# NEWSLETTER ISSUE 2 DECEMBER 2019

SEEDING THE FUTURE SINCE 1856



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Get the low down on the KWS Dinner and Field Day

## Welcome...

...to the second issue of 'My Maize Matters' KWS' quarterly newsletter. Our series will keep you posted on topical issues which can help you to maximise the results from your maize crop during the growing season, as well as offering advice on varietal selection and other related subjects.

In this issue, we review the 2019 season and look ahead to next year's planting. Maize seed is expected to be in high demand, due to the failure of a percentage of the UK wheat crop. It means that supplies of spring seed of all crop types may be limited and we advise you to place your orders early to make sure you get your first choice varieties.

We are proud to introduce our new Initio Bird Protect seed treatment, which is exclusive to KWS varieties and we also present a report from our biennial energy crops dinner and field day, which was held this autumn at our HQ near Lydney, Gloucestershire.

Please scan this code to sign up for futher issues:



## Maize Harvest Review

#### JOHN BURGESS

A late harvest, with dry matters expected to be up by 0.5t/ha on the year and starch marginally up compared with last year (32.6% in 2019 vs 32% in 2018). That is how John Burgess of KWS sums up the 2019 season.

"2019 has been far more in line to the long term average in terms of drilling conditions, heat units and crop development. Despite the high residual soil moisture deficit left from 2018, there has been ongoing rainfall this season, so we can expect none of the drought and associated crop failures which caused real yield losses for some farmers, especially those in East Anglia last year".



"Maize yields for 2019 are likely be equal or exceed those from 2018, but with far more consistent dry matter ranges, as a lack of drought will allow better grain filling and starch laydown too", concludes Mr Burgess.

### **KWS UK** New Precision Dry Matter Monitoring Tool

In our previous issue, we published exciting news about our new maize dry matter monitoring tool. It has been declared a success and we are looking for additional maize growers anywhere in the UK to join our pilot testing scheme. Would you like to take part? Contact one of the KWS maize team using the details on this newsletter, or email your interest to maize@kws-uk.com



Here's a summary of what our new service is all about:

- Online dry matter monitoring tool increases decision-making accuracy at harvest time
- Uses satellite imagery accurate to 10m<sup>2</sup> for crop analysis
- Imagery combined with variety FAO and rainfall, heat unit and radiation data on individual farms
- Colour coding system indicates crop is too wet, harvest-ready or has exceeded target dry matter
- Prioritises fields ready to cut useful for large acreages
- Improves yield and quality and reduce silage losses
- 25 UK maize growers using pilot system
- Due to go live in 2021 will cover 80% of UK maize-growing area.

# **KWS MAIZE PORTFOLIO 2020 COMPETITION**

Enter our maize portfolio competition by ordering the latest copy for the chance to win the seed variety of your choice from our wide selection, which contains top varieties suitable for a range of farm situations.

KWS

Apply online at www.surverymonkey.com/r/KWSmaize2020 The competition closes on 31//1/2020.

**1ST PRIZE** 20 bags of maize seed **2ND PRIZE** 12 bags of maize seed **3RD PRIZE** 8 bags of maize seed

## **Last Year's Portfolio Competition Winner**

Yorkshire-based Chris Stockdale won £1,000-worth of maize seed, after coming runner-up in our previous KWS Maize Portfolio competition draw. Mr Stockdale opted for KWS Arvid and Rodriguez KWS to feed his dairy cows.

"Both of the varieties performed well and I am planning to grow them again," says Mr Stockdale. "Yields on the sandy land reached an average 16 tonnes/ha, while the medium loam fields gave us 18-19 tonnes/ha. That was acceptable, particularly given the dry early summer and later high rainfall."

Mr Stockdale's maize silage from 2019 had not been analysed at the time of going to press, but he says fermentation has been excellent and the clamp is "looking good." Fed at 20kgs/head to produce a 10,500kgs average yield, the maize silage goes into a TMR for his 170-cow Carrvale herd near Pickering.

"The addition of maize silage to the diet six years ago has increased production by about 700 litres/head," he says. "We rely on wholecrop cereals for the short period when the maize runs out, but ideally we would like to feed it all year round. I like KWS varieties because they perform well on my farm."

Our new portfolio is packed with information to help you select the varieties that will perform best on your farm and fit in with your system. It is divided into forage and biogas sections and has a handy reference table, so you can compare varieties at a glance.



## NEW SEED TREATMENT TO REPLACE TMTD AND MESUROL ON KWS MAIZE **INTERPORT BIRD PROTECT**

The loss of Mesurol as a maize seed treatment to prevent bird damage is likely to have a far-reaching effect on the industry. But KWS has come up with an alternative solution. INITIO Bird Protect will be launched for 2020 as standard across all KWS varieties.

> The INITIO Bird Protect new seed treatment has active ingredients which ensure fungicidal action and bird repellency. To enhance its efficacy, it also contains zinc and manganese micronutrients for faster root development.

Growing maize without a bird repellency seed treatment is "not an option," according to John Burgess of KWS.

"High UK populations of birds like pheasants and rooks mean that there is a risk of significant crop losses from untreated seed or ineffective treatments," said Mr Burgess.

"In response to the withdrawal of both \*TMTD and \*\*Mesurol, maize breeders are offering a variety of differing treatments. KWS recognised the withdrawals of both actives have led to the industry losing its go-to standards. As such we take a clear responsibility in safeguarding maize crop health.

"By offering INITIO Bird Protect on virtually every KWS hybrid in our 2020 portfolio, we bring total clarity of choice for growers.

"This initiative will also help to protect the UK maize acreage, which is highly likely to diminish if untreated or fungicide-only treated seed is drilled. However with a backdrop of an ever-decreasing range of active ingredients, KWS researchers are also working towards a permanent solution to this issue," he said.

Growers planting INITIO Bird Protect treated seed have the KWS commitment to crop safety, bird repellency and best-in-class hybrids for the maize season ahead.



**INITIO BIRD PROTECT** 

**Standard Treatment** 

- Dual fungicidal and bird repellency seed treatment
- Standard on all KWS maize seed
- Formulated with micronutrients for root health
- Cold stress (12 deg°C .) and early vigour benefits in the 4 – 6 leaf stage
- Crop safety commitment

#### **CROP SAFETY COMMITMENT**

**INITIO BIRD PROTECT** offers genuine bird protection in maize.

KWS offers a 50% re-sow discount with replacement **INITIO BIRD PROTECT** treated seed, should bird damage occur.

KWS will carry out a field visit to verify any bird damage, together with your retail distributor.



\*TMTD - thiram \*\*Mesurol - methiocarb

<sup>\*</sup> Source KWS Cold Test Data 2019

## Drilling Depth Advice to Ensure Better Yields

#### After the 2019 season KWS has updated its guidance on seeding depth and seed placement for the growing season ahead.

Owing to the relatively short drilling window experience in both 2018 and 2019, maize planting showed up a number of cases where drilling depth and accuracy can be improved.

The drilling window exists from the time soil temperatures reach safe drilling temperatures, and at the same time adequate soil moisture is present. In both 2018 and 2019 this optimum window was constrained, leaving less time for drilling and field work to be completed.

We have summarised our guidance into two areas, firstly on seed placement, and secondly on appropriate drilling depth as below;

#### Seed Placement Advice

- Uniform seed placement ensures optimal root formation, stronger stems and uniform light interception
- Seed placement is 'fixed' at the point of drilling so uniformity must be checked at drilling

#### Eliminate double plants

- Double plants lead to weaker root structures
- Double plants compete and normally form two smaller ears
- Yield and maturity is not optimised along the row

Plant inter row spacing is normally referred to as the coulter deposition distance.

#### **Recommended drill depths**

- Early to mid season (April to early May) 3 cm to 5 cm
- Mid season (Early May onwards) 5 cm to 7 cm
- Late (mid May onwards) 7 cm to 9 cm max

Ensure buttress roots are covered on 90% of the final plant stand to promote optimal root anchorage.

#### **?** DID YOU KNOW?

There is no longer an associated yield penalty with earlies because of genetic advancements in plant breeding; some early modern KWS hybrids will out-perform later types.

## KWS Variety Trials Results

#### We are proud to announce the launch of our new variety, the highstarch KWS Exelon.

Available for the coming season, it has been the best performer in our in-house trials and has a unique feature. It has the potential to carry 20 rings of grain; by comparison a typical older hybrid will contain 15-16. Obviously this increases the weight of the cob and to offset the risk of lodging, it has been bred with a lower ear insertion height. It is an exciting step forward and we are looking forward to monitoring KWS Exelon next year.

We are achieving rapid genetic progress in breeding plants that suit the UK climate and will give growers the results they are looking for. Therefore we advise the inclusion of our newest types as a percentage of the farm portfolio each year. Nevertheless, some of our well-established varieties also stack up well and we continue to get very positive feedback about Cito KWS and Autens KWS.

Cito is one of the earliest-maturing varieties on the market at FAO 150. It has excellent starch potential and high yields of close to 40%, as well as high starch figures. Autens KWS has already been classified as the highest-yielding in its segment for 2020 season. It is noted for its good standing power and rapid dry-down abilities.

#### KWS - the market leader in hybrid maize varieties





## **Dinner and Field Day**

Growers from all over the country came together to attend our energy crops dinner and field day at KWS HQ in Lydney, Gloucestershire in September. We allowed plenty of networking time within the itinerary and our speakers were well-received, with a lot of interesting points raised during the tours of our demonstration plots and on-site AD plant.

Here are a few of the comments from energy crops event delegates:

Very worthwhile, interesting to look at the trial plots and some excellent speakers. The evening dinner speaker was fantastic; good choice. I've learned a lot and I'm planning to use the new dry matter monitoring tool to help with harvest logistics.

#### **?** DID YOU KNOW?

- 50,000 hectares of the country's maize is grown for energy production
- It makes up about 25% of the total maize area
- 2011 saw 12,000ha of maize grown for energy.
  Predicted to increase to 60,000ha by 2022
- Approximately 340 AD plants countrywide
- Greatest future opportunities for AD the supply of energy to the national gas grid
- When maize is added to rye, triticale and beet, the area represents less than 1% of our arable production. The figure for Germany is 7%



#### Philipp Lukas, Future Biogas



One of the highlights of the event was the presentation by Philipp Lukas of Future Biogas, who spoke at the evening dinner. He stressed the need for the further development of the UK's AD industry. His company runs 11

AD (anaerobic digestion) plants, with some of its energy production injected into the national gas grid. One plant supplies power to Centre Parcs at Sherwood Forest.

We have picked out some snippets from his presentation which we hope will be of interest:

"Feedstock supplies are not as forthcoming as they should be. To make a significant impact on the UK gas grid, more agricultural crop and residue feedstocks are needed. Hundreds of millions of pounds have been spent on developing the gas grid, it is a national asset which needs to be fully utilised.

"Some of the carbon dioxide which is a byproduct of biomethane production plants is sold into the food and beverage market. The industry is exploring new ways of handling the product because it could almost double its environmental impact through carbon dioxide capture. One option is to store carbon dioxide in disused gas wells and this would have an immediate positive effect on the UK's carbon footprint; in Norway the practice has been adopted for several decades."

"I predict that over the next 5 to 10 years we will see a much greater focus on carbon sequestration, coupled with a continued drive for soil improvement and preservation. Growers should be rewarded for their efforts; I believe that farmers should be paid for changing their practices to maximise the lock-up of carbon in their soils.

"I would like to see raised awareness of the benefits of the digestate that is a by-product of AD. It adds valuable nutrients to the soil, increases soil microbe activation and enhances carbon absorption, as well as lifting organic matter levels and offering potential savings on chemical fertiliser inputs.

"More research is needed to find out which farming practices, such as rotational changes, min or no-till and break crops, will improve soil carbon capture in the long term and this would also promote soil water retention."

#### **?** DID YOU KNOW?

17% of the turnover of our parent company, KWS Group, is invested into plant breeding research and development annually

#### Nick Reynolds, EVG Springhill Farms



Nick Reynolds of EVG Springhill Farms in Worcestershire gave a presentation on the business, which has AD plants which produce biogas for the national grid and grows 3,750 acres of energy crops including 2,000 acres of maize, as

well supplying salad crops to the large retailers.

"The main challenges we face are logistical, as well as ensuring compliance with nitrate vulnerable zone regulations and maintaining a good relationship with local residents," he said. "Historically, we have planted nine-plus maize varieties, but we are hoping to reduce the number to five, in order to simplify crop management.

"Future plans include increasing the acreage of green cover species to replace forage crops ahead of maize and we will also focus on expanding the storage of digestate and improving the accuracy of application; some 80,000 tonnes of digestate are produced each year. We may also add kale to the rotation, when sugar beet is not available.

"I believe that the KWS UK DM monitoring tool will be very useful to our operations and should help us to achieve a more timely harvest."

#### Will Hunt, AD plant

The KWS on-farm site at Lydney in Gloucestershire is also home to the Plusterwine Biogas AD plant and energy crops day delegates were given a tour by owner/manager, Will Hunt. AD Plant Facts:

- Established in 2013
- Originally a 500kW plant expanded to 1.5 mW
- Produces electricity and dries maize and paper pulp for use as livestock bedding
- Feedstocks maize and rye silage and FYM (also chicken manure which makes up 40% of intake)
- \* Group tours are available on request to the KWS maize office



#### Meet the Team...



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