

Wishing you Perfect Weather and Good Market Conditions in 2013

Many records were broken in 2012, most at the Olympics and Paralympics, but I fear it is the weather records that will remain in the memories of all involved in the farming industry. It will be a year like 1976 that is quoted by all who were around at the time of that drought as an extremely difficult season, but for the opposite reason – total saturation. For all, we wish you a good 2013 with perfect weather and good markets for your produce. So far it has started well. Less rain and mild enough for the grass to grow – Let us look forward to an early turnout.

Fodder Beet Wins Through?

Fodder Beet is a reliable source of high energy fodder with consistent quality. At 12.5-13 ME and 12% protein, it is unequalled by any annual crop. It is limited to medium and lighter soils needs a good agronomist and attention to detail for top results, but its adaptability to UK weather is confirmed by its performance in 2012. The control varieties in our UK trials last year were 96 t/ha @ 15% DM. The best variety produced another 15 t/ha more beet.

An increasing acreage of Fodder Beet is grazed in situ. Most is grazed by sheep and costs between 10-15p/ewe/day for winter feed. Some is also grazed by cattle in combination with bale silage, especially young stock at a cost of 60-70p/head/day. **Could this suit you?**

If you do plan to grow and lift Fodder Beet, plan for optimum yield and utilisation. It keeps increasing in yield until about mid November, so lift from late October to the end of November in cool, but not freezing conditions. Do not stack more than 2m high and protect from frost with straw and/or a breathable beet cover. **Covers now available from Field Options.**



New **Fortimo** Fodder Beet – A Perfect combination of yield and dry matter

New Maize Hybrids Look Very Good in a Difficult Year

2012 was a challenging year for maize, although a very good year for testing varieties – ‘If it did as well in 2012 as the previous two seasons, it has the makings of a good variety’. In both national trials and Field Options own trials, established varieties like **Lapriora** and **Adept** have done pretty well for both yield and ME, but **Severus**, in the same early group has excelled for the 2nd year running. In addition, two varieties which are at least a week earlier, **Recolt** and **Activate** have also performed very well with similar earliness to **Kaspian**, but producing the equivalent of 1.5 tonnes more silage/acre.

It is clear from discussions with growers that many who plan to continue to grow maize are looking at slightly earlier varieties. The availability of new hybrids at Field Options will help to ease any pressure on supplies of the very earliest varieties.

£2.00/unit discount on maize seed ordered before the end of January



Switch From Maize in Marginal Areas

A succession of challenging years for maize growing and increasing awareness of the reliability and performance of spring sown Wholecrop, has led to a big increase in the number of enquiries for **Wholecrop PB**, Field Option's Pea Barley Mix. This can produce up to 10 tonnes/acre of 35% DM Wholecrop with a feed value of 11.0 ME & 12.5% protein in just 14 weeks. Cost comes in at under 1p/ Mj resulting in a basic feed cost of under 5p/litre for milk producers and under 80p/kg of liveweight gain for beef producers. Though more resilient than maize to the UK's challenging weather, Wholecrop PB still needs to be grown carefully for best results. Pay particular attention to soil structure, make sure pH is +6.0 and ideally drill from Mid-March to 1st week of April.



New Website Up and Running – Visit : www.field-options.co.uk

For more information contact Field Options on 01544 262 500 or www.field-options.co.uk

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Soil Structure Problems – Be Patient

Record breaking rainfall in 2012 caused soils to be saturated for months. Grazing in these conditions has caused compaction, but field operations, whether it be harvesting or cultivating and ploughing in poor conditions has caused greater damage. Repair to soil structure is a priority if any crop performance is to be efficient. If you have ground in poor condition, avoid crops like maize which are excessively sensitive to poor soil structure and plan a strategy for correcting the situation.

Timing of aerating or sub-soiling is dependent on soil conditions. Most machinery designed to repair soil structure needs dry operating conditions to be effective, so you will need 2-3 dry weeks in the spring before an aerator will be effective and 5-6 weeks before a subsoiler will operate efficiently. Timing is dependent on soil type, so to be sure, dig a hole. If the soil is 'plastic' at the depth you need to be working, wait.

Remember, it costs the same to operate in the right conditions as the wrong conditions, but the response to working in the right conditions is impressive. The response to working in the wrong conditions can be poor and can create more damage. You must also understand that mechanical soil repair is only part of the story, it accelerates the development of natural soil structure and the long term health of soil biological systems – So do not expect perfection straight away.

IDEAL OPTION: Consider growing **Hurricane II** or **Hurricane Pro Nitro XS** catch crop grass and legume mixtures. They pull moisture out of the ground as they grow and each time the crop is cut or grazed, you have the opportunity to use a grassland subsoiler to repair structure. The new mixture, **Hurricane Pro Nitro XS**, also contains Vetches and clovers which further enhance soil structure and fertility.



HURRICANE II - Maximum Potential of Spring Sown Grass

Most grasses do not head in the year of sowing, this is good for quality but not for total dry matter yield. **Hurricane II** heads following a spring sowing and has the potential to produce more than 8 tonnes of dry matter/ha at 10.6 ME from a spring sowing – Equivalent to 14 tonnes of 25% DM silage from a 3 cut system. Some farmers who repeat drill it for 'out wintering' are achieving 12 T/Ha.

Critical to success is planting as soon in the spring as soil conditions allow. If soil conditions are good at the end of February – plant it, but late March would be normal. If sown by the beginning of April, 1st cut will be about 25th June – Be ready to cut, this assures quality and re-growth. **Hurricane II** will last up to 18 months.



Shortages of Spring Cereal & Pulse Seeds

Low yield, poor harvest conditions and an increase in land available for spring planting have combined to create a shortage of arable seed in the UK for spring planting. Seed is being imported from Europe, but this adds £50-60/tonne to the price and there are limited quantities of varieties which have been successfully tested in UK conditions. This includes seed for our Barley & Oat Pro-Nitro Mixtures, so please book early to ensure supplies.

Farm Saved Cereal & Pulse Seeds

One way to secure supplies of seed is to save your own. Following discussions with a number of customers who have their own seed cleaned, it is clear that many do not test their seed before cleaning and hope that a higher seed rate will compensate for any quality shortfall. We suggest that this is not a good strategy, especially following the 2012 harvest when a high % of seed crops failed certification through poor germination. If you want your seed tested, contact the Field Options office for details.

DON'T KEEP SEED in Chemical Store!

A number of farmers have ended 2012 with seed not planted due to poor field conditions. To maintain the potential value of this seed, store it carefully. Keep it in a cool, dry, vermin free location but NOT IN A CHEMICAL STORE. The vapour from some chemicals, especially herbicides could affect the viability of the seed and remember, if it is not used for 6 months, consider getting it re-tested. If germination level has dropped a bit, then you can get successful establishment by increasing seed rate.

For more information contact Field Options on 01544 262 500 or www.field-options.co.uk

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