

NOTE

This is the first harvest report of the 2023/24 season and covers the beginning of harvest up to 25 July 2023. It is produced with data collected by RSK ADAS Ltd and compiled by AHDB. The approach used is consistent with previous years allowing comparison of data and provides a snapshot of harvest progress throughout the harvest season. All harvest reports run from Wednesday to Tuesday – with data reported for the week ending on a Tuesday.

This early report is based solely on data from the South East, South West, West Midlands, East of England and East Midlands regions, with an indication of harvest progress elsewhere in the country. Therefore, early yield and quality data is very much skewed, and should not be considered to be representative of the whole country.

Grain and seed yields from early harvested crops are presented corrected to a standard moisture content of 14.5% for winter barley and 8% for oilseed rape.

OVERVIEW

Mild and wet weather has continued through most of July, though it has turned cooler as of late. During the week ending 25th July, temperatures averaged 15.1°C, down 1.1°C from the long-term average. Across the UK, average rainfall for the same week was 31.1mm, this is more than double the long-term average for the period.

Windows of dry weather have enabled farmers to make a reasonable start to the winter barley and oilseed rape harvests in the Midlands, Southern and Eastern regions of England. But progress has been hindered in certain regions by the recent rainfall. In total, 48% of the English, Welsh and Scottish winter barley harvest is complete, which is slightly behind normal pace. Similarly, only 21% of the winter oilseed rape harvest has been completed across these areas, also below the 5-year average. Very small areas of winter wheat, spring barley and oats have also been harvested in mostly southern regions, though data is very limited this early on (accounting for < 0.5%).

Reports of crop leaning and lodging incidences have increased in some areas due to the recent rainfall and high winds. However, lodging risk remains relatively low across all crops, with only a few reports of severe impacts.

There has been significant variation in reports of drying requirements, ranging from 10% to 100%. This has varied both between and within each region, because of varying rainfall and the timing of harvest.

WINTER BARLEY

Harvest update

By 25 July, it is estimated that 48% of the GB winter barley area was harvested.

Winter barley harvest has now started across all regions, with progress ranging from 1% complete in the North East to 83% complete in the South West.

As could be expected, harvest is far behind the same point last year when dry and hot weather saw the GB winter barley harvest reach 93% complete by week 3. It is also behind the 5-year average of 56% complete, but similar to the progress in 2021.

Good straw yields have also been reported across many regions, though baling has been challenging due to the wet weather with some straw remaining in swaths.

Yields

Early indications are good, with yields trending slightly above the 5-year average, ranging from 5.0 – 11.0 t/ha. Better yields have been reported on heavier land, whereas lighter soils suffered more from water stress during grain fill.

Generally, southern areas of England have reported above average yields. Whereas the Midlands are currently reporting average or just below average yields.

Quality

This is the first report in the series, so volume of processed samples is low. As a result, quality reports are expected to change once more crops are analysed.

Specific weight – Specific weights are currently coming in between 63 – 66 kg/hl.

Screenings – Low screenings are being reported on farm, ranging between 2-5%.

Grain nitrogen (for malting varieties) – Early grain nitrogen indications range from 1.50-1.85%.

Moisture – Average grain moisture is around 15%, with a variation drying requirements depending on weather/timing of harvest.

Germination – There is currently limited data for germination levels. The next report should include a range for germination percentages.

WINTER OILSEED RAPE

Harvest update

Overall, 21% of the GB winter oilseed rape (WOSR) area has been harvested up to 25 July. This is based on data mainly from the Southern, Eastern and Midlands regions.

Much like winter barley, due to the wet weather, WOSR harvest is far behind where it was at the same time last year, when 68% had been harvested. It is also behind the 5-year average (37% complete) but ahead of 2021 when just 9% of the area had been cut.

The South West and the West Midlands are the furthest ahead, at 61% and 35% complete respectively. Harvesting is 32% complete in the South East. However, in Scotland, Wales, and the North East of England, harvest was only just starting or not yet underway.

Again, drying requirements have been varied both between and within each region, because of the varying rainfall and timing of harvest.

Lodging in WOSR has generally been low, with a few reports of up to 15%.

Yields

Yields so far are variable, ranging from 1.0 – 4.9 t/ha. Generally, yields are poor, averaging 3.0 t/ha. These lower yields have largely been a result of storm damage (which caused heavy shedding), as well as pest and frost damage earlier in the season. There are reports that a shorter flowering period than usual (due to dry and warm weather in the spring) has reduced pod density at harvest in certain areas.

The East Midlands and Eastern region in particular have reported cabbage stem flea beetle damage across the region, also compromising yields.

Quality

There is currently limited quality data available for WOSR. More information will likely be available by the next report.

Oil content – currently ranging between 42 - 46%.

Moisture – Moisture contents ranging from 7-12%, though this could change on increased data availability.