

AHDB Harvest Report

Report 4 – Week 7

Week ending 26th August 2021

Summary

This is the fourth report of the 2021/22 season, with data covering the period 18 August – 24 August 2021. It is produced with data collected by RSK ADAS Ltd and compiled by AHDB.

The first 3-4 days of this period provided settled weather conditions for many, although high humidity and heavy dews shortened harvest days. However, conditions became more unsettled on Saturday, many being disrupted by heavy showers. This progressed to storms and heavy rainfall on Saturday night, which brought harvest to a halt for most. As a result, many crops remained wet until Monday. With the heavy dews, high humidity and occasional scattered showers, some regions that experienced even the more settled conditions found the period not as conducive to harvest as hoped.

Therefore, about 80% of crops harvested this week required a spell in the grain dryer to get to storage moisture. Starting moistures were pegged around 20% and not dropping below 16% until late in the afternoon.

Where farmers were reliant on centralised storage, there have been issues sourcing sufficient lorries to transport grain off farm. Temporary on farm stores are getting full and there is a lack of capacity for many for additional grain to be stored.

The **winter wheat** harvest has progressed during the period; now 46% complete nationally some 26-percentage points forward from last week. While this is still 11-percentage points behind the 5-year average, it is ahead of both 2017 and 2019 at this point. Steady progress was achieved, despite the shortened harvest windows and slow drying grain.

The **winter barley** is now more or less complete, with just occasional crops left to clear in Wales. In line with the 5-year average, this progress is usually to be expected by this time.

Nationally, the **spring barley** harvest is behind the pace of the 5-year average (33%), at 26% complete. Winter wheat harvests (particularly milling varieties) have been favoured over spring barley when opportunities have arisen. However, where conditions were wet, spring barley often dried quicker than wheat, allowing farmers an earlier start. Progress is 5-percentage points behind last year, but ahead of 2017 (22%).

Harvest has remained focussed on **winter oats**, with only small pockets of **spring oats** cleared in southern England. Now pegging nationally at 30% complete, this is 14-percentage points progressed from last week, but 19-percentage points behind the 5-year average. At this point, oats harvest is only ahead of 2019 (25%) in the last five years.

Winter oilseed rape (WOSR) harvest is nearing completion nationally, at 92%. However, this is 6-percentage points behind the five-year average and the lowest completion rate over the preceding five-year period (2016-2020). The small areas yet to clear have largely comprised of later sown and late developing crops and Scottish crops, where clearance stands at 54%.

Winter wheat yields remain close to average, ranging between 8.0-8.4t/ha against a five-year average of 8.0t/ha. Current ranges are quoted from 6.0-14.0t/ha, with plenty of early reports of yields over 10.0t/ha. Milling varieties are tending to range between 6.2-12.5t/ha.

Winter barley yields are ranging between 6.9-7.1t/ha this season, a slight improvement on the five-year average of 6.8t/ha. They have ranged between 4.4-10.5t/ha, the lowest yields being reported on lighter land. Malting barley yields have generally come in between 6.5-8.5t/ha.

Preliminary yield reports for spring barley are good, with early harvested crops yielding ahead of the five-year average (5.7t/ha). Currently reported to be between 5.8-6.2t/ha, with farm yields ranging between 5.1-10.0t/ha. Malting varieties have typically been about a tonne lower than feed varieties and heavy land yields slightly higher than from those crops on lighter land.

Current winter oat yields range between 4.8-8.5t/ha. Given the Defra average yield is made from a combined winter and spring oat yield, a direct comparison to the five-year average is not possible at this stage. Milling crops are typically reported between 6.5-8.0t/ha, with naked oats at the lower end of the range.

Finally, WOSR yields are close, or slightly better, than the five-year average (3.3t/ha), ranging between 3.3-3.5t/ha. Good crops have yielded particularly well this year, with regular reports of over 4.0t/ha and occasional reports of 5.5t/ha. Heavy land has yielded particularly well, but lighter land has also yielded well this season. A small proportion of crops that had a poor early start, suffered pigeon or rabbit grazing, or CSFB damage have suffered yield losses, dropping down to about 1.0-3.0t/ha.

So far, there is limited data in winter wheat quality. Early indications are that specific weights are slightly lower than normal, at 73-78kg/hl. In most regions, Hagberg Falling numbers on group 1 and 2 varieties have held, remaining above 300 seconds. Protein levels range from 10.5-13.0%, tending to be lower where yields are particularly good. Some high yielding crops are expected to fail specification.

For winter barley, grain nitrogen levels typically range from 1.4-1.6%, with occasional reports of them dropping to 1.3%. Specific weights are low in most regions (60-62kg/hl), with slightly better weights reported in the West Midlands and North West. Germination levels of recently harvested crops are dropping, particularly from those crops affected by lodging (about 20% of the GB crop).

Spring barley quality data is limited, based on a small sample. Early specific weights range from 60-65kg/hl and indications are that grain nitrogen levels are low. To date, screenings are lower than for winter barley, typically between 1-5%.

Specific weights for winter oats have generally been within milling specification, sitting between 50-55kg/hl. There have been a few reports of specific weights falling below 50kg/hl, dropping down to 42kg/hl in exceptional circumstances.

Oil content for WOSR is tending to be around 44%, but some low oil percentages have been reported. This is especially where desiccation was a little early, with oil contents falling to around 40-42%.

Straw

Good winter wheat straw yields are being reported. Quality remains good, with some needing a day to dry before baling. In the West Midlands, delays to harvest has led some to chop straw rather than wait for the baler, to allow following crops to establish.

Spring barley crops are also reporting good straw yields, and demand particularly in the East Midlands is said to be strong, encouraging farmers to continue to bale. Winter barley straw yields and quality are good this season. Six row varieties have been more brittle, which has been challenging to bale. For the winter barley straw produced in the last week, turning has been required to dry out before baling.

Oat crops continue to report high straw yields. However, green stems and poor drying conditions have meant that it is taking time to dry the straw sufficiently for baling to commence.

Winter wheat

Harvest update

As at 24 August, the winter wheat harvest was 46% complete nationally. This is 18-percentage points behind last year's progress and 11-percentage points behind the five-year average. At this point, it is ahead of both 2017 and 2019. The Eastern region and Yorkshire & the Humber are both over half cleared (56% and 55% respectively), with the slowest progress in more northerly regions (North East at 17%, North West at 16% and Scotland at 17%).

In all regions, unsettled conditions have limited progress over the weekend. Where possible, a few hours were snatched back as crops dried before the next shower.

Yields

Yields have remained close to average, between 8.0-8.4t/ha (against a five-year average of 8.0t/ha). Current ranges are from 6.0-14.0t/ha, with plenty of early reports of crops over 10.0t/ha. Milling wheats are ranging between 6.2-12.5t/ha. Growers from many farms in Yorkshire are yielding above average.

Quality

Data on quality remains limited, so true trends are difficult to detect. Early indications are that **specific weights** tend to be on the lower side, at 73-77kg/hl. There are occasional reports of up to 80kg/hl, but also reports of specific weights dropping to 69kg/hl. In the West Midlands, sooty moulds are now developing on winter wheat and there is concern that specific weights will start to drop.

Hagberg falling numbers (HFN) on group 1 and 2 milling varieties have held up, and remain above 300 seconds. This has been particularly reported in the East Midlands and Eastern regions. There are occasional samples where harvest was seriously delayed, where HFN's have dropped below 200 seconds in quality wheat varieties. These will be downgraded as feed. Feed wheat values, as expected, are lower ranging, from 90-200 seconds.

Protein levels are ranging between 10.5-13.0%. They are tending lower where yields have been particularly good, with some high yielding crops expecting to fail specification.

Moisture content. The proportion of grain dried this period has varied across the regions, depending on the weather, the availability of drying facilities and the willingness of farmers to wait for crops to dry naturally. Some farmers have started to harvest at moistures of 22%, with moistures dropping to 17-18% during the day and most of the sample requiring drying. In the East, drier conditions meant that just 40% required drying. It was the unsettled conditions during the end of the period that resulted in a greater proportion of crops across the regions requiring drying.

Winter barley

Harvest update

Harvest is complete now in most regions, with just occasional crops left to clear. These are predominantly in Wales. The completion rate is largely in line with the five-year average.

Yields

Yields are close to, to slightly improved, on the five-year average this season (6.8t/ha), between 6.9-7.1t/ha. Ranges from 4.4-10.5t/ha have been reported, with the lowest yields on light land. Malting barley yields are typically around 6.5-8.5t/ha.

Quality

Grain nitrogen levels typically range between 1.4-1.6%, with occasional reports of them dropping to 1.3%.

Specific weights are low in most regions (typically 60-64kg/hl), although Yorkshire & the Humber are reporting a large range. Slightly better weights are reported in the West Midlands and North West (66kg/hl). They are tending slightly higher on two row varieties than six row.

Germination levels of recently harvested crops are dropping. Those harvested early were typically over 98%, but more recent results show levels around 95-98%. However, later harvested crops affected by lodging have dropped to 90-92% and will fail malting specification.

Moisture. All grain harvested this week required drying. The majority was harvested at 17-20%, rising to 23% in Scotland.

Spring barley

Harvest update

Nationally, 26% of the crop is now harvested, 6-percentage points behind the five-year average and at a similar rate to 2019. Winter wheat (particularly milling varieties) harvest has tended to be favoured over spring wheat where opportunities arose, limiting spring barley progress. However, where conditions were wet, spring barley often dried quicker allowing farmers to get an early start.

The South West and West Midlands are almost two thirds of the way through the spring barley harvest (60% and 65% respectively), but the Eastern region is only 16% progressed as wheat harvest has often been favoured here. In the South East, ripening is variable, with some only receiving desiccant in the last week. As such, the region is only 31% through the spring barley harvest.

Yields

Preliminary yields are good (5.7-6.1t/ha), with early harvested crops yielding ahead of the five-year average (5.7t/ha). Farm yields reported to date have ranged from 5.1-10.0t/ha, with malting varieties typically about a tonne lower than feed. Heavy land yields are also slightly higher than those from crops on lighter land are.

In Yorkshire, yields on poorly drained land are typically ranging between 5.0-6.5t/ha, while better-drained soils are pegging between 7.5-10.0t/ha.

Where crops have brackled and ears dropped below the header height, there have been occasional in field losses reported.

Quality

Quality data is limited and based on a small number of samples.

Early **specific weights** range from 62-66kg/hl. Indications are **grain nitrogen** is low, but the sample size is small. **Screenings** to date are lower than winter barley, typically 1-5%.

Lodging is present in about 10% of the crop, with the South West being particularly badly affected. **Moisture content** was between 15-18% when harvested, with the level of drying varying between regions e.g. the West Midlands need to dry the majority of the crop while the South East only needed to dry very little as the moisture was below 15%.

Oats

Harvest update

Harvest has remained focussed on winter oats, with only small pockets of spring oats cleared in southern England. Now pegging nationally at 30% complete, this is 14-percentage points progressed from last week, but 19-percentage points behind the 5-year average. At this point, oats harvest is only ahead of 2019 (25%) in the last five years.

Yields

Current winter oat yields range between 4.8-8.5t/ha. Given the Defra average yield is made from a combined winter and spring oat yield, a direct comparison to the five-year average is not possible at this stage. Milling crops are typically reported between 6.5-8.0t/ha, with naked oats at the lower end of the range.

Quality

Specific weights have generally been within milling specification, sitting between 50-55kg/hl. There have been a few reports of specific weights below 50kg/hl, dropping down to 42kg/hl in exceptional circumstances. This has been especially reported in Eastern crops affected by lodging.

Moisture. Harvest is typically starting at 18% moisture, although where stems were green, this has resulted in moistures increasing as the grain passes through the combine. Where crops are not quite ripe, farmers are waiting for 15% moisture before starting harvest. In Yorkshire, about 40% of the crop has required drying.

Winter Oilseed Rape

Harvest update

Winter oilseed rape (WOSR) harvest is nearing completion nationally, at 92%. However, this is 6-percentage points behind the five-year average and the lowest completion rate over the preceding five-year period (2016-2020). The small areas yet to clear have largely comprised of later sown and late developing crops and Scottish crops, where clearance stands at 54%.

Yields

WOSR yields are close, or slightly better, than the five-year average (3.3t/ha), ranging between 3.3-3.5t/ha. Good crops have yielded particularly well this year, with regular reports of over 4.0t/ha and occasional reports of 5.5t/ha. Heavy land has yielded particularly well, but lighter land has also yielded well this season. A small proportion of crops that had a poor early start, suffered pigeon or rabbit grazing, or CSFB damage have suffered yield losses, dropping down to about 1.0-3.0t/ha.

Quality

Oil content for WOSR is tending to be around 44%, but some low oil percentages have been reported. This is especially where desiccation was a little early, with oil contents falling to around 40-42%.

In Yorkshire, low oil content percentages have been reported, typically averaging around 42%.

The majority of crops harvested in England during the last week were harvested at less than 9% ***moisture***, although a few started with moistures of 11%. An estimated 80% of the volume harvested this week required drying. Moistures were higher in Scotland and Wales.