

NOTE

This is the first harvest report of the 2024/25 season and covers the beginning of harvest up to 31 July 2024. It is produced with data collected by The Andersons Centre and compiled by AHDB. Due to the change in data provider, the approach used varies slightly from previous years. The information is based on a sample survey of farmers in Great Britain and will provide figures on harvest progress throughout the harvest season. For this report, the survey captures data from farmers up to 31 July.

Given that we are at an early stage in the season, there will inevitably be variation in farms across the country. With some regions only seeing minimal progress at this point, early yield and quality data will likely be skewed, and should not be considered to be representative of the whole country.

Please note that these harvest progress reports are separate from AHDB's Recommended Lists harvest data, which includes results from their variety trials.

Grain and seed yields from early harvested crops are based on farmer reported yields. The percentage deviation between the farmers reported yield and the five-year average is applied to the regional five-year average quoted by Defra. Yields have been adjusted where moisture is above 14.5% for cereals and 8% for oilseed rape. Moisture levels below 14.5% and 8% have not been adjusted.

OVERVIEW

Harvest conditions have improved considerably in the past week following a catchy start. Intermittent rain earlier in the summer has given way to mostly warm, dry weather allowing winter crop harvesting to progress at pace.

For some growers, there was a break between starting and completing winter barley harvest due to rainfall in mid-July. Winter barley harvest had started in some areas as early as 10th July. Favourable conditions more recently have also meant that oilseed rape harvest is well underway. In total, 85% of the English, Welsh and Scottish winter barley harvest is complete, ahead of normal pace. Similarly, 73% of the winter oilseed rape harvest has been completed across these areas, also ahead of the five-year average. Anecdotal reports suggest very small areas of winter wheat and spring barley have been harvested. The survey results also show that a small proportion of oats have been cut, though as data is very limited, today's report will not publish information on these crops.

Harvest is expected to continue progressing well in the coming fortnight, though a band of low pressure looks set to reach much of the UK this weekend, bringing cooler temperatures and increased chance of rain. Given the weather and bare patches in fields, grass weed pressures have been high. This has been observed with increased prevalence of ergot in some samples. Ergot has primarily been seen as coming from grass weeds rather than cereal crops.

WINTER BARLEY

Harvest update

By 31 July, it is estimated that 85% of the GB winter barley area was harvested. This is well ahead of the same time last year when harvest was 48% complete, and the five-year average of 50.6% complete at this point in the season.

Winter barley harvest has now started across all regions in England and Scotland, with progress ranging from 40% complete in the South East to 100% complete in the Midlands, Eastern and Northern regions. It's thought that the bigger farms down south are focussing on oilseed rape harvest before moving to winter barley, hence the slower pace.

There are some small swaths of straw, particularly in the East. Though straw has been baled and carted relatively quickly this year, with some farmers getting on with cultivations and early drilling of OSR.

Yields

Early indications vary significantly by region. GB yields overall are trending 12% down on the UK five-year average at 6.2 t/ha and ranging from 5.3 – 8.5 t/ha. Better yields have been reported in the Eastern region, while the East Midlands saw the greatest fall on average in yields so far.

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 59 – 72 kg/hl.

Screenings – Screening retentions for winter barley are reportedly between 85-90%, a little lower than normal due to a smaller grain size.

Grain nitrogen (for malting varieties) – Given the dull spring, nitrogen content is generally low. Early grain nitrogen indications range from 1.30-1.60%.

Moisture – Moisture has varied greatly, sitting between 11.6-15.3%, and averaging 12.8%. Understandably crops cut earlier in the season were at a higher reported moisture. Moisture quoted is lowest in the east of England at 11.6% and highest in Yorkshire and the Humber at 15.3%

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, 73% of the GB winter oilseed rape (WOSR) area has been harvested up to 31 July (please note data for the North East is currently unavailable and therefore completion figures could differ slightly).

Much like winter barley, WOSR harvest is well ahead of where it was at the same time last year, when 21% had been harvested. It is also ahead of the five-year average (29.4% complete) but is more in line with 2022 when harvest was 68% complete at this point.

Harvest is now complete in Yorkshire and the Humber, East Midlands, East of England, South East and Wales. However, in Scotland, harvest was only just beginning.

Yields

Yield variation is significant, with considerable cabbage stem flea beetle (CSFB) damage reported in some areas. Yields range from 2.0 – 3.6 t/ha and are averaging 2.9 t/ha. The largest increase in yields are in the Eastern region, up 19% on the average. The area seeing the greatest declines in yield is the South East, down 37% on the five-year average.

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.

Oil content – currently ranging between 43 - 46%, though there are reports of small seeds.

Moisture – Moisture content is averaging 8.3%, ranging from 6.7% in the East to 10.2% in the North West. Higher reports were seen earlier in the season. With the drying weather seen in recent weeks, there were some reports of farmers combining rapeseed earlier in the day to preserve moisture.