

Basingstoke Monitor Farm meeting report



Meeting 5: Farming after Brexit – Marketing strategies and business resilience

Speakers: Helen Plant (AHDB), Mark Bowsher-Gibbs (Sittingbourne Monitor Farmer)

Date: 6 March 2018

Location: Whitchurch Longmeadow Sports Club, Whitchurch, RG28 7RB

For more information, visit: cereals.ahdb.org.uk/basingstoke

Meeting summary – key messages

- Define your business objectives for the short / medium / long term
- Keep your staff fully engaged with objectives through regular meetings
- Understand the risk elements of your business and then categorise them accordingly
- Continue to strive to improve business efficiency through regular analysis
- Regularly analyse market trends – working out 5-year averages can give you a lot of information
- World grain markets and current cropping pressures can help indicate potential beneficial markets
- Animal feed has helped promote grain markets and in theory the long-term prospect of this looks to continue
- Be prepared to sell % of grain forward (hedging) if prices are above the cost of production
- Know your business costs as this is key to identifying your business / enterprise strengths and weaknesses
- Benchmark your figures with other similar local farms, along with taking opportunities to compare your figures with national international averages
- Invest time to attend relevant farming meetings, seminars and training
- Identify opportunities to introduce more innovative and efficient strategies and systems (eg collaboration, diversification)

Strategies for resilience: Mark Bowsher-Gibbs

- Investment in facilities (infrastructure, farm offices, grain dryers etc) buys you management time flexibility, increases output/labour unit, provides environmental compliance and reduces tax
- With soils, doing less can be a win-win: more robust with less operational cost
- Fine tune with innovative technology but be wary of cost:benefit ratio
- Integrate enterprises and strategies and regimes in order to share benefits and reduce costs
- Measure yourself with your contemporaries.
- Keep questioning your strategies and analysing costs in order to develop a better understanding of your strengths and weaknesses

Is your arable business fit for the future?

- There is a real risk that tariffs are about to up the complexity of the UK market
- The global market is presenting some fairly benign conditions right now but there are some watch areas developing
- From a UK perspective, the key trend has been the shift away from wheat over the past decade
- Combined with typically average yields in 2016 & 2017, this is reducing UK reliance on export markets – this has allowed the UK price to rise relative to world prices, but brings the threat of imports
- Unless yields are again above average in 2018, UK supplies could well be tight again next season

Understanding the potential impacts of Brexit

- Examine the potential impact of various scenarios on farm business income
- Identify parameters within businesses control in order to help levy payers prepare for Brexit and get 'fit for the future'
- AHDB have mapped out a range of possible post-Brexit situations and their effect on UK farming, for details see [Brexit scenarios: an impact assessment](#)

Find out more – Links to AHDB information sheets or research

[Brexit scenarios: an impact assessment](#)

[Post-Brexit prospects for UK grains](#)

[Grain market update – February 2018](#)

[AHDB Market news](#)

[Farmbench](#)

For more information on Brexit, visit ahdb.org.uk/brexit



Next meeting

Date: 6 June 2018

Topic: Summer meeting

Time: 10.00–13.30

Location: Southfields Farm, Whitchurch, Hampshire RG28 7JI

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To find out more about Farmbench, AHDB's benchmarking tool, contact: Emma

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MONITOR FARM PROGRAMME

