

Overview – Week 3- WE 24 July

This Harvest Report has been prepared by ADAS for AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds, using data supplied by regional reporters (mostly independent agronomists). The approach used is consistent with previous years allowing comparison of data and provides a snapshot of harvest progress throughout the harvest season.

This week's report is based on data from the South West, South East, Eastern region, West and East Midlands and Wales. After a cold and wet spring, conditions changed in early June as grain set started, with a period of sustained high temperatures and dry weather across GB. Many parts of Central and Eastern England have had no rainfall at all for over 50 days, whilst other regions have caught the occasional heavy shower. Temperatures have reached 30°C several days in a row. Where crops are ready, the dry conditions have allowed good progress to be made on winter barley and oilseed rape, with harvest of these crops nearing completion in Southern England.

The prolonged hot dry conditions have rapidly reduced the moisture content of crops prior to harvest. This is causing a number of issues, in particular there has been an increased risk of fires being started by machinery in the field. In oilseed rape crops, the rapid drying has meant that in the case of desiccated crops, the plants were often dry and ready for harvest well before the 14 day harvest interval for glyphosate application. Where crops were over dry, there was an increase in the level of pod shattering observed during harvest, with some growers opting to harvest at night to reduce losses.

WE 24/07 saw winter barley harvest near completion in the Eastern, South West, South East and Midlands regions, with the majority of oilseed rape now also harvested in these areas. Elsewhere, harvest is underway. Just under 80% of GB barley area has been harvested to date, just over 60% of the oilseed rape area, 20% of the oat area and 5% of the winter wheat area.

Weather

The weather in the lead up to the start of harvest has been settled with a prolonged period of fine dry weather setting in during early June. This dry weather has persisted into July, with only occasional localised heavy rain storms arising towards the end of the month. The AHDB weather hub shows that between 1 July and 24 July the majority of weather stations in the South East, Eastern England, the Midlands and Yorkshire had recorded less than 10mm of rain. In the long term analysis, Central

England (effectively the Midlands and East Anglia), the South West and the South East are shown as having only received 2-14mm in June and July, making this the driest run up to harvest in the last 80 years. Even in Scotland where there have been a few more showers (rainfall of 20-60mm in June & July) it still remains the driest June and July recorded in the last 80 years.

Average daily air temperatures have ranged from 15-20°C since early July, with day temperatures consistently 25°C or higher and occasionally over 30°C. Night temperatures remained mild, typically in the teens.

Harvest Progress

Fine dry conditions meant that crops moved rapidly from grain fill to ripening. As a result, where crops had been slightly backwards coming out of a cold winter, harvest actually started early. The settled conditions across almost the whole of GB have meant that farmers have been able to start harvest as soon as crops were ready, and there have been no impediments to harvest progress, other than the availability of ripe crops to harvest. Dry conditions and resultant low levels of dew have meant that combines have been able to work late into the night, and in the case of some farmers with over dry oilseed rape crops, have worked right through the night.

Harvest started in the last few days of June, with small areas of early ripening winter barley cut, although for most, the real start of harvest occurred in WE10/7 with test cuts made into winter barley. In total 1% of the GB cereal and oilseed area was harvested up to WE10/7. Rate of progress increased in WE17/7 with a further 4% of the area harvested. The main peak of winter barley harvest and a good start to winter oilseed rape occurred in WE24/7, with farmers also starting winter wheat and winter oats. This led to rapid rates of clearance with a further 18% of the GB area harvested. By WE24/7 an estimated 22% of the GB cereal and oilseed area had been harvested, which is ahead of progress to the same point in the last five years.

Harvest progress charts are available to view [here](#). Select the region and crop that you are interested in to see progress. There is also a dashboard available to show national harvest progress against previous years.

Winter Wheat

The WE24/7 saw the start of winter wheat harvest in Southern and Eastern England. To date, an estimated 5% of the GB area has been harvested. Progress ranges from about 20% of the regional areas harvested in the South West and South East, down to occasional fields harvested in the West and East Midlands.

Yields

Data is limited at this point in the harvest. Initial yields appear to be close to or slightly below average in the early harvested crops of the South and East. Initial yield figures range from 7.0-11.0t/ha depending on variety and soil type. The best yields have been delivered on heavier land, where more moisture has been retained.

Quality

Quality information is based on a small proportion of early harvested crops from the South and East and is subject to change. Generally, despite the growing conditions, Hagberg falling numbers and specific weights are adequate.

- **Specific weight** – typically 74-78kg/hl
- **Hagberg Falling Number** - early harvested crops over 300 seconds.
- **Grain protein** – typically 13-14%

Winter Barley

A slow start was made to winter barley harvest in the last few days of June and early July, on very light land where the crops had run out of moisture. On the more full bodied soils, the first crops were harvested in the second week of July (WE17/7). The settled dry conditions have meant that once crops were ripe and ready for harvest, rapid progress has been made, with over 230kha harvested in the last week. Just under 80% of the GB area is estimated to have been harvested by WE24/7, putting harvest progress well ahead of that achieved at the same point in time in any of the last 5 years.

Winter barley harvest is close to completion in the South West, South East, Eastern region and Midlands. Elsewhere, a good start has been made to harvest of winter barley.

Farmers have been able to wait for crops to reach desired moisture content before harvest, with few crops requiring any drying. Where facilities allow, some crops have required ventilating to reduce the temperature of the grain to make it suitable for storage.

Yields

The current GB yield estimate for winter barley is 6.8-7.0 t/ha, which is close to the GB 5 year average of 6.9t/ha. The very early yield reports showed poor yields on the very light land that ran out of moisture, with some crops producing as little as 5 t/ha in extreme cases. However where crops ripened properly, yields have held up better, resulting in yields reaching up to 11.0 t/ha. Despite some early harvested poor crops, in general, crops on light soils have often performed as well as those on heavier soils, as most of the yield building growth occurred before moisture was a limiting factor. In

the South East, poorer yields have been linked to waterlogged heavy soils in the winter/spring causing a lack of tillering, leading to poor canopy structure.

Quality

Although large volumes of winter barley have been harvested, the speed of harvest means that quality data is limited to earlier harvested crops from the South and East. It is therefore expected to change as more crops are analysed. Initial reports suggest nitrogen levels in malting varieties are reaching target levels and specific weights are adequate, especially in later cut crops.

- **Specific weight** – no issues reported. Averaging 64kg/hl, although earlier cut crops have been as low as 60kg/hl. Highest specific weight reaching 72kg/hl.
- **Screenings** – typical reports are around 2%-6%.
- **Grain nitrogen** (malting varieties) – ranging from 1.5-1.8%.
- **Moisture** – minimal drying required, except to manage very small areas of grain from tramlines or very sheltered areas.
- **Germination** – no data.

Spring Barley

No reports of any harvesting yet, aside from a very small area in the Eastern region.

Oats

Harvest of winter oats started in the WE17/7, with an estimated 2% of the national area harvested during this week. More rapid progress was made in the WE24/7, with just under 15% of the GB area harvested by the end of the week. Harvest of oats is well underway in the South East, with 50% of the crop already harvested.

Approximately 25% of the oat area in the Eastern region has now been cut, along with 10-15% of the oat area in the Midlands and Wales. As of WE24/7, oat harvest progress is ahead of each of the last 5 years. Typically harvest doesn't start until the last week of July, with the early harvest of 2014 having 6% of the area cut by this stage.

Yields

Early yields are based on a small area of crops, predominantly from the South and East, of winter varieties and should therefore be treated with caution at this stage.

Initial reports point to average yields of 6.1-6.3t/ha, although data is limited at this stage.

Quality

It is still very early in the oat harvest and quality data is based on a small number of winter oat samples from the South East and Eastern regions. Early indications are that specific weights are in the region of 51-53kg/hl.

Winter oilseed rape

The first farmers started their winter oilseed rape harvest in WE17/7, with small areas cleared. More rapid progress was made in WE24/7, as more crops ripened and were ready for harvest. An estimated 63% of the GB area has been harvested to date, again slightly ahead of progress in the previous 5 years.

Once harvest started, rapid progress was made, particularly in the South East, South West and Eastern region where harvest is almost complete (>80%). Although, dry conditions have generally allowed harvest to progress without any interruption, in some cases it has been necessary to harvest at night in an attempt to avoid pod shattering due to the very dry conditions, as well as to ensure seed moisture levels are not too low. The rapid drying of crops has led to challenges for those farmers who used desiccants, as crops were often ready for harvest well before the 14 day harvest interval was up, leading to increased risk of pods shattering when harvest occurred. The level of lodging is low across the country, although up to 5% of crops are affected by lodging in the West Midlands.

Yields

Due to the speed of harvest this year, many harvested crops have not been processed yet, so yield figures are based on a small number of early harvest crops - predominantly from the South and East. The estimated current average yield for winter oilseed rape is 3.0-3.2t/ha. This is 10-15% down on the GB 5 year average of 3.5t/ha. The slightly below average yields are attributed to the lack of rainfall during pod fill and ripening. There have been a wide range of yields from 2.0-5.0t/ha with variety and soil type having a major influence. The heavier land is tending to produce better yields, due to greater moisture retention.

Quality

- **Oil content** – oil content has been adequate, with crops averaging 44-45%.
- **Specific weight** – no issues reported.
- **Moisture** - very dry conditions mean moisture levels are low and no drying has been necessary in most cases. Average moisture levels are around 8%, dropping as low as 5% in some fields during the middle of the day.