

TOPICS DISCUSSED AND DECISIONS MADE BY THE AHDB RECOMMENDED LIST PROJECT BOARD 20th June 2024

Board members present:

Peter Gregory (Chair)
Greg Dawson (Chair of Oilseeds Crop Committee)
Marion Self (Chair of Barley, Oats and other Cereals Crop Committee)
Chris Piggott (AIC)
Steph Spiers (BSPB)
Chris Guest (BSPB)
Louise Everest (BSPB)
Jenna Watts (AHDB)
Russ McKenzie (AHDB)

Apologies: Patrick Stephenson (Chair of Wheat Crop Committee) Alistair Gale (UKFM)
Mark Ineson (MAGB) Richard Summers (BSPB) Lisa Black (Independent)

Key items discussed:

1) Report from the Oilseeds Crop committee

- The Oilseeds Crop Committee planning meeting made minor changes to the processes for harvest 2024
- Automatic recommendation on the basis of yield will no longer be possible
- The importance of untreated yield was increased, recognising that there is often not enough data on untreated yields
- Marginal varieties will no longer be given the benefit of the doubt unless there is doubt about the data quality

2) Report from the Wheat crop committee

- Automatic recommendation on the basis of yield will no longer be possible
- The importance of untreated yield was increased
- The value of data on ear sterility and treatment benefit was discussed and a decision was made to make the data available on the AHDB website
- There needs to be more clarity on the suitability of soft varieties for distilling
- The committee agreed a target specification for brown rust and mildew resistance to be set at 4.0 for automatic selection at candidate stage
- The importance of mildew was discussed, but there was no change to its status at selection

3) Barley Oats and other Cereals Crop Committee

- Automatic recommendation on the basis of yield will no longer be possible
- The committee introduced target specifications for all diseases and increased the importance of mildew and crown rust in oat selection
- Oat quality was discussed, AHDB were tasked with examining the possibility of a quality index, also incorporating yield, for oat selection
- The committee also asked for AHDB to investigate differences in spring barley ripening between the north and south, the quality of skinning data for spring barley and treatment benefit for barley

4) Number of varieties in trial

- The Board discussed the high number of varieties in trial for harvest 2024 and the impact this has on trial costs for AHDB
- Large numbers of varieties is problematic for the seed trade as seed multiplication becomes higher risk
- It was emphasised that the RL is an evidence-based system and putting a cap on the number of varieties in trial is not appropriate
- If numbers of varieties in trial remains high the Board will look again at other areas where expenditure can be cut

5) Nitrogen use efficiency and RL fungicide program

- The Board was presented with the outputs of two scoping reviews commissioned by AHDB
- Nitrogen use is complex and the RL cannot push this issue without co-ordination with the VL
- The breeders were reluctant to add extra cost into the variety registration system
- AHDB will consult with breeders and APHA about potential ways forward
- The RLs purpose is to characterise varieties, not to test farming systems or fungicide programs
- AHDB has data on the performance of varieties under reduced fungicides and will use this for communicating with farmers on this issue
- The RL contains all the information needed to manage diseases on varieties

6) Oat quality

- The Board discussed the findings of a meeting held between members of the Barley, Oats and Other Cereals Committee, oats breeders, oat millers and end users
- There is no consensus between millers on the exact qualities they require in oats, and no appetite for establishing an industry wide testing system
- It was agreed that while grain quality should be the main focus of variety selection in oats, the committee is right to raise the bar for disease resistance

7) Statistical models for yield analysis

- The Board discussed an analysis done of the statistical methods used to calculate yield averages
- Changing variety from a fixed to a random effect in models gives more accurate prediction of future performance, but makes variety yields appear more similar, which could make selection more challenging
- The committee discussed the impact on oilseed rape, which has a strong genotype by environment interaction
- It was agreed more analysis is required