

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



**Mole Valley
Farmers**

DOING YOUR BIT FOR SOIL PROTECTION

In This Issue:

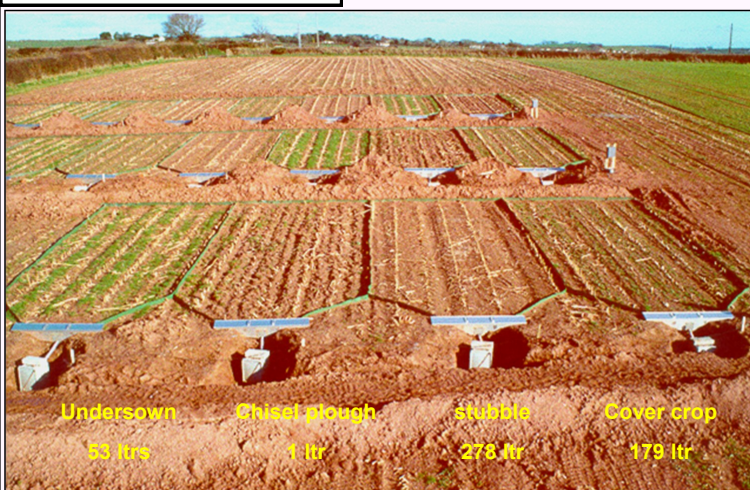
- ◆ Clamped forages—review & improve—Chris Savery.
- ◆ Good maize establishment— Simon Draper.
- ◆ Pointers for growing maize in 2014— Neil Groom.
- ◆ Conference report.
- ◆ Diabrotica update.

The recent link being made in Somerset and elsewhere between maize growing and flooding is nothing new. The MGA have been encouraging growers for over 15 years to take the very real risks associated with late harvested maize very seriously and with this in mind have offered lots of advice and information to all comers.

Where there is a risk of soil wash or erosion, growers should choose early maturing varieties and drill them as soon as conditions allow. Remember, early drilling means early harvest. Oversowing with ryegrass or another cover crop should also be considered, as the technique has been proven to reduce nitrogen and soil loss post maize harvest in the autumn and winter. **You should never leave bare or uncultivated maize stubbles over winter.** Reducing the risk of soil related problems continues to be an important issue for growers.

The link between maize and soil problems reminds us of the key UK trial undertaken by the Environment Agency, with the help of the Maize Growers well over ten years ago now, where soil water runoff was measured following four different maize stubble treatments.

The two site project confirmed that water runoff was reduced significantly when grass was under and after sown and that the runoff was almost stopped completely (1 litre of runoff) when the stubbles were chisel ploughed post harvest. It was pleasing to hear that both the MGA Chairman (Hugh McClymont) and Treasure (John Cottle) adopted a "no winter bare stubble" policy during the winter and that both reported reduced soil and water loss from their fields.



Trial site at North Wyke

NEW MAIZE FUNGICIDE REGISTERED

We were pleased to hear this week that QUILT XCEL (azoxystrobin + propiconazole) from Syngenta has been formally registered as a fungicide for the useful reduction of eye-spot (kabatiella Zeae) and leaf blight (Helminthosporium) in maize for grain and forage.

DIABROTICA — CHANGE IN STATUS

We are not sure if the recent communication received in relation to the status of the Western Corn Rootworm, more commonly known as Diabrotica, within the European Union is good or bad news. The good news is that diabrotica's change in status from a "quarantine" pest will result in significantly less regulation and maize growing restrictions should the bug grace UK shores in the future. The bad news is the reason for this change in status being that on the continent diabrotica's has taken such a hold, to such an extent that the almost inevitable decision has had to be taken to live with the pest, rather than continue with the fight to eradicate.

Monitoring will continue, as will centralised guidance on how to suppress populations and/or protect crops. Members keen to know more should contact Jean in the office who will be happy to send on the official change in status letter.

FieldStar
Maximum energy
Agrii

MGA CONFERENCE REPORT

As members will no doubt know this years MGA conference headed north of the border for the first time. Hugh McClymont, MGA Chairman and Farm manager at The Crichton, Dumfries welcomed more than 80 delegates to the event held on February 13th at Easterbrooke Hall Dumfries. Hugh is great maize enthusiast and his reputation for hosting stimulating meetings showed with the excellent attendance from new and established growers/trade representatives from far and wide. The good attendance was particularly pleasing bearing in mind the dreadful weather at the time.

Conference day started with a tour of the farm and Hugh explained the research that he and his team are involved in at Crichton. It was then back to Easterbrook Hall to listen to 5 excellent papers on maize growing and nutrition.

The opening address was from **Graeme Cock**, Chairman of Mole Valley Farmers, who announced that this year Mole Valley Farmers have become the MGA main sponsors.

Bridget Lynch from University College Dublin then spoke about the research she is conducting in Ireland. She is involved in a joint research project focused on enabling farmers to grow better quality maize. The project aims to better understand the agronomy factors affecting the energy yield of forage maize; this is an ongoing 2 year project. Bridget is also working on an animal nutrition study to quantify the milk production potential of feeding forage maize at grass.

Next up was **Graeme Cock** again! Not only is he Chairman of Mole Valley Farmers, but he is a busy dairy farmer in South Devon. You would think it is an ideal place to grow maize conventionally, but as Graeme explained, he feels the quality of his maize silage is so much better now that he grows it under plastic. He went through the costs and despite the plastic increasing the cost by £250/hectare, the increased feeding value of the silage meant he now is planning to grow all his maize under plastic in future.

While it is important to grow a good crop of maize, it is also useful to know what quality feed you have got in your clamp and our next speaker, **Jonathan Blake** from the Forage Analytical Assurance Group talked us through the LINK project that DEFRA had helped to fund and looked at developing a standard method of analysing maize samples across all analysis laboratories. Having analysed 90 samples taken over 2 years from around the country, the FAA have implemented new equations for dry matter and nitrogen degradability approaches for the 2014 maize feeding system.

Maize for AD in Cumbria was the title of the next paper and **Alistair Wannop** gave delegates a very interesting insight into his farming history and his reasons for building an Anaerobic digester and using maize, grass silage and slurry to feed it. Alistair talked us through growing his maize, harvesting and the costings. He finished by saying that he thinks the future of AD in the UK is with small farm scale AD plants using the slurry from the dairy and beef units.

After lunch **Simon Draper** (MGA Agronomist), Neil Groom from Grainseeds and Brian Chambers from ADAS talked through the MGA trial results for 2013.

Simon explained the results of our weed control trials and also the ongoing sulphur trial.

Neil talked through the maize under plastic trial that he conducted, with the help of Hugh at Crichton and then updated delegates on the latest maize eyespot thinking. Eyespot is a fungus that occurs on maize in damp, dull conditions and last year, with our lovely warm summer eyespot was not prevalent. In a bad year it can quickly destroy the crop, so applying a fungicide, even late on is worth doing to save the maize.

Brian talked us through the DEFRA trial titled "Competitive maize cultivation with reduced Environmental Impact". There are 2 sites, one in Norfolk and the other in Devon. The objectives are to develop economically productive techniques for maize cultivation, with reduced environmental impact, quantify the effects of contrasting cultivation and ground cover management practices on yields and quality, diffuse water pollution, biodiversity and soil structure.

After all these very interesting papers, we finished the conference with our popular "Short & Sweet" session. We give commercial MGA members the chance to promote a product or service in 5 minutes, not a minute more! We had 7 brave souls who all did an excellent job.

The conference was a great success and Hugh did Scotland proud.

The conference papers are in the process of being printed and will be with all members shortly.

The MGA would like to thank our main conference sponsor BayerCrop Sciences, the sponsors of the papers, Syngenta and Limagrain, all the companies that had stands in the Hall, Scottish Rural College, Crichton and everyone who attended.



*From the left
Bridget Lynch, Jonathan Blake, Hugh, Neil Groom,
Brian Chambers, Graeme Cock & Simon Draper.
Alistair Wannop not in photo.*