



Teagasc Crops Better Farm

April 2011 Diary

Despite the fact this is a small country there is a marked difference between the Better Farmers circumstances when I spoke to them last week. Soil moisture is an issue with the Williamsons in Wexford and the O'Donoghues in Meath but the Crowleys in Cork are happy with the amount of rain so far. However, as a general point they all agree, this has been a terrific year and almost all crops are looking well and have good yield potential.

Crowleys in Cork

Last week was a busy week on the Crowley farm with the sprayer moving in all directions. John is happy with his crops so far as all crops are full from hedge to hedge. "The flag leaf was peeping out to fully out on most of the winter barley crops last week so we applied a fungicide (Opus+Bravo) with Cerone at 0.4L/ha to most of the winter barleys" said John. All crops were clean but John was a little nervous of Saffron and switched from Opus to Proline. "With all the talk of rhynchosporium in Saffron I decided to protect the excellent canopies even though the dry weather will stop the spread of the disease" said John.

The Crowleys have a large acreage of winter wheat and the third last leaf is three quarters out to fully out in most fields. John started the T1 application to the wheats late last week. "We might be starting a little earlier than I would like as the third last leaf on some crops are not fully emerged but we have to get around a large acreage and don't want to miss the excellent spraying conditions" said John. Proline and Bravo will be the T1 fungicide most used by John this year. "Getting quotes for chemicals is difficult and time consuming" said John "but its worth it when you can see large price differences in the same products". The final fungicide choice is based around the price with an eye to the chemical composition not the other way around on the Crowley farm.

Williamsons in Wexford

"Emergence of spring crops has been exceptional this year" commented George when admiring a crop of spring barley late last week. "All my crops are looking well but I need to start weed control in a couple of fields which are particularly dirty with charlock" added George. The dry spring was excellent for establishing crops but George maintains the spring crops need rain to wash in the fertilisers and counteract temporary trace element deficiencies like manganese. "My spring crops are not struggling yet but I would be much happier if the recently applied nitrogen was washed in" said George. He is reluctant to apply any herbicides as yet to his spring crops, not because the weeds are too small or the weeds have not emerged as yet but because he feels the crops are under enough pressure at the moment. "Last year in the Teagasc spring barley weed trial I could see where a high rate of herbicide damaged the yield potential of a crop by 0.8 t/ha (0.3t/ac)". "At the moment

weeds are still small and I will hit them later this week after a little rain has fallen” said George. He intends to reduce rates of herbicides to half rates (or lower) and include an aphicide (as crops are only a few miles from the sea).

The only cloud on the horizon for a good harvest (so far) for the Williamsons is the winter oat crop which was not ploughed out. In comparison to the newly planted spring oats it doesn't look great and has a yield potential to match. But on a positive note the plants which survived are growing strongly and are disease free.

O'Donoghues in Meath/Dublin

Winter wheat is a large part of the O'Donoghues acreage and Joe and Colm are happy with all crops so far. They stuck to their guns and didn't apply Chlorothalonil (Bravo) to the crops which he is quite happy about today. “Crops are very clean with only a little septoria on leaf six or leaf seven” said Joe. “Its been very dry on our farms so septoria didn't travel and we hope to exploit this in the T1 fungicide this year” said Joe. Septoria sampling of wheat on Joes farm last year revealed the crops had high levels of insensitive strains, so Joe is aware that rates cannot be reduced too much or persistency will be compromised if the interval to T2 fungicide is stretched. “I am still waiting for a couple of prices before I make a decision about the T1 fungicide. In the past I was happy with the performance of Helix, Proline or Venture Extra” commented Joe.

Winter barley is clean so far with the final growth regulator due this week. “Cerone is my product of choice at this timing and I will add a fungicide (probably generic epoxiconazole or maybe Proline, depending on disease pressure) to aid penetration and the fungicide will help to stretch the interval from the first fungicide until the head is emerged.

When asked about his spring barleys the first answer was that they needed rain. All the top dressing is applied and rain is needed to wash it in. Joe has noticed his system of placing fertiliser at seed level before planting appears to have worked extremely well this year in comparison to neighbours' crops which didn't employ the same strategy. “Crops look healthier and are growing more vigorously however the cost is that our sowing technique is much slower and we can get caught when the planting window is narrow” said Joe. Crops wont get a herbicide until the moisture deficit is rectified as Joe does not want to put the crops under anymore stress.