

AHDB Harvest Report

Report 3 – Week 6

Week ending 19th August 2021

Summary

This is the third report of the 2021/22 season, with data covering the period 10 August – 17 August 2021. It is produced with data collected by RSK ADAS Ltd and compiled by AHDB.

All regions have been affected by unsettled weather during this period. However, there were several dry days over the weekend that allowed the combines to continue to roll, some in Eastern England going late into the night. Overall, farmers have been snatching opportunities to harvest whenever they have risen between the showers.

Winter wheat harvest has now started properly across all regions. By 17 August, 20% of the national crop had been cleared. However, this is still some 39 percentage points behind last year's rate and 24 percentage points behind the five-year average. In fact, this is the second slowest start to the winter wheat harvest in the last eight years, only ahead of the 2017 campaign (which was 11% at this point).

Winter barley harvest is nearing completion in many regions in England, with the odd pockets in the South East and Yorkshire and the Humber still to cut. Scotland and Wales are also nearing the finish point. Nationally, 99% of the crop is cleared, which is 3 percentage points ahead of the five-year average.

Winter oilseed rape harvest is in full swing across all regions, with 83% of the crop cut by 17 August – a similar rate of progress to 2019 (85%). The South West, North West and Eastern regions are complete, with the South East and East & West Midlands all at, or above, 95% clear.

Winter oat harvest has now commenced in England and Wales. Some producers were concerned about shedding and lodging and started to harvest during favourable weather windows. As a result, there are reports of wet, sappy straw. Now at 16% complete, this is at a similar rate to 2019 (17%), but 20 percentage points behind the five-year average.

The first fields of **spring barley** have now been cut in England, with only whole crop spring barley harvested in Wales. Scotland has yet to start. Nationally, 12% of the crop is now cleared, 9 percentage points behind the five-year average.

Most crops harvested during this period required a spell in the grain dryer to get to storage moisture, as the showers and humid weather slowed natural grain drying.

Early winter wheat yields are close to average, at 8.0-8.4t/ha (five year average 8.0t/ha). Current ranges from the early harvested crops are between 6-12t/ha, with plenty of early reports of crops over 10t/ha. Winter barley yields are ranging between 6.9-7.1t/ha, slightly ahead of the 6.8t/ha five-year average and similar to 2017 levels (7.0t/ha).

Winter oilseed rape yields are pegging between 3.3-3.5t/ha, a small increase on the five-year average (3.3t/ha) and similar to 2018 (3.4t/ha). However, yields have been highly variable, depending on the level of Cabbage Stem Flea Beetle damage suffered.

It is too early to give any definitive yields for winter oats yet, but early reports suggest yields between 4.8-8.5t/ha. Again, preliminary indicative yields for spring barley peg the crop between 5.8-6.2t/ha, similar to last year's 5.8t/ha.

Winter wheat quality data is based on a small sample size, predominantly from Southern England. Specific weights are highly variable, with ranges of 67-80kg/hl reported and better weights seen in milling varieties. Early Hagberg falling numbers on milling varieties are between 250-380 seconds, although they are already starting to fall in locations where wheat is ripe and waiting for harvest. Protein levels are acceptable, at 11-13%, tending to be lower where yields are particularly good. Some high yielding crops are expected to fail specification.

Specific weights are low in most regions for winter barley (typically between 60-62kg/hl), although slightly better weights are reported in the West Midlands and North West (typically 66kg/hl). Specific weights are tending to be slightly higher on two row varieties than six row. Nitrogen percentages are low. Germination results are satisfactory so far, with occasional reports of values down to 92% where crops were late harvested and lodged. Oil content for OSR is tending to be around 44%, but some lower levels have been reported, particularly where desiccation was a little early.

Limited quality data is available for both spring barley and winter oats and based on small samples. Early specific weights for spring barley are between 60-65kg/hl. Indications are that grain nitrogen is low, but the sample is very small. Screening are low to date. Early winter oats specific weights have generally been within specification, sitting between 50-55kg/hl. There are a few reports of specific weights below 50kg/hl, dropping between 42kg/hl in exceptional circumstances.

Straw

Winter barley straw yields are generally good. In the Eastern regions, straw required turning before baling. In Scotland, while most winter barley straw was baled, some was chopped where OSR establishment will be required.

Good straw yields have also been reported to date for winter wheat, although some areas report wet straw still lying in some fields. Straw yields are also good so far for spring barley, although clean but brittle in some areas (South East). East Midlands has baled most of the straw to date.

Oat straw yields are also generally good, but baling has been slow due to green stems and damp swaths.

Winter wheat

Harvest update

The winter wheat harvest has now begun in earnest across England and Wales. By 17 August, 20% of the national crop had been cleared, some 39-percentage points behind last year's quick progress. Harvest rate is 20-percentage points behind the five-year average, with only 2017's delayed start (11%) behind this rate since 2014.

Rapid progress has been made in the Eastern region, now 23% complete and the East Midlands are now well into their crop, with 31% cleared since harvest commenced properly on 10 August. Some keen farmers in the North West harvested at 30% moisture to catch the initial high price. This has since levelled off and most are now cutting at 17% moisture.

Yields

Early yields are close to average, currently pegging between 8.0-8.4t/ha against a five-year average of 8.0t/ha. Current ranges from early harvested crops are reported between 6-12t/ha, with plenty of early reports of crops over 10t/ha. Fairly consistent yields so far are reported in the South East, although there is some variability on lighter land.

Quality

Quality data is based on a small sample and mostly from the southern half of England.

Specific weights are highly variable, typically between 73-77kg/hl, but ranging as wide as 67-80kg/hl. Better weights have been reported on milling varieties.

Hagberg falling numbers (HFN) on early milling varieties are predominantly ranging between 260-380 seconds. However, these are already starting to fall in locations where the wheat is ripe and waiting to be cut. HFN's have held so far in the East Midlands and indications in the West Midlands are that they are starting to drop in the most recently harvested crops. The Eastern region has occasional reports of low Hagberg's near the 250-second cut-off.

Protein levels are OK nationally, typically between 12.4-13%, and widening as wide as 11-13%. Levels tend to be lower where yields were particularly good, reported in the West Midlands, and some high yielding crops are expected to fail specification. High protein levels are reported in milling varieties in Eastern regions.

Moisture levels are ranging between 15-19%. Most regions had to dry wheat harvest this week, with starting moistures as high as 20%, but tending to drop during the day.

Winter barley

Harvest update

The winter barley harvest is complete in most regions and 99% complete nationally. Small pockets remain in the South East, Yorkshire and the Humber, Scotland and Wales, but even these areas are over 95% cut. Harvest rate is slightly ahead of the five-year average (97%)

Yield

Yields are close to, to slightly above, average this year, ranging between 6.9-7.1t/ha against a five-year average of 6.8t/ha. However, the variability is quite wide, with ranges from 4.4-10.5t/ha seen, the lowest yields reported on light land.

In Yorkshire where the main bulk of winter barley harvesting took place this week, yields of later-harvested crops were often lower, as these crops were frequently sown late into poor seed beds. The yield range on heavy land is typically 6-10.5t/ha, with lighter land yielding 6-9.5t/ha.

Quality

Low **grain nitrogen percentages** have been recorded, typically between 1.4-1.6%. Last year at this point in time, nitrogen levels were pegged at 1.7-2.0%.

Specific weights are low in most regions (ranging between 60-64kg/hl), although slightly better specific weights have been reported in the West Midlands and North West (typically 66kg/hl). Specific weights are tending to be slightly higher on two row varieties than six row. Yorkshire has reported a wide range of specific weights and the Eastern region has said specific weights are low from crops on light land.

Screenings are between 4-7%.

Moisture content is ranging between 14-18%. All crops harvested in the last week required drying, with typical starting moistures of 16-17%. However, some started at 20%, with moistures dropping throughout the day.

Germination results are satisfactory so far, although there are occasional reports of values down to 92% where crops were late harvested and lodged.

Winter oilseed rape

Harvest update

The winter oilseed rape harvest is well underway in all regions and currently 83% complete nationwide. While this is 9-percentage points behind the five-year average, it is in line with 2019 (85%) at this point in harvest.

The South West, North West and Eastern regions have completed their OSR harvest and the South East and West & East Midlands are at, or over, 95% cleared. The lowest clearance rate is in Scotland, at 21% harvested.

Yield

Yields are close to average, ranging between 3.3-3.5t/ha against a five-year average of 3.3t/ha. Good crops have yielded particularly well this year, with regular reports of over 4t/ha and even the occasional report of over 5t/ha. However, these are countered by some particularly poor yields of 1-2t/ha where crops were poorly established, or suffered from CSFB damage or pigeon grazing. Nevertheless, there are fewer reports of CSFB damage this year, although there are fields affected in many regions in key hotspots, particularly Bedfordshire, Hertfordshire and Essex. Here, yields were consistently lower.

Quality

Oil levels are tending to be around 44%, ranging between 42-44%. Some low oil percentage is being reported, especially where desiccation was a little early.

The majority of crops harvested this week required drying, with starting moistures typically between 11-13%.

Winter oats

Harvest update

The winter oat harvest has now commenced across most of England and Wales. Nationally, 16% of the crop is now harvested, with the most progress made in the West Midlands (40%), the South West (21%) and South East (20%). Progress is 20-percentage points behind the five-year average, but at a similar rate to 2019. Fear of lodging has prompted some to start maybe a little earlier, with reports of progress being made while the straw is still green.

Yield

Early yields tend to be from winter varieties, and are above the Defra national average (which is spring and winter varieties combined). Early estimates peg ranges between 6.4-6.8t/ha, although have been seen as wide as 4.8-8.5t/ha. There are reports of occasional naked oat yields dropping to 3.9t/ha, up to 6.1t/ha.

Quality

Specific weights have generally been within specification, predominantly between 50-55kg/hl. There have been a few reports of weights below 50kg/hl, dropping down to 42kg/hl in exceptional circumstances.

Moisture content at harvest has typically been between 15-18%. As a result, the majority of samples have required drying.

Spring barley

Harvest update

The harvest of spring barley started this week, with rapid progress in the West Midlands and South West. National progress is 12%, some 9-percentage points behind the five-year average. Only whole crop spring barley has been harvested so far in Wales.

Lodging is present in about 10% of the crop, with the South West being particularly affected.

Yield

Preliminary yield reports are good from early harvested crops. Early ranges are pegged between 5.8-6.2t/ha against a five-year average of 5.7t/ha. Farm yields reported to date have ranged from 5.1-10.0t/ha, with milling yields typically a tonne lower than feed and heavy land yields tending to be higher than light land.

Quality

Quality data is limited and based on a small sample. Early specific weights typically range between 62-66kg/hl. Indications are that grain nitrogen is low, but the sample size is very small. Screenings are low to date.

Moisture content has typically been between 15-18% when harvested, and the level of drying necessary has varied between regions. The South East and East Midlands have required little drying for the spring barley, although drying has mostly been necessary in other areas.