

MGA TIMES



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MGA FARMER SURVEY—1ST SUMMARY

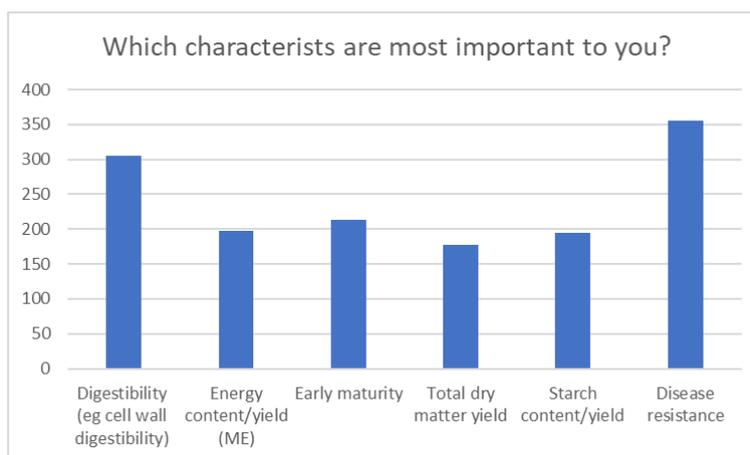
Analysis of the 2017 MGA survey data for which we got a 23% return rate (thank you) continues. This month we have taken the opportunity to look at the decisions members take and information they look at when making their variety choices.

In this Issue:

- ◆ Invitation to training days.
- ◆ Silage feed out—Mike Wilkinson.
- ◆ Summary of survey.
- ◆ Improved milk fat and protein yield—Chris Bartram.
- ◆ Summary of Harper Adams beef trial.

First off members were asked which characteristics are most important to them when selecting the variety of maize to grow. The categories were Digestibility (e.g. cell wall digestibility), Energy content/yield (ME), Early maturity, Total dry matter yield, Starch content/yield and Disease resistance and were ranked from 1 to 6, (1 being the most important). The results set out in fig 1 below, showed that, by scoring the lowest overall, total dry matter yield appeared most often in the top preferences for growers, energy content was next. Disease resistance appears to be the least important characteristic by scoring the highest which could be a reflection of the relatively low incidence of maize eyespot in recent years.

Graph 1. Total scores of respondents when asked to prioritise the characteristics used when selecting maize varieties



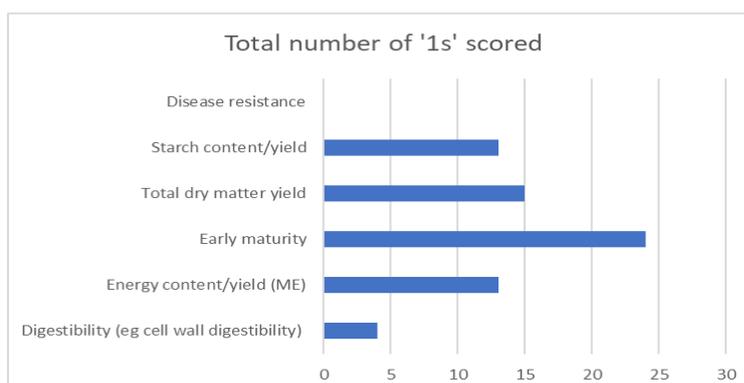
SILAGE ANALYSIS REMINDER

As always once the maize is harvested it is important to know the constituent value of the crop for either animals or bio-digesters.

The MGA have an arrangement with Sciantec Laboratories and if you require sample bags, please do not hesitate to contact Jean in the MGA Office and she will send you the appropriate packs.

Interestingly, when looking at just the number of top scores received (i.e. scored at 1, the most important) early maturity most frequently received a score of 1 (see graph 2). This suggests that there is a marked division in opinions on the importance of this attribute with growers either ranking it of high importance or very low. As well as ranking lowest priority overall, disease resistance also had by far the greatest number of '6' scores.

Graph 2. Scoring for individual characteristics when growers asked to prioritise the characteristics used when selecting maize varieties



This month's yellow envelope for 79 members is quite a bit heavier than normal. This is a thank you to all members who filled in the farmer survey earlier in the year. We are very grateful to Limagrain for providing the multi tools for anyone who replied. Included in this mailing and during the next few mailings we will be summarising some of the results from the survey.

More data will be released from the survey in due course in the hope that it provides useful information for both grower and commercial members.

HOW MUCH PROTEIN SHOULD YOU FEED YOUR FINISHING CATTLE?

The long held belief that finishing cattle should be fed diets containing 12-14% DM crude protein diets has been challenged by long time MGA friend and contributor Simon Marsh from Harper Adams University. Simon and colleagues compared the performance of dairy bred beef heifers fed maize silage based diets either of 12.5% or 16% CP/kg DM during 2016. The results of their work were published during July this year. Cattle in the randomised trial were allocated into two groups. Ad lib amounts of good maize silage were fed with concentrates to supply the 12.5% and 16% protein diets.

Table 1: Animal performance (kg)

Treatment	160	125	s.e.d	P Value	Sig
Start wt	303	304	3.9	0.946	NS
Slaughter wt	539	523	8.9	0.105	NS
Days to slaughter	215	226	6.5	0.098	Trend
DLWG	1.10	0.98	0.044	0.026	*
Age at slaughter (days) ¹	462 (15.1)	474 (15.5)	6.4	0.082	Trend

¹ Age in brackets = months

NS = not significant, * = P<0.05, ** = P<0.01, *** = P<0.001

Alongside animal live weight being recorded throughout the trial, carcass quality was analysed once the animals had been slaughtered. Daily Live Weight Gains were significantly higher for the cattle fed the higher protein ration as was their Feed Conversion Rate. Margin over feed cost per animal was £56/hd higher for the 16% protein diet, even though feed cost per kg carcass gain was slightly increased.

Full copies of Simon's paper are available via the MGA office. The paper makes good reading and offers a real opportunity to significantly reduce the cost of rearing fattening cattle.

MGA MINERAL RANGE

In this mailing we have included the MGA mineral range specifications and price list. If you haven't used them in the past, but are interested in learning more, Mike Wilkinson would be happy to discuss them with you and you can tweak the specs to your own taste (cows taste!). Mole Valley Farmers make the minerals, to MGA requirements and the Association get a commission on minerals sold.



Only from **Agrii**

'PROFIT FROM IMPROVING THE QUALITY OF MAIZE SILAGE DIETS FOR DAIRY COWS'

Following on from successful events last December, the MGA have organised two more this November. Please read the enclosed invite for more detailed information.

On a local farm, Mike Wilkinson will lead the group discussion of these aspects of feeding maize silage:

Removing silage from the silo

- ◆ Safety.
- ◆ Spoiled silage.
- ◆ Feed out rate.
- ◆ Sampling.

Mixing feeds

- ◆ Mixing sequence.
- ◆ Reducing sorting.

Diet formulation

- ◆ Targets for diet composition.
- ◆ NDF and fibre requirements.
- ◆ Choice of supplements.
- ◆ Reducing diet carbon footprint.



Assessing the grass silage at Grosvenor Farms last December

The group will visit silos and cows. The host farmer will describe his system.

Book your place on the enclosed invitation