

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



PLANT COUNTS SUGGEST IMPRECISION RATHER THAN PRECISION DRILLING!

- In this Issue
- ◆ Maize feeding this winter—Chris Savery
 - ◆ Covercrop meetings invitation.
 - ◆ MGA Mineral price list and specs.
 - ◆ Show & meeting reports.

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, Chris Savery would be happy to discuss them with you and you can tweek 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.

When doing the rounds of the demo sites this autumn I have taken the opportunity to undertake some plant population counts. Plant populations are quite easily calculated using the average number of plants per 10m row length and then, using the attached table, multiplying the row numbers up to field populations.

During my counts I have been surprised by the amount of variability within the rows. In one field alone I had plant counts ranging from 47 to 63 plants per 10 metre row. Such variation is particularly surprising bearing in mind the crop was sown via a so called precision drill. Also of note is the variation in plant stem diameter, suggesting that some plants have profited at the expense of others. Such variation in plant size may well be linked to seed being sown at uneven depths, which in turn has led to uneven germination and development. In effect one maize plant has competed with another for moisture and nutrient, with the result that maturity in the crop as a whole will vary considerably and overall yield will suffer.

Plants/10m row	Plants/acre	Plants/ha
63	33995	84001
62	33455	82668
61	32916	81334
60	32376	80001
59	31836	78668
58	31297	77334
57	30757	76001
56	30218	74668
55	29678	73334
54	29138	72001
53	28599	70668
52	28059	69334
51	27520	68001

10m plant counts & plant populations

My observations have reminded me how important it is to get the seed in the ground at an even depth and even spacing. The drill man, be he/she a contractor or member of the farm team, needs a talking to! The drilling team need to be given time to drill slowly enough to achieve good seed placement, as well as being encouraged to get out of the cab to dig down to see what is actually happening behind them.

When you get down to the soil level, uncover the seeds to see what the drill is achieving. Seed should be sown onto the soil moisture, be that at 1 inch or 4 inches depth and be very evenly placed within the row. If sowing depth or spacing is not perfect, come up with a plan (usually involving slowing down!) to get it right.

UK DAIRY DAY—TELFORD

The MGA headed up to Telford in mid September to attend the UK Dairy Day, we took the opportunity to have our quarterly MGA council meeting the afternoon before at a nearby Hotel, so there were plenty of helpers to erect the stand that evening. Our cunning ploy worked!

The UK Dairy Day was very well attended and we met many MGA members and hopefully reminded non members of our existence. The theme for our stand this year was the importance of managing maize stubbles after harvest, so armed with 2 green tesco boxes (other supermarkets boxes are available, but don't tell them!) full of soil, one with compacted bare soil and the other sown with a grass cover crop and with the aid of a watering can, we were able to demonstrate the impact of water running off a slope. The background to the stand was our normal display of maize plants, borrowed from Town Barton, (no expense spared with MGA stand building!). John & I were very grateful for the time put in on the stand by our Chairman Michael Christensen and Treasurer John Cottle.



IRELAND EUROPEAN MAIZE COMMITTEE MEETING

September 1st and 2nd 2015 saw the European Maize Committee returning to Ireland, who took on the challenge of hosting this multinational group of farmers and researchers. Congratulations should go to long-term friends of the MGA, Willie and Ernest Tanner and Tim O'Donovan for organising a great meeting.

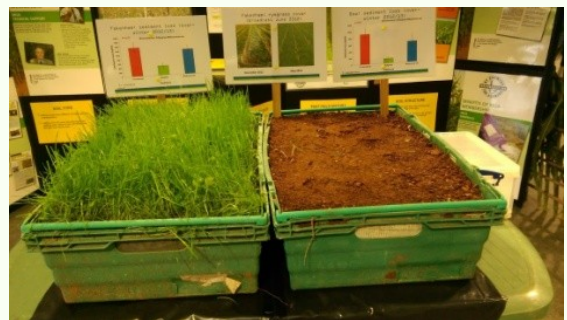
The customary review of the status of the maize crop in each country revealed similar weather related challenges across the bulk of Northern Europe, with the only real exception to this picture being Italy who have had a very good maize growing season. This year's specialist subject, on which each country made a presentation, was Foliar Diseases of the Maize Crop. As you can imagine maize Eyespot topped the subject list, however other less common problems to UK growers were also discussed. A full review of the papers will be produced in due course and very much in time for next years maize crop. Full copies of various countries papers are available via the office and will in time and where clearance from the authors has been obtained, be posted to the MGA web site.



Members of the European Maize Committee visiting the University College of Dublin maize trials on the second day of the EMM.

THE DAIRY SHOW Harvest date & milk price

Early October and we are back in our normal space in the Edmund Rank pavilion of the Shepton Mallett show ground for the Dairy Show (locally know as the "South West Dairy Event") The event retains its practical farmer attendance and as such continues to provide an ideal opportunity to talk to growers be they current or "prospective!" members. Key theme for discussions included the lateness of harvest, although the recent break in the weather has speeded up maturity, and the economics of the industry. The key feature on the stand was our demonstration of the benefits of green cover crops in overwintered maize stubbles which, similarly to the Dairy Day stand in Telford, most certainly sparked interest. As in the past the day flew by which is always a good indication of an events success. Next stop LAMMA on the 20-21st January next year.



MGA demonstration boxes used at the Dairy Show to illustrate the difference in runoff from green cover and bare overwintered stubbles.

DAY TRIP TO SAMCO HQ

While in Ireland for the Euro maize meeting John Morgan took the opportunity to head west to visit the HQ of SAMCO to catch up with Matt Shine and the family team. His whistle stop tour of the site and adjacent trials confirmed the commitment of the company to the technique of using degradable film in the growing of various crops, as well as some of the other activities the family are involved with.



SAMCO bagpress

AD MEETING AT SWAFFHAM

Members in the east of the country took the chance on the evening of the 10th September to view the NIAB/TAG and Future Biogas/MGA small plot trial site nr Swaffam in Norfolk. Simon Draper, Neil Groom and Oliver Knowland led the 30 + attendees through the impressive trial site, where the choice of variety for biogas production, need for starter fertiliser and potential benefits of slow release nitrogen products is being reviewed.

Those who were not able to make the event can learn more of the work during the MGA conference in Peterborough on Thursday the 25th of February.



Simon Draper talks maize yields at Gayton

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 Scianteq 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.