



Teagasc Crops Better Farm

May Diary

Meath

Joe O'Donoghue rain gauge hasn't seen much action over the past few weeks. "Even though there has been 20 mm of rain its hard to tell on the ground as the wind has dried up the rain almost as quick as it falls". Joe added "It goes without saying we need more rain". Winter crops are looking well and have retained a reasonable good colour and the small quantity of rain should help to get more nitrogen cycling through the system. The O'Donoghues still have nitrogen to apply to bring crops up to 210 kg/ha of N and Joe is hoping to apply this shortly but is also hoping for an inch of rain to wash it in. Trace element deficiencies are widespread in winter and spring crops. Joe applied manganese on all his wheat this year (for the first time) and is happy with the results. "The very dry conditions are making it difficult for the plant to pick up soil manganese and we felt all crops needed a boost" said Joe. "We also specifically targeted some of the later sown spring barleys with trace elements as there were suffering and we will come back with weeds and disease at a later stage" said Joe.

Winter Wheats are very clean with the top five leaves showing no signs of disease. "Its hard to see septoria moving in this weather as it is so dry" said Joe. The septoria timer is monitoring the conditions and is reporting there were no conditions suitable for the spread of septoria over the past three weeks. The septoria timer monitors leaf wetness and even though there was 20 mm of rain over the past 10 days the water has dried off the plants quickly therefore making septoria spread very difficult. The O'Donoghues wheat is at flag leaf emerging and the T2 fungicide is due in the next few days. "We intend to take advantage of the low disease pressure and the T2 fungicide will consist of Venture 1.0 L/ha plus Bravo 1.0 L/ha" said Joe. "All growers should look at conditions in the crop and make an informed choice based on the disease levels and cost and the decision should not be base the next fungicide around product availability" commented Joe.

The O'Donoghues have to apply agro-chemicals to almost all their crops over the next week or so. "Spring barley needs to recover from the drought conditions before we will apply herbicide on them this year" said Joe. The only problem is the broad leaved weeds and wild oat herbicides are all needed in a short space of time this year. "We are going to try an alternative strategy on very dirty fields of spring barley (broad leafed weeds and wild oats) by leaving out a hormone weed spray (CMPP) and use Starane instead (plus Cameo Max) and include Axial (wild oat herbicide) plus Adigor" said Joe. Predictably disease levels in spring barley are very low and no fungicide application is planned for at least two weeks.

Wexford

“The rain over the past ten days has been welcome but with just under 20 mm so far we could do with some more” said George Williamson, the Wexford Teagasc Crops Better Farmer. “As a general comment crops are looking well but later sown spring barleys are struggling” George added. “This season will be remembered for the windy conditions” commented George, “We’ve had wind night and day here in Wexford. Over the past week we snatched a few hours spraying morning and evening but it has been difficult”.

Almost all the Williamsons spring barley crops have yet to be sprayed for weeds as it was decided conditions were too dry to spray any earlier. A couple of fields with massive populations of charlock were treated (with a half rate Harmony + Galaxy) about three weeks ago and it has worked well. George is not overly worried about the weeds in the rest of the barley as weed populations are not competitive however normally he would like an aphicide applied by now to reduce BYDV, as most crops are close to the sea. “Teagasc tell us aphid numbers were low through the critical period of barley growth (emergence to early tillering) and because crops were planted in good time this year most are now too advanced to be infected”.

Winter wheats are at flag leaf emerging to fully out. Disease levels vary in crops. “You can tell from the sowing date the level of disease in crops” said George. The Williamsons have Alchemy planted on the 28th of September and also on the 14th of October and there is a huge difference in disease levels between both crops. The Septoria timer has been monitoring the septoria spread and it indicates conditions were suitable of the spread of septoria on three occasions since the 13th of April. In a period between the 5th and 7th of May septoria was very active and likely to cause problems where fungicide cover was weak. The T1 fungicide was applied 3 weeks ago and should be good enough to protect the wheat over this high septoria pressure period but George is less sure of the earlier sown varieties with higher disease pressure. “I think there is good potential in the early sown crops and I will use the new product Aviator 1.0L/ha plus Bravo 1.0L/ha and a less costly alternative in the later sown cleaner crops”

Cork

“Unlike growers in the east of the country we have had a lot of rain and we probably have more than enough to see the season out” commented John Crowley the Cork Crops Better farmer. “Crops are looking fantastic. Winter crops are thick and some of the spring barleys resemble silage fields at the moment” added John. “All our nitrogen is applied and I feel we are seeing the full benefits of it now” said John. “I have very little to complain about apart from getting the right conditions to spray. Its either too windy or raining here over the past two weeks so conditions are very challenging” said John.

Winter barleys are spotless and the final fungicide has been applied over last weekend and early this week. John has opted for Opus and Amistar opti in the final spray and fungicide choice was influenced by the desire to maintain a good colour in the straw come harvest.

Even though the septoria timer has indicated conditions were favourable for septoria spread on three different occasions in six days over the past two weeks, the Crowleys are happy their winter wheat crops have four clean leaves. "I would hope the T1 of Proline and Bravo would be sufficient to protect me through his difficult period and the interval between T1 and T2 is only coming up to three and a half weeks" said John. The T2 will consist of a full rate Strand (Epoiconazole) plus Bravo. "This strategy worked well for me last year and given how clean crops are I think these rates should be ample" commented John. John has a block of land with Sahara which is a little dirtier which he might switch to Venture Extra for a little extra septoria control.

Spring barleys have received their herbicide and there are a few small weeds coming through but the canopy is so thick these weeds are unlikely to cause a problem. The Crowleys spring barley is due its first fungicide shortly which is likely to be Proline 0.4 L/ha.