



Combines Rolling on Teagasc Crops BETTER Farms

Tim O'Donovan, Kildalton College

Another harvest is about to start on the Teagasc Crops BETTER farms. Decisions that were made before and during the season will be soon measured by the combine and on the back of that information, next years crop programs will be finalised. Looking back over the season, the weather was kind when both spring and winter crops were established. I don't think I ever had a season as an advisor when there was as little germination or establishment problems with cereal crops. The result is commented on in this paragraph by Joe O'Donoghue when he says crops are full to the ditches. Disease levels in general were low to start with (except rhyngo in winter barley) but it soon turned out to be a high Septoria year in wheat.

The Teagasc Oak Park disease trials have had hundreds of people to see them in the past month with advisors from the UK, France and Germany making the trip to specifically see the new chemistry in action under challenging situations. Wheat growers should pay particular attention this autumn to variety selection as I have seen robust fungicide programs performing poorly if the variety is weak on disease to start with. Our three BETTER farmers will be trying out blocks of the newer varieties this autumn courtesy of the seed trade which you can see at next years open days. Of course there will be plots of all varieties in the Department of Agriculture trials on the BETTER farms also on show at our open days.

Teagasc will be holding its National Crops Forum on Wednesday 7th September from 2-5 pm in the Keadeen Hotel where you will hear the latest info on markets and crop husbandry. All are welcome.

John Crowley, Cork

"We have about 100 acres of winter barley cut so far but it is mainly from the centres of fields so I can't give you a figure as to how it's exactly doing. I know our trailers are weighing well and grain quality looks good. I don't think it will be as good as 2010 but that was an exceptional year where our winter barley averaged over 4 t/ac" said John when I spoke to him last week. John has a mixture of 2 row and 6 rows cut so far, mainly Saffron and Sequel. "We have no straw baled yet but it looks to be excellent quality and reasonable volumes". Overall John thinks barley looks promising but not exceptional. He was happy with his spray and fertiliser programs on barley which were decided on with the help of his local advisor Ciaran Collins. He is probably going the go with Sequel, Saffron and Famosa next year as they spread his harvest window. "Sequel comes in early so I can get started sooner which is a big help with straw" said John.

Winter wheat is the other main crop on John's farm. He has noticed some take-all patches in the past few weeks, a little more than usual. Otherwise John was happy with his spray programs. Overall John got good disease control from using mainly triazole chemistry. He didn't use the newer SDHI chemistry because at the time disease levels were low in his crops. The wheat varieties John grew this year

included Alchemy, JB Diego and Sahara, all of which have good disease ratings. He has noticed high aphid numbers in his crops especially in spring barley. He did use an aphicide on the head but lost some valuable time getting the job done as his sprayer broke down.

John is also just finishing off a new grain store. It will be a great addition to the grain handling on the farm and will hold about 2000 tons. John was just finishing off the conveyers when I spoke to him last week.

Joe O'Donoghue, Meath

Also hoping to cut winter barley in the next few days is Joe O'Donoghue. The crop looked good all year and never got any set-back. "We didn't have the rhyncho issues you had down South. Shay Phelan (local Teagasc advisor) was sending us out the warning messages but the rhyncho never got hold up here and I have good hopes for my barley at the moment" said Joe.

Joe is thinking of drilling some winter oilseed rape into ground that needs to be 'broken'. "I am debating whether or not to drill winter rape. Its 10 or more years since I last grew it so I hope all its problems have been sorted out by now. Recently Joe and his discussion group visited a farm in the east of the UK. The farmer was growing oilseed rape every 2 years, alternating it with winter wheat. It was early days yet but so far he was maintaining his yields. "I didn't see any signs of rotational disease like Club-root" said Joe. "I was impressed with their sub-soiler establishment system. The wider rows look like they suit the way oilseed rape is being grown nowadays".

Locally Joe says it costs around €35 /ac for the contractor to drill the rape using that type of system. "That is only good value if it establishes the crop correctly".

"My winter wheat is looking good. Einstein is coming in quicker than JB Diego but I am not sure how this will affect yield. If we had a scorching summer it might have been bad for grain fill given the dry spring. Hopefully the cool weather will lengthen the grain filling a bit and increase the yields. All the crops up here are very full from ditch to ditch and most crops are standing up well. I suppose I could have done with more nitrogen based on what I saw in local trials but in another year, extra nitrogen would have flattened the crops so I think we are ok".

"Spring barley will not be a record-breaker up here this year due to the dry April. Propino and Quench look good. Disease levels were low but I had some late mildew on Snakebite" said Joe.

Joe also commented that this year with the dry soils he will hope to do some sub-soiling after harvest. "We didn't get a chance to sub-soil last year but I think our soils will benefit from it this year and hopefully we will get a good shatter effect from sub-soiling. After 3 wet summers there is a lot tracks and so on in fields".

George & Ken Williamson, Wexford

“I am just delivering the first of the grain, Tim” said George when I spoke to him last week. “I think it is doing 3.5 t/ac but won’t know until we have finished the field off. As it is my first time growing winter barley in a long time; I don’t have a reference to compare it to on my farm. I gave it around 140 units of nitrogen and am very happy with the spray programs decided on, between my local advisor John Pettit, Ken and I”.

“I hope to sow some oilseed rape after it but I need to get a reasonable price before committing to the crop. It is not a crop I grew before because I use oats as my main break crop along with small amounts of beet and maize (sold to local farmers). However rape offers me the chance to widen out my oat rotation and to lessen the chances of getting Oat Mosaic Virus” said George.

“Speaking of oats my ‘experimental’ Barra crop left after the frost looks very good compared to spring oats nearby. I did take out one field of winter oats as it was terribly thin-looking in February and Mascani (true winter variety) is looking good also. Hopefully the ‘experiment’ will bushel well also” said George.

George is not as happy with his spring barley as last year. He felt that the rain missed his area and that crops never really delivered on their early promise. “I also think the dry weather reduced the residual power of the herbicide as we had some speedwells coming through a good herbicide program” said George. On the variety front, Propino looks good and once again barley on ‘fresher’ ground is looking really well compared continuous barley ground.

Winter wheat (Alchemy and JB Diego) also got a set-back from the dry weather and George tried some liquid fertiliser to give the crop a boost. Visually, he felt it did help compared to untreated tramlines. He was very happy with disease control in his wheat crops.