

# myKWS MAIZE

NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 16 | SUMMER 2023



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It is vital for KWS to be at the forefront of science when we are breeding maize varieties for the UK market

SEEDING  
THE FUTURE  
SINCE 1856

KWS



# Welcome...

...to issue 16 of the KWS quarterly newsletter. Despite the very late season, crops are safely in the ground and we look forward to a favourable growing period over the summer. In this issue we focus on Augustus KWS and hear from Somerset grower, George Davis, who finds the variety well-suited for producing forage for the family dairy herd. He also outlines the results from his early experiments with maize strip-tilling.

Meanwhile, Andrew Cook of KWS gives an update on the potential loss of maize seed dressings and the possible effect on next year's crop. This summer issue contains information on KWS maize trials and also details on how to access our free, online tools to help growers get the best out of their maize crops.

## Seasonal Review

ANDREW COOK, KWS



Andrew Cook

'Late' is the word that aptly sums up this year's maize sowing season, and the knock-on effect will be a potential delay in harvest dates on the majority of farms across the country, certainly relative to 2022.

There was very little April sowing and most growers did not bring the drill out of the shed or ring the contractor until May. At least sowings this year have plenty of moisture and crops have been bouncing out of the ground from generally warm and great seedbeds.

To allow you to monitor your crops throughout the season, and to be able to compare progress against the 5 year average and your individual sowing dates, the KWS Maize Heat Unit Tool can prove very useful, providing an indication of likely harvest dates.

Having been out and about looking at 2023 maize crops, I am more convinced than ever that pre-emergence herbicides are a worthwhile investment. Young maize does not like competition so a pre-emergence spray will provide a wider window for the application of a post-emergence spray.

Although drilling is a little later, given a fair run of favourable weather we can look forward to a successful maize growing season.

## SPP NEWS

Sowing for Peak Performance SUMMER 2023



Why making the right decisions around the varieties you choose TODAY will help deliver the highest crop margins TOMORROW and secure greater sustainability for us all in THE FUTURE



# SEED DRESSING

## UPDATE

The industry is facing the potential loss of fungicide, insecticide and bird repellent seed treatments by the end of this year – a move which has the potential to lead to considerable losses in maize crops.

Unlike some products that have been withdrawn from the market, no use-up date has been proposed. Assuming that there are no permitted re-registrations or new product registrations, producers are facing the prospect of sowing untreated seed for 2024; the regulations apply to both home-produced and imported seed.

The products under threat are: fungicides including **Redigo M**; **Korit 420 FS** (bird deterrent effect); **Force 20 CS** (wireworm control).

The implications of sowing untreated seed are worrying and could put maize plants at greater risk of attack from soil-borne pathogens. Bird damage also poses a threat, although it could be argued that if all seed is left untreated, then the risk of significant losses to an individual farm may not be as serious as might be expected.

The options for management techniques to combat the loss of seed treatments include sowing seed deeper to protect from birds. However, deeper drilling also hugely increases the susceptibility of germinating seedlings to disease, especially in cooler soils where emergence will naturally be slower. Later sowing may offer better bird protection and therefore ultra-early varieties may become more popular, as they can cope with a shorter growing season.

The only realistic way that treated seed might be available for next season would be following a political solution in 2023, which would allow existing products an extension for use, and/or allow for re-registrations to be completed.

An industry working group has been formed and includes KWS, multiple other maize breeders,

the MGA and the NFU. We are busy lobbying and have suggested a range of options to the Rt Hon Mark Spencer MP, Minister of State, Minister for Food, Farming and Fisheries.

To support this, we would urge producers and stakeholders to write to their MPs, to outline their concerns over the withdrawal of these products and the possible negative effects on their businesses. A letter of support can be downloaded from the MGA website at [www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk](http://www.maizegrowersassociation.co.uk) and we would strongly encourage you get involved.

KWS is working behind the scenes on a new seed treatment which will act as a bird deterrent, and we are determined to bring this to our growers' armoury as soon as possible. KWS is conducting trials in the UK and Europe to ensure this is ready as soon as practically possible. We will of course provide further updates on new options, and also any political resolutions achieved.

## ? DID YOU KNOW?

Growers are advised to monitor for eyespot from eight leaves onward and be prepared to use a fungicide if more than 30% of plants are affected. The application should contain triazoles and/or strobilurins. If eyespot is an ongoing problem, ensure that this year's stubble is finely chopped and incorporated into the soil.

**NEW!** Out now!

KWS **SPP NEWS** magazine  
– Sowing for Peak Performance,  
Summer 2023



Scan the QR code to download our Summer 2023 SPP news edition

Focus on...

# AUGUSTUS KWS



*Last year we grew Augustus and KWS Calvini, with a 50:50 split between the two varieties. Both varieties did well but the Augustus seemed to be ideally suited to our silty clay loam and therefore we have used it exclusively for this season.*



George Davis

## FARM CASE STUDY

# Maize for the dairy herd

GEORGE DAVIS, WEST BODDEN, SHEPTON MALLET, SOMERSET

An early harvest, with high yields and good starch potential are George Davis' three main requirements for a maize variety and he finds that Augustus KWS fits the bill. He has been experimenting with a strip-till technique for maize establishment for a couple of years and it has reduced costs considerably, although its management is still being fine-tuned. The business at West Bodden includes a large arable acreage and a dairy unit, as well as offering a wide range of contracting services.

The 120-140 hectares of maize that is grown each year at West Bodden is used to feed the Davis family's 300-cow dairy herd. It usually follows a cover crop after winter barley and precedes winter wheat.

George says: "It is very important that we can get the maize off in good time for planting our winter wheat and one of the reasons we like Augustus is that it takes fewer days to reach maturity, giving us the chance for an early harvest.

"Last year we grew Augustus and KWS Calvini, with a 50:50 split between the two varieties. Both varieties did well but the Augustus seemed to be ideally suited to our silty clay loam and therefore we have used it exclusively for this season. The yield figures for our 2022 maize were not split into varieties and average production was 14.5 tonnes/acre in a challenging year, with starch at 33%. Overall, Augustus produces good results, with a reliable, even crop and a large average cob size."

### STRIP-TILLING

Some 8 hectares were used for maize strip-tilling at West Bodden this season, with crop drilled in eight rows at six metres wide after a cover crop containing oats and vetches had been killed off using glyphosate.

The first attempt at strip-tilling for maize was in 2021, when George used an adapted sub-soiler on a small acreage. Last year, a 15-hectare area was allocated for strip tilling and a demonstration machine was used, but due to the preparation

involved and the need to learn more about the technique, the acreage was reduced for this season. One element in particular which he feels must be addressed before maize strip-tilling is to ensure that the soil pH is correct.

George is so confident that strip-tilling is the way forward that he has bought a Kuhn Striger 600. He is planning to use the machine extensively in future years, due to the potential cost saving it offers and its advantages in terms of soil structure preservation. Next year's rotation means that about 100 acres of fairly light land will be used for maize growing and it is anticipated that it will be dedicated to strip-tilling.

"Costings for the traditional, plough-based method of maize establishment average £40/acre for this farm and it is considerably cheaper for the strip-till method," comments George. "Another benefit is that strip-tilling keeps compaction to a minimum, as only a percentage of the land is travelled and relatively lightweight equipment can be used.

"The seed rate for the traditionally-established Augustus was the standard 103,000 seeds/hectare, but the figure was increased to 110,000 seeds/hectare for the strip-tilled crop because it was sown earlier into cooler soils. It was drilled on 23 April at 75cms spacings, while sowing for the main crop did not start until the first week of May."

George has found that a number of factors are involved in producing a good crop of maize from strip-tilling.

"So far I have found that the soil needs to be fairly light, with plenty of organic matter and a decent structure to allow for the development of strong roots," he says. "Obviously the N, P and K levels also have to be correct; many of the requirements are the same for cropping in general. However the timings are a bit more important for strip-tilling and adequate soil moisture levels are more critical, which is why it went in early."



### CONTRACTING SERVICES

Trading as **J and W Davis Ltd**, the family runs a busy contracting service for arable and grassland, with two combine harvesters and two foragers in the machinery shed. Operations include: spraying, fertiliser spreading, drilling, soil cultivations and silage harvesting. George farms in partnership with his parents, William and Teresa and his sister Jess, who runs the dairy unit.



## AUGUSTUS KWS FAO 160

**Ultra Early**

A born leader...

**AUGUSTUS KWS** is capable of achieving maturity in 130 days (compared with 160 days – mainstream varieties)

**Characteristics / Quality**

- Rapid dry-down
- Suitable across a wide range of soils
- First choice for less favourable sites on NIAB forage maize descriptive list for 2023
- Leading dry matter yield in its segment
- Excellent starch potential (37.7% average)
- ME average 11.8
- Superb early vigour

**Scan the QR code to watch a video review of AUGUSTUS KWS**

# KWS Maize Trials

KWS has a dedicated maize hybrid breeding programme specifically for Northern European countries.

Hybrid maize breeding is very complex, the process is time and labour-intensive, taking up to ten years of continuous and intensive research. The desired maize traits include a very good yield, resistance to pathogens, a high starch content, and good standability in the field. To be able to combine all these traits in one single variety, parent plants carrying the desired characteristics are cross-bred. The final stage of the process is extensive field-scale testing. Only the most successful varieties will be taken further.



**About 10%** of the KWS varieties on test each year make it through to the second stage of trials.

**Only 1-2%** make the final selection.

## KWS UK MAIZE DEMO & TRIAL SITES

- 7 trial and 2 demo sites maintained by **Hunt Agri Services**. Locations range from sea level up to 600ft
- 300 new varieties** screened each year, as well as commercially available varieties
- A number of sites ensures varieties are tested across all major maize growing regions of the UK, covering different altitudes, soil types and latitudes
- KWS trials mimic the protocols of the **NIAB** system. Therefore KWS trial results are extremely robust when compared with NIAB results
- On farm testing** to support and confirm trial data

## WHAT IS THIS BREEDING PROGRESS WORTH TO YOU?

The additional energy of the newer varieties compared with 2005 is circa 43,000 MJ/ha which is worth approx. 7900 litres of milk to the producer. This demonstrates the value in using newer varieties to enhance your on farm performance. For AD growers, our newer varieties offer a range of advantages, including higher yield potential, better early vigour and enhanced standing power.

	2005	2022	
	Average of varieties (6) FAO 170 or lower	KWS Exelon FAO 170	Difference
DM Yield t/ha	15.9	19.6	<b>23%</b>
ME Yield MJ/ha	179,000	222,000	<b>24%</b>
Starch Yield t/ha	5.23	6.55	<b>25%</b>

NIAB results - favourable sites

# FREE KWS Online Tools



## Digital consulting for farmers

A range of free online tools designed to help growers maximise results for their maize crops is available by signing up to myKWS.

Services available to all growers – you do not have to be a KWS customer to sign up.



### Heat Unit Tool

HARVEST

- Online service to monitor your crop and help you predict your harvest start date
- Live from Apr-Oct
- Uses local meteorological data to monitor crop progress against 10-year average to calculate real-time heat unit numbers
- Updated weekly



### Field Vitality Checker\*

MID-SEASON

- Uses satellite technology to scan crops for damage or other field problems
- Draw in your chosen field online to access the data
- Check for issues including: herbicide damage; nutrient deficiency (typically nitrogen or phosphate); eyespot or other disease problems; lodging; stem breakage; dry down; over-ripening
- Works by analysing satellite information to assess green area density (an indicator of plant health and maturity)

## To access your FREE TOOLS...

Go to [www.kws-uk.com](http://www.kws-uk.com) and select the Maize option. You can also download the myKWS app straight to your phone, available on both Apple and Android devices. Unsubscribe at any time.



## Visit our demonstration sites this September

**We have 2 demonstration sites approximately 10 minutes apart.**

One is close to sea level reflecting favourable sites, the other at 600 ft showing less favourable conditions at altitude.

The sites are unique in the UK and showcases the full KWS Maize portfolio including:

- Breeding demonstration
- Population wheel
- All KWS current commercial hybrids
- First look at new KWS forage and energy hybrids prior to commercialisation
- Compare the UK's bestselling maize hybrids
- Maize & Beans Trial
- Tour of adjacent AD plant if requested in advance

# KWS Open Days



**Lydney, Gloucestershire – Open during September**

To book your visit please contact your merchant or the  
KWS Maize office: [maize@kws-uk.com](mailto:maize@kws-uk.com)

SEEDING  
THE FUTURE  
SINCE 1856



## Meet the Team

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