myKWS MAIZE

NEWSLETTER | ISSUE 25 | AUTUMN 2025

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KWS

Welcome…

…to issue 25 of the myKWS MAIZE quarterly newsletter, which keeps you up to date on all the latest information on maize and helps you make the most of your crop.

There is plenty to share in this issue. Andrew Cook of KWS UK reviews the growing season, and we introduce four new KWS UK varieties featured on the 2026 Descriptive List.

Our three farmer case studies feature a couple of growers in south-west Scotland, who outline their experiences with KWS Leto. Meanwhile, a Buckinghamshire grower/contractor explains how KWS Norento has boosted yields for his cash crop maize, which supplies both AD plants and local dairy farmers.

SEASONAL REVIEW

ANDREW COOK, KWS UK

Andrew Cook

Talking about averages for the 2025 maize season holds little value, as yields have varied widely, largely dictated by the timing of localised rainfall.

What can be said with certainty is that an early, trouble-free harvest has been the norm, giving growers a head start on autumn operations. In some cases, oilseed rape has even followed maize – a scenario almost without precedent.

In regions such as Kent, some growers have seen their best results in years, producing large volumes for nearby AD plants. Meanwhile, the abundance of sunshine hours has supported strong crop quality across much of the country. As a result, many farms now have high-starch maize silages to sustain livestock through the winter.

The Next Generation…

Lay the foundation for successful maize cultivation with KWS UK.
Four new varieties will be added to the 2026 BSPB Forage Maize Descriptive List (DL).

KWS PORTABELLO is out in front for early yield and delivers excellent starch to drive ruminant production. Very high early vigour encourages rapid establishment.

KWS ZIMO delivers stand-out maincrop yields – and enormous total energy yields per hectare – filling your clamp and boosting ruminant and AD production.

KWS REO is a proven performer on both favourable and less favourable sites, consistently delivering extreme yield and quality for its maturity. A winner for multi-use production on mainstream sites.

AGROLINO delivers heavy yields for both forage and biogas where a long growing season is available. High yields ensure clamps are full.

FOCUS ON **KWS LETO** FAO160 **FARM CASE STUDY ONE**

Maize for the **dairy herd**

MICHAEL YATES, EAST LOGAN FARM, CASTLE DOUGLAS, DUMFRIESSHIRE

Michael Yates and Alistair Neil

> *"The 2025 crop is looking good enough to easily reach at least 20 tonnes/acre fresh weight!*

A return to maize growing after two decades has been a positive move for the Yates family, and Michael is hoping that this year's KWS Leto crop will help to break the 12,000kgs milk yield barrier for the family's noted herd of 480 'Logan' pedigree Holsteins.

Maize used to be grown under plastic at East Logan, but it was replaced with whole crop cereals and was not reintroduced until 2024, says Michael. Some 50 acres (including a small area of KWS Leto) were planted in the open, and the variety was sown across the 90-acre maize acreage for this season.

"The KWS Leto was ready to cut 10-14 days ahead of the other variety last year and that gave us the confidence to use it exclusively and increase the allocated area," he says. "Maize undoubtedly promotes milk yields, but there were harvest issues and plastic is detrimental to our environmental footprint.

"The overall maize yield for 2024 was 17 tonnes/acre fresh weight in a difficult, wet season, and this year has been very different. The 2025 crop is looking good enough to easily reach at least 20 tonnes/acre fresh weight, which was the average under plastic."

Like last year, the maize is being followed by forage rye. Maize silage was added to the TMR at 20% inclusion, and there is scope for a higher rate with the expanded acreage.

"The maize was sown on fields that are sheltered from easterly winds and close to a river prone to flooding. The 2024 crop was harvested in October, giving us just 24 hours to plant the rye using the power harrow and discs. Thankfully, the turnaround was not so rushed with this autumn's late September cutting date, and we have the benefit of mostly sandy loam soils.

"Winter ground cover from the forage rye helps to minimise nutrient losses and keep the soils working over the winter. The 2024 forage rye yield performance was impacted due to the wet autumn, and it gave us the advantage of double-cropping and analysed quite well, with a ME of 10-plus. It was cut in early May, allowing adequate time for maize seedbed preparation and drilling on 11 May.

The plan is to repeat the maize on the same fields for spring 2026.

"In the longer term, its place in the rotation will take some thinking about, due to the later harvest date compared with the previous whole crop cereals. However, we have made a commitment by purchasing our own maize header."

Michael farms with his parents, Brian and Sheila, and the family is well known in the Holstein breeding world, with the Logan herd twice reaching the RABDF/NMR Gold Cup award finals.

"We meet a lot of other pedigree breeders, and it seems that all the top producers use maize silage to push milk output," says Michael. "We are doing all we can to progress our Holsteins, which are run as two separate herds a few miles apart. The cows average 11,800kgs on three daily milkings, and it would be nice to get comfortably over 12,000kgs. The target should be achievable with the benefit of genomics, and also through tweaking the ration to include maize silage, as the feeding system must keep pace with genetic advancement. A yield figure of 13,000kgs is the next goalpost," says Michael.

FORAGE RYE ANALYSIS

DM: 37.1%
CP: 9.2%
ME: 10.8MJ/kg

KWS LETO – FAO 160

- **Dual-purpose - AD and ruminants**
- **Yield average 17t/ha DM**
- **Superb starch potential (38.8% average)**
- **Short season variety (late sowing and/or early harvest)**
- **Excellent early vigour**

EAST LOGAN HERD FACTS AND FIGURES

- **540 acres (total)**
- **Two fully housed herds on same management system**
- **300 head and 180 head**
- **Milk sold to Arla**
- **Solids yields: 4.4-4.6% butterfat, 3.5% protein**
- **Compact feeding regime: grass and maize silage; protein blend; soda wheat; molasses; water volume based on forage DM**
- **Sexed semen used for replacements**

AGRONOMIST PERSPECTIVE

ALISTAIR NEIL, AGRONOMIST, AGRII

Alistair, who represents Agrii in south-west Scotland, assisted with the transition to maize at East Logan.

"We managed to get hold of a bag of KWS Leto for the farm last season, to have a look-see and compare it with the previous variety being grown," says Alistair. "KWS Leto made the Forage Maize Descriptive List for 2025 and it is proving to be an excellent option for growers in my area because of its short season growing potential.

"With the forage rye included at East Logan, there is time pressure at both shoulders of the season. It is essential to select a variety that can be grown in the open and produce a crop that will fill the clamp after only being in the ground for four to five months.

"When growing a variety without plastic, it is critical to wait for the soil temperature to have reached 8°C for at least 10 days prior to drilling, with no cold weather forecast. Waiting for the forage rye to be harvested in early May reduces the temptation to drill too early.

"As the KWS Leto was sown after the other varieties in the area had been drilled under plastic, it was slightly slower to get established. However, once it found its feet it quickly caught up and never looked back.

"It has to be noted that the weather has been exceptionally favourable, however. My corner of Scotland had 20-25mm of rain every couple of weeks over the summer, as well as plenty of sunshine hours. The zinc and nitrogen-based foliar feed towards the end of June was again a worthwhile investment; it is an input that I will always recommend," says Alistair.

FOCUS ON **KWS LETO** FAO160

FARM CASE STUDY TWO

Maize as a **cash crop**

DAVE BELL, HODDOMTOWN, LOCKERBIE, DUMFRIESSHIRE

When Dave Bell was looking for an alternative spring crop for his grass/cereal rotation, the farm agronomist suggested that KWS Leto might replace some of the spring barley acreage. As a first-time maize grower, Dave has been pleased with the results after selling the 19 acres of standing crop to a local dairy farmer.

Hoddomtown grows winter and spring barley in a rotation with grass leys, as well as renting out about two dozen acres for potato growing. Some 300-400 store calves and a store lamb group are finished annually, with the unit also carrying a 200-ewe flock.

Dave says: "The maize was advertised as a standing crop on my personal Facebook page, and the news spread further by word of mouth. Within a short time, I had taken several phone calls and been offered the full price per acre.

"Maize silage is a good cattle feed, and it was always in the back of my mind that it could be used at home if there was no interest. However, not only did it sell, but a couple of other local dairy farmers have since asked if I could plant some on their behalf.

"Next year's rotation has not been finalised, and I expect to expand the maize acreage, again at the expense of the spring barley. It seems there is a ready market in this area, and I have not ruled out feeding it to my own cattle in the future."

He sets out the advantages of maize as an enterprise.

"Spring barley prices have been down, and maize provides an opportunity to utilise FYM, rather than having to store it over the summer for autumn use. Marketing it as a standing crop means there is no pressure on storage capacity and it fits in with the work pattern, as it is drilled and cut later than the barley."

The maize followed grass, which was sprayed off before cultivations began. The field was limed, ploughed and power harrowed, and a small quantity of chemical fertiliser supplemented the FYM. The land was treated with a pre-emergence herbicide, with the KWS Leto drilled on 1 May at 105,000 seeds/ha.

The crop had chitted by 5 May, he reports, and the plants had emerged in rows by 12 May. A post-emergence herbicide, combined with a foliar nutrient (nitrogen, zinc, manganese), was applied in mid-June when the maize had reached the 8-leaf stage.

"There was not a lot of agronomy involved, and once the maize was up and growing it was a question of shutting the field gate and looking over every now and then to make sure that all was well," says Dave.

Dave Bell with Rory Clark-Kennedy

He works alongside his son, Finlay, who has recently returned from college to work at home, while his younger son, Gregor, is currently studying agriculture. The farm also offers horse livery.

"The next step is probably to introduce some cover crops over the winter after the maize, and forage rye looks as if it might be the solution. Another subject up for discussion is to take back some of the farming operations in hand, as contractors have been used extensively up to this point. That will be easier now that Finlay is working at home, and Gregor is particularly keen on the cropping side. The younger generation's viewpoint has to be taken into consideration," says Dave.

AGRONOMIST PERSPECTIVE

RORY CLARK-KENNEDY, AGRONOMIST, AGRII

Based in south-west Scotland, Rory of Agrii was on hand to support Dave in his first year of maize growing.

"I immediately thought of KWS Leto when I was asked for a recommendation and the variety has not disappointed," says Rory. "Both Dave and I agreed that we wanted to see if maize could work in the rotation without the use of plastic, so a short season variety with early harvest potential was a priority, especially in this part of the country. KWS Leto fitted the bill, and it has been a real bonus in this part of the world," says Rory.

HARRIET BLAKEY, AGRII SEED PRODUCT SPECIALIST

There are no compromises with KWS Leto, according to Agrii's Harriet Blakey, who covers Northern England, Lothian and the Scottish Borders.

"In the past, ultra-early maize varieties were associated with a degree of compromise, specifically when it came to DM yields. However, the KWS Leto on my clients' farms this year has demonstrated vigorous growth leading to high DM yields, with well-developed cobs producing good starch content. One farm has achieved an average fresh weight yield of 22 tonnes/acre at 35% DM.

"Everyone has been impressed with the variety, whether it has been grown on the east or the west side of the region. It was selected mainly for its short season capability, which can bring forward harvest dates. Maize is becoming more of a viable option for growers in marginal regions. Unlike some other parts of the UK, this area had enough rainfall to keep the crop growing well this season."

Maize breeding genetics have advanced rapidly in recent years, particularly within the early-maturing sector, she states.

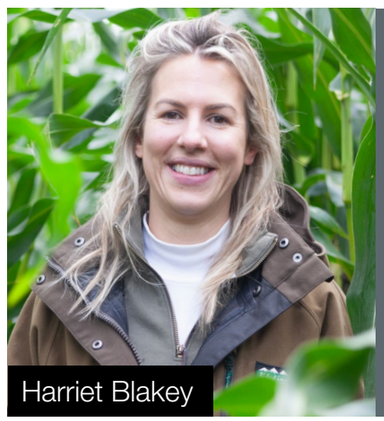
"I get a lot of enquiries from farmers looking to discuss the option of growing maize without the use of plastic. Some have never grown the crop before, while others stopped sowing it due to the possible environmental impact at harvest time. Interest has been reignited by a desire to maximise production from home grown forage.

"Varieties like KWS Leto have opened up opportunities for planting maize in the open, in locations that might previously have been considered too marginal. Nevertheless, it is important to select the right variety and sow into favourable soils. In this region, maize should ideally be established on south-facing fields that are not too exposed, and growers should also be prepared for an October harvest in a normal year."

Maize performance in general will suffer if it is sown into compacted ground or faces weed competition, she adds.

"I would advise tackling any compaction before planting and considering both a pre-emergence and a post-emergence herbicide. Maize is not the cheapest crop to grow, and as long as it is managed with attention to detail it can return significant feed value.

"The majority of livestock producers grow maize to produce high quality silage that will boost milk production and/or liveweight gains. Opting for later maturing varieties while relying on the aid of plastic may not always be the best financial policy, in my opinion. The favourable growing season has encouraged confidence for northern growers, and I am expecting an expanded conventional maize acreage for 2026," says Harriet.



Harriet Blakey

"KWS Leto produces a silage with high figures for DM, starch content and ME.

FOCUS ON **KWS NORENTO** FAO 210 **FARM CASE STUDY**

Maize as a **cash crop** and for the **beef herd**

DANIEL TUCKWELL, SALDEN CRABTREE FARM, BUCKINGHAMSHIRE (ROBERT TUCKWELL CONTRACTING)

Daniel Tuckwell

> *"The crop performed very well under tough conditions, especially on stay-green and dry-down qualities.*

Daniel Tuckwell and his family grow almost 2,000 acres of silage maize annually as a wheat break, and their 'Robert Tuckwell Contracting' business took the total acreage under their management to 4,000 acres this year. Most of the home crop is sold fresh weight to local dairy farmers and into AD plants, with some 40 acres retained for the suckler herd.

Salden Crabtree was affected by this season's droughts, says Daniel, who farms in partnership with his parents, Robert and Jane.

"We would normally expect to ensile 21,000 tonnes of maize silage, but the figure was down to 18,000 tonnes," he says. "The phone has been ringing constantly with people wanting to buy maize silage. Regular customers have had their usual deliveries, but the clamps are empty aside from stocks for our own cattle. We do not have the additional 3,000 tonnes that are generally sold over the winter months."

Maize on the home farm was divided into two sections, with roughly half dedicated to Keops and KWS Norento, selected for their FAO of around 210 and high yield potential. The remaining maize ground carried FAO 190 varieties.

"The FAO is matched to soil type and the range also spreads the workload," says Daniel. "Varieties have to be dual purpose for livestock and AD for maximum flexibility and bulk fresh weight potential. High gas yields for the AD plants and a good starch content for our dairy customers are two other priorities."

KWS Norento beat Keops by a margin on yield at 32–36 t/ha, compared with Keops at 28–36 t/ha.

"In an average year, the crop would achieve 38–50 t/ha and drought effect was disappointing, although it could have been much worse," he comments.

"It was the fourth season for Keops. In previous harvests, it has averaged 24-29% starch and had a gas yield of 240 cubic metres per fresh weight tonne. We are very happy with Keops, and KWS Norento has taken production to the next level, despite the weather setbacks."

The standard drilling period is the first week in May, and this year saw early drilling.

"The soil temperature had reached the target by mid-April and we managed to catch a limited amount of soil moisture. Harvest dates also had to be shifted. Cutting would normally start on the 20th September, and it was all finished by that date."

The lowland farm has mainly heavy clay soils and maize is sown after overwintered ploughing or follows stubble turnips for sheep grazing. A 12-metre trailed Horsch Maestro handles the drilling.

"Some customers ask for a specific seed rate, and we find that 103,000 seeds/ha works best, and DAP, MOP, or microgranular fertiliser is added down the spout according to requirements. The row spacings are set at 75cm, which is optimal for strong plants and a thick crop. A 50cm setting has been trialled, but it produced weaker stems that could increase lodging risk."

Digestate is spread at the six-leaf stage and the service is offered to customers, with about 70,000 tonnes applied this past season.

"The digestate rate is roughly 25–30 cubic metres/ha, and it will depend on soil indices," he explains. "It provides plenty of sulphur and micronutrients, as well as topping up soil potash and phosphate levels and acting as a soil conditioner."

This spring, the farm took delivery of a 1,200 HP Claas Jaguar maize forager to replace the 980 HP Claas model. Daniel describes the new machine as "phenomenally good."

"The forager was bought partly because two new AD plant customers came on board. Unfortunately, its efficiency potential was not optimised because of the challenging season, and it should come into its own for 2026. It will be used across about 5,500 acres and it will be a great help with managing timeliness of operation."

A biological additive is used in the ensiling process.

"It acts as an insurance policy, and new for this season was an MDE Rhino Pak silage compactor, which is run on a 300 HP tractor and works alongside a loading shovel to remove air pockets.

"Achieving top yields and quality requires a degree of luck, particularly when it comes to the weather. Careful seedbed preparation and timely spring establishment are vital for getting the crop up and away, and it also needs to be fed well. A previous experiment with a foliar nutrient application failed to give a return on investment."

Maize is grown in alternate years with first milling wheats, and the group one variety, KWS Vibe, is being introduced this autumn on the 3,800-acre farm.

"Demand for maize silage by the fresh weight tonne has risen in line with the number of AD plants opening in the region. Our dozen or so customers are divided into equal thirds: AD plants, dairy farmers and beef producers. Wheat and maize silage as cash crops play a key role in farm income, and maize is also grown on 20–25 separate arrangements for both active and non-active farmers.

"We are fortunate to be supported by a good team of staff. This season has not been easy for maize, but we are eternal optimists and 2026 could well be a better year," says Daniel.

KWS NORENTO – FAO 210

- **Highly suitable for AD and high maize inclusion diets**
- **Yield average 19.6 t/ha DM**
- **Balanced starch content (28.9%)**
- **Wide and secure harvest window**
- **Great early vigour**

BEEF HERD

The maize silage fed is an excellent source of dietary energy and gives a nice bloom to their coats, says Daniel. The 300 British Blue females go to an Aberdeen Angus bull, with their progeny sold privately as 20-month stores.

Forage sold to equestrian units. Contracting services include: end-to-end arable contracting; construction; tyre supply; fencing; plant machinery.

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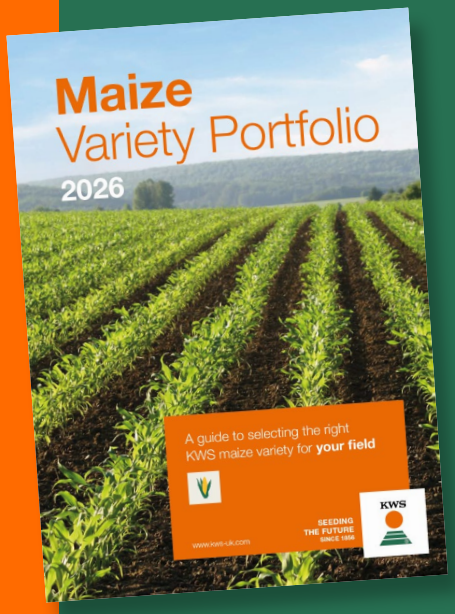

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