

NOTE

This is the second harvest report of the 2024/25 season and covers from 1 to 14 August 2024, which are the fourth and fifth weeks of a 'typical' harvest period. 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 the United Kingdom (including Northern Ireland) and will provide figures on harvest progress throughout the harvest season.

For some crops, harvest is still at an earlier stage than others. For these crops, early yield and quality data will likely be skewed to those regions where more harvesting has taken place; they should not be considered 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

Over the past fortnight, harvest has continued to progress at pace. Warm, dry weather has both supported harvest progress and the continued progression of wheat, spring barley and spring oat crops towards harvest. Crops in many regions have been harvested at moistures meaning little has required drying.

There has been a noticeable gap in the harvesting of wheat for some growers. The gap is driven by differences in variety, drilling date, and conditions post planting. Progress with wheat harvesting varies by region and within regions. In England, the East Midlands is the most progressed at 65%, followed by the South East at 48%. But it is expected that the wheat harvest in Scotland and the North East of England is at least a week to two weeks away.

The winter barley harvest across UK was largely completed (99%) by 7 August, with most of the remaining crop cut this week. A small proportion remains to be cut in Northern Ireland. The UK winter oilseed rape (WOSR) harvest is nearing completion with 93% harvested by 15 August. The remaining areas are in the west and north of England and in Scotland.

Given the weather this year 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.

There are generally high levels of grass weeds and volunteer cereals within crops, including blackgrass, ryegrass, and brome.

WINTER BARLEY

Harvest update

It is estimated that winter barley harvest is all but complete in the UK, ahead of last year's 94% complete. Progress was already well advanced by 31 July, with the weather allowing harvest to be almost completed by 7 August and most of the remaining crop to be cut this past week. There is a small proportion left to be cut in Northern Ireland.

Yields

The average reported winter barley yield is 6.3 t/ha, down 11% on the UK five-year average.

As reported previously, there is significant deviation in yields between regions. Winter barley yields in the Eastern region were up 22% on average, but down in all other regions except the South East, where the five-year average level was seen. The largest decline in winter barley yield was observed in the East Midlands, with yields 21% below average.

Quality

With harvest nearly complete, more samples have been processed allowing greater quality insights. Winter malting barley quality is good, although there have been some lower bushel weights and subsequently lower screenings (retentions on a 2.5 mm sieve). There were also some comments regarding increased admix, primarily volunteer cereals or secondary growth. That said, merchants report that the crop is very usable for the domestic market.

Specific weight – Specific weights are coming in between 59 – 72 kg/hl, with an average across all regions of 64 kg/hl.

Screenings – Screening retentions (on a 2.25 mm sieve) for winter barley are averaging 88% but with a range of 85-98%. This is a little lower than normal due to a smaller grain size.

Grain nitrogen (for malting varieties) – Nitrogen levels within winter malting barley have averaged 1.5% with a range of 1.3% to 1.6%. This is low for winter malting barley, where maltsters typical look for grain nitrogen of up to 1.75%. This could also prove a challenge for exporting, with a higher nitrogen level required for continental malting (up to 1.85%).

Moisture – The average moisture observed across the UK is 14.2%, with a range from 11.6% to 16%. As such, apart from earlier cut samples, very little has needed drying.

Germination – There are no reported problems with germination in the winter malting crop, with almost all of the crop above 98%.

WINTER OILSEED RAPE

Harvest update

The WOSR harvest is almost complete, with only parts of Scotland and the west of England left to be cut. Harvest has progressed well in Scotland over the past fortnight, having gone from 4% cut as of 31 July, to 82% cut as of 14 August. Progress has been slightly slower in the west of England, with harvest only 48% complete in the North West.

93% of the UK WOSR area has been harvested up to 14 August. This is ahead of the 76% by the same stage in 2023 and 77% on average over the past five-years (GB).

Yields

Yields are down across all regions, except the Eastern region. However, as mentioned in the previous report, eastern farms surveyed have lower average yields due to historic cabbage stem flea beetle (CSFB) challenges. Yield declines this season are not entirely due to pest pressure, although pressure was high, anecdotally there have also been challenges with clubroot.

Yields are down 9% overall across the UK, at an average 2.93t/ha, the greatest decline in yields was reported in Yorkshire and the Humber, down 29% on the five-year average. Declines in yield of greater than 20% were also observed in the West Midlands and South West. Yields were better on lighter ground.

Quality

Oil content – The average oil content is reported to be 45%, with very few samples below 44%. Specialist WOSR crops such as High Oleic and Low Linolenic (HOLL) and High Erucic Acid Rape (HEAR) varieties have reportedly produced oil contents in excess of 47%. While part of the driver of low yields has been smaller seed sizes, this has not impacted oil content.

Moisture – Moisture levels for oilseed rape vary from 6.7% in the East to 10.2% in the North West. Higher reports were seen earlier in the season. One challenge for oilseed rape as harvest progressed was ensuring the crop cooled sufficiently.

OATS

Harvest update

Growers have been progressing with both spring and winter oats. As of 14 August, 22% of the national crop had been cut, although reports were limited to the North West (52%), East Midlands (18%), West Midlands (34%) and South East (100%). Progress is ahead of last year, when 5% of the GB oat crop had been harvested by this stage but behind the progress in the hot, dry summer of 2022 (35% complete).

Yields

Winter oat yields have followed the trend of other winter crops, with yields disappointing. However, early reports of spring crops look positive. On average across both winter and spring oats, yields are down by 6%, however this is not weighted by variety.

Quality

The volume of processed samples is still low, especially for spring oats with the comments below reflecting mainly winter oats. Quality reports are expected to change once more crops are analysed.

Winter oat quality so far has been good, and most samples are of milling specification.

Specific weight – Specific weights have averaged 53 kg/hl so far, with samples bold and of good colour.

Moisture – Moisture content is averaging 14.3% so far, with a range of 13.4% to 15.5%.

WHEAT

Harvest update

The wheat harvest in the UK is 37% complete in the week ending 14 August. The most progress was reported in the East Midlands where harvest was 65% complete, and in the South East at 48% complete. Harvest is reported as 100% complete in Wales, although this is based on a small sample.

While harvest has progressed well through some crops, there are still fields which are not fit. This is especially true where crops are thinner and secondary tillering has taken place.

It is expected that the wheat harvest in Scotland and the North East is at least a week to two weeks away.

This year progress reflects the total wheat area, including spring wheat as the extreme weather meant some winter varieties were planted later than usual, plus there is a greater spring wheat area than usual. However, progress still looks to be ahead of both last year when just 5% of winter wheat in GB had been cut and the five-year average for winter wheat (25% complete).

Yields

At an average of 7.5 t/ha, reported yields in the UK are down 7% on the five-year average. Lower yields are reported in all regions, except the Eastern region where the five-year average was observed.

Quality

Protein content is the main watchpoint at this stage. Winter wheat harvest is progressing and so the number of samples analysed will increase over the coming reports.

Specific weight – The specific weight of milling samples has been encouraging, averaging 76 – 77kg/hl. Some feed samples have exceeded 80kg/hl.

Hagberg falling Number (HFN) – There are no problems reported with Hagberg Falling Numbers, although this is unsurprising given the dry conditions.

Protein – Early reports of milling wheat proteins were disappointing but have improved over the past week. That said, given the dull grain fill period proteins remain low. UK Flour Millers Group 1 samples have averaged 11.5% to 12.0%, some samples have exceeded 13.0%, but these are rare.

Moisture – The average moisture observed across the UK so far is 15.3%.

SPRING BARLEY

Harvest update

Across the UK, only 7% of the surveyed area had been cut at the time of reporting. This is ahead of last year, when 5% of the GB area had been harvested, but slightly behind the five-year average of 9% complete.

Spring barley harvest is underway in the east and in Yorkshire and the Humber. Anecdotally, substantial progress has also been made in the East of England, with as much as 50% of the crop cut on some farms, although this is not the case for farms within this survey.

Yields

Spring barley yields have so far been promising, although this is based on a small area harvested.

Quality

While limited samples have been processed to date given the early stage of harvesting, the spring malting barley samples seen so far have been particularly good. The crop is expected to perform well, though the next few weeks will bring more clarity.

Specific weight – Specific weights are currently coming in between 65 – 68 kg/hl. Grains are generally a good size, with specific weights higher than those of winter malting varieties.

Screenings – Very good levels are reported, with retentions on a 2.25 mm sieve in excess of 95%.

Grain nitrogen (for malting varieties) – Nitrogen content has averaged 1.45%, with samples ranging from 1.2% to 1.5%.

Moisture – So far moisture levels are averaging 14.1%.

Germination – Early germination assessments suggest germination is in excess of 98%.

PULSES

Some pulses have been cut in Cambridgeshire, with promising early yields.

STRAW

There were again some small swaths of winter barley straw over the past two weeks, which will compound challenges with availability this season.

Winter wheat straw yield is highly variable, with some noticeably smaller swaths and some larger swaths.

Oat straw has remained a challenge particularly where crops were thin. While the grain was at a sufficiently low moisture to harvest, straw was still green in places. Oat straw volumes have been better than other cereals.