be sent to all who could not attend shortly and also our commercial members who had stands at the event.**



*Delegates making the most of the lunch time break to talk to stall holders*

### TRAINING DAY REPORT & PROPOSED NUTRITION TRAINING

In the light of the most challenging year for maize growing in the past 25 years, Simon Draper on behalf of the MGA ran a series of one day courses on maize production during the winter.

The course was designed for all those who are new to maize growing, as well providing the more experienced growers with a refresher/ update on the new methods, to help achieve better maize crops.

Despite some snowy weather on two of the days, nearly 100 delegates turned up at the five venues across the country, to learn some lessons from 2012 and also be reminded of the basics of growing maize.

**Now that we all know how to grow the maize! the MGA, with the help of Chris Savery are proposing to run some nutrition training days and the suggestion is to hold these in the early autumn. Please could you let me know if you are interested and I will see where the majority of interest is and we will book venues in those areas.**

### MGA OPEN DAY WEDNESDAY 22nd MAY

Stephen Temple, an MGA council member has kindly invited members to an Open day at his dairy farm in North Norfolk. Not only does Stephen and his wife milk 100 cows, they also have a very well known cheese business (Mrs Temples Cheese) they also run a 140 kW AD plant, that uses the electricity to heat the farmhouse, dry the grain & warm the cows drinking water.

Also of interest to MGA members will be the DEFRA/ ADAS trial titled "Competitive maize cultivation with reduced environmental impact". There are 2 sites, one here in Norfolk and the other in Devon. We will send more details soon, but please put the date in your diaries.



*Setting up plots to measure run-off*

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