



MGA TIMES

Maize Growers Association

August 2023

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South West Trial Site Open Evening



Bright Maize Maize & Bean Trial.

photo taken by Mike from Bright Maize

A small group of committed enthusiasts braved atrocious weather conditions on the evening of the 26th July to take a look at the plots laid out at the South West trial site nr Shepton Mallett. The logic behind and specifics of, Nitrogen response curve, foliar nitrogen, starter fert/biostimulents, undersowing and drilling depth treatments were reviewed with both Jon Myhill and John Morgan on hand to lead the discussions. Thanks were given on the night and are repeated here, to those who have supported the trials including Wessex Water, Natural England, and QLF. Thanks also to companies for providing product to be trialed at no cost to the MGA. While most plots show good progress, after a very late and dry start, one trial that is perhaps disappointing is the maize/beans combination where establishment of the beans in particular is poor. In contrast to our far from spectacular maize and bean plots, Mike Sims from MGA members Bright Maize, was on hand to talk us through their far more successful look see. Mike has kindly sent some pictures of their plots to make us feel jealous! Thanks Mike.



The group of members looking at the trials



View of the MGA maize trials

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Jon Myhill' America Adventure



I recently went on a study tour to America with Horizon Agriculture. I visited the Precision Planting PTI farm in Pontiac, this is a 400-acre ring fence farm, purely laid down to over 110 plot trials of maize and soybeans. What interested me was the focus on attention to small details – they are trialling different soil locations of base, starter and nitrogen fertilisers to gain that small “win” in yield. The conclusion so far is to apply more of the fertiliser load near the seed on the planter in a liquid form, or if this is not possible to band it before planting with strip-tillage.



Maize plots everywhere, this one was looking at liquid base fertilisers

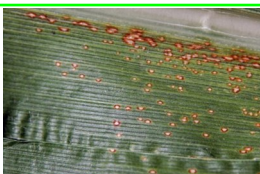


400 farmers attend the start of the conference

In the second part of my trip, I attended the National Strip-Till Conference in Bloomington (famous for being on Route 66). Here I was able to listen and ask questions to some of the best maize growers in America, not only were they so passionate to pass on their experiences (good and bad!) but they wanted to know and learn how we grow maize in the UK

P.S. The record grain maize yield in America is over 41t/ha, which is 4 times our average!

MAIZE EYESPOT



Please remember to send any samples of maize eyespot to Sandra Chapman, NIAB Park Farm, Villa Road, Impinton, Histon, Cambridge, CB24 9NZ. Please ensure that your samples are sent fresh, in a plastic bag with a paper towel/tissue. NIAB is keen to gain more knowledge regarding the different strains of the disease.

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MGA AGM!

September 7th has been set as the date for the association's Annual General Meeting. The AGM is to be held at Harper Adams University after which we will have a guided tour of the MGA and other maize trial work being conducted on-site. The AGM provides the opportunity to revitalise the MGA Council of Management which, like a board of directors, sets strategy and mission for those charged with day-to-day running of the association. The plan is to add one new council member this time around with John Hocknell a dairy farmer from Cheshire joining the group. Two additional council members have joined during the year they are arable farmer and grain maize grower Will Oliver and Biogas grower Michael Jarmuz. As we gain members we also lose some, and this year we will see Richard Martin stand down as his fixed term comes to an end. Jon Myhill, as his company takes on the MGA administration, will also stand down as a formal council member, but will remain as the MGA Agronomist. We welcome the newcomers and thank Richard and Jon for their considerable efforts to keep us on the straight and narrow over the years. If you would like to attend the AGM, please could we ask that you let Kate in the office know so that we can plan for the numbers attending. You can contact Kate via email info@maizegrowersassociation.co.uk

Time for a change



Jon Myhill, owner of Agvisor Ltd

We are pleased to be able to report that as of September 11th, the administration of the MGA will be undertaken by The Agvisor Ltd, the principal director of which is the existing MGA agronomist Jon Myhill. Kate Baker, who currently runs the MGA office is remaining on to become operations manager, providing continuity and enthusiasm to her very important role. Contact numbers including phone and email will remain unchanged and the address of the new office will be provided as soon as possible. All at the MGA believe that Jon and Kate will take the association to a new level, and we wish them well.

It's that time of year again!

Traditionally viewed as the harvest mailing this August's offering is focused on the imminent harvest of forage maize in the coming days and weeks. John Morgan's tech notes encourages a planning meeting to set harvest targets as well as forecasting harvest timings. John reminds us that hitting your harvest KPI's will have a dramatic impact on annual finances and encourages all to put the time into getting things spot on. No sooner than harvest is done establishment of following cash and cover crops, comes to the fore. MGA agronomist Jon Myhill, in his offering, sets out the case for keeping cover cropping simple as well as taking the opportunity to clarify need, or lack of need, for nitrogen to get cover crops off to a good start. Both tech notes are short and sweet and we hope worth a look.



Seed dressings

We are pleased to report that good progress has been made in relation to extending the use of the three key seed dressings currently available to growers. As most will know, as a result of the end of BREXIT transition agreements, seed dressings historically approved for EU use, but not independently approved by UK authorities, would cease to be available from January 1st 2024. Considerable effort has been exerted by the MGA and others to ensure that those in power fully understand the significant negative impact if such a threat became a reality. Lobbying letters by many to their MP's and ministers plus circulation of the key results from a spring survey of growers, yielded a ministerial meeting last month during which the importance of dealing with this issue in a timely manner was stressed. Since that meeting ongoing dialogue has continued and we feel confident that progress continues to be made.



Along with lobbying, the MGA have also separately applied for Emergency Authorisation to use dressings. Seen as an insurance approach in case the lobbying activity comes to nothing, the Emergency Authorisation applications will, if successful, provide an alternative route for growers to gain access to dressings next year. The MGA remain members of a consortium of interested parties and we thank all involved for their support to this very important work. Thanks also go to Julian Little who has coordinated work on both fronts and to MGA council member Neil Groom for his dogged determination to get this sorted. Key now is timing with seed ordering from breeders very much on the supply train companies' minds. Rest assured we will keep pushing for early notification that we are good to go again.

FIVE TIPS FOR MAINTAINING MAIZE QUALITY FROM HARVEST TO FEED-OUT

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Lientje Colahan, technical sales support at Lallemand Animal Nutrition, recommends taking five key steps.

1

Ensile correctly

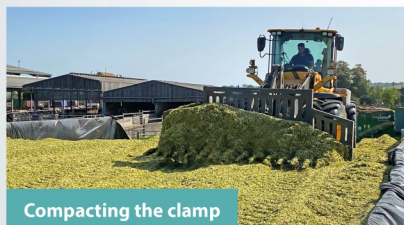
When the plant reaches an average dry matter (DM) of 30-35% it's ready for harvesting: use the milk line on the kernel, and the leaves at the base of the plant as a guide. Consider the maize variety when looking at the leaves – stay-green varieties will do exactly that.

The milk line should be 1/3 down the kernel.

The bottom leaves will start drying off / browning (except in stay-green varieties).



Clamp the maize in tight, even layers and apply as much weight as possible when compacting the clamp.



Compacting the clamp



Use a barrier film

2

Create a barrier

Using a non-porous oxygen barrier film instead of highly porous black plastic will help eliminate air pockets.

3

Use an inoculant

Using a maize-specific inoculant, such as **Magniva Platinum Maize**, will optimise fermentation and help maintain stability throughout storage and feed-out, resulting in less heating and therefore increased feed value for the cow.

It offers a good return on investment, with estimates showing the cost of treating a 1,000-tonne clamp is the equivalent to the cost of growing 43 tonnes – this equates to 4% of the total amount of silage, which is less than a 10cm strip across a typical 2.2m x 50m x 100m clamp.



Beware of toxic gas

4

Keep an eye on the clamp

A good fermentation process can cause the silage sheet to blow up like a balloon.

Once the sheet has settled, re-check any gravel bags, tyres or other weights to ensure everything is securely in place.

If a brown or orange gas seeps from the silage, don't approach the clamp until this has disappeared – it may be highly toxic nitrogen dioxide gas.

5

Avoid losses at feeding

At feed-out, best practice is to remove one metre per week, crossing the entire face, to keep up with oxygen influx into the silage.

In instances where getting across the face takes longer, taking half-shear grab depths will result in a more consistent feed.



Scan the QR code to find out more or call our friendly team on 07884 312 382 for further help and advice



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