

MGA TIMES

Maize Growers Association

March 2020

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Conference Review

On 6th February, we held our annual conference in the Hilton Hotel, East



Midlands Airport, Derby. *Delegates at the dairy farm looking over the housing area*

We had just over 100 attendees from across the UK (and two or three from Europe!) with around half of these joining us the night before for an excellent conference dinner at the venue, with the wine kindly sponsored by Samco. The conference day started with around 35 delegates having a tour of the Centre for Dairy Science Innovation at Nottingham University's Sutton Bonington Campus which explored the robot milking system, the feeding system and the KPI monitoring systems in place.

On their return, we kicked off the conference with an introduction from MGA Chairman, John Jackson, during which he introduced us to his 'nightmare' harvest and some of the measures that were in place to ensure that it was as successful as possible (he was still combining maize crops on the day of the conference!). The first section of presentations was on the subject of 'Blue Sky Thinking' so was about ground-breaking research and ideas which may be adapted into maize production in the future but are in their early stages at the moment. Speakers in this section were Riccardo Fusi, George Crane and Jem Woods. We then heard from Michael and Ian Sturmer about their beef enterprise, and then Friedhelm Taube on maize nutrient management in European agriculture, and the 'Carbomaize Project'. During the lunch break, delegates had a chance to visit the commercial stands which were held by ARK, Bright Maize, Lallemand Animal Nutrition, QLF Agronomy, Samco, Sly Agri, Syngenta, Vaderstad, and Volac. Thank you to all of them for their support and time in setting up and speaking to delegates.

The afternoon session consisted of presentations by Professor Phil Garnsworthy (Nottingham University) on their dairy nutrition and emissions research (Phil also kindly coordinated the farm tour for us in the morning), followed by Simon, Neil and Oli of the MGA Council who spoke about the results of our 2019 trials.

The presentations from each speaker which were handed out on the day in papers kindly sponsored by Vaderstad, can be found on the MGA website under 'Resources'. We have also summarised each presentation in the enclosed Conference Review. If you have any questions about the speeches given, please contact the office.

A final thanks to everyone that came along, it was a very successful day which we enjoyed very much, and to ARK Agriculture and Bright Maize, thank you so much for being our main 2020 sponsors.



2020 Drilling Courses have been arranged!

We will be holding one on 24th March at Sparsholt College, Hampshire, and one on 27th March at Stoke Bardolph Estate, Nottingham. Please see enclosed invite for more information.



Last year's attendees learning about optimum drill settings before watching some demonstrations on forward speed and seed spacing and depth

N Predictor

Enclosed in this mailing is your N predictor form for 2020. As previously, please fill in the form and scan/post back to us and we will aim to get your nitrogen prediction back to you within a week. There is also a spreadsheet version of the data entry form which we can email to you upon request.

Our nitrogen prediction service is a system for determining how much inorganic nitrogen will be required by your maize crop using data that you provide about the individual field, and data collected by the MGA on nitrogen availability and uptake.

Using this estimate has potential save you money and optimise yield if you are under or over-applying your nitrogen typically.

Willie Tanner

It is with real sadness that we write to report the recent death of Willie Tanner. As well as being active on the family dairy farm, and running a forage seed business in southern Ireland, Willie also coordinated the Irish MGA for many years. He was a regular at the MGA conference and represented Ireland at the European Maize Meeting for many years. Willie's input to maize growing in Ireland will be very much missed. The MGA pass on our condolences to his family and friends. Willie is pictured here (fifth from the right) with other members of the European Maize Committee in Belgium 2018.

**Soil Temperatures**

Soil temperature measuring will begin again on 16th March! I will be going out at 9am on Monday mornings to test the temperature at 10cm deep. Please do the same if you are able! We would also love a mini profile of the field that you are measuring because there will likely be variations in altitude, slope, soil type etc. As promised last year, I am also going to keep a record of the weather alongside this to draw comparisons. One member had suggested last year that he followed the forecasted air temperatures and took averages over the next fortnight to determine when things were getting warmer so I'm going to give that a try too! Look forward to your emails on Monday mornings! Give me a call or email in the office if you'd like more info. Will be emailing results and posting on website!

Photo Competition

As you will have seen on our social media and previous mailings, we held a photo competition of 'Best Practice Maize Farming' to win a place at our conference. The winning photo (below right) was sent in by Phil Campion in Cheshire; it shows a field partly undersown with a ryegrass and tall fescue mix at 5kg/acre the 6-leaf stage of the maize. You can see standing water in the section that has been left bare. Additionally, the following maize crop performed better in undersown areas suggesting an improvement in soil condition and structure as a result.

Our runner up!

In second place was the below photo from Frans de Boer in West Sussex. He drilled the grass (tall fescue) and maize with a one-pass drill and harvested on 28th September. Frans told us that all of the undersown maize fields harvested easily this year due partly to the firmer ground from strip till but also the grass holding the soil together. But that the fields drilled conventionally were a nightmare!

**DID YOU KNOW...?**

Maize ears (cobs), once they have started developing, grow at a rate of around 3mm per day.

**Dates for your diary:**

24th Mar 2020 - Drilling Course at Sparsholt College, Hampshire

27th Mar 2020 - Drilling Course at Stoke Bardolph Estate, Nottingham