

Downpatrick Monitor Farm meeting report

Meeting 1: Launch meeting

Date: 19 June 2018

Location: Meadow Farm, Downpatrick BT30 9ER

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



Downpatrick Monitor Farm

Rotation

wheat – potatoes – wheat – winter barley – turnips – spring barley – 5-year grass

Winter wheat (Graham)

- Drilled 25 October in difficult conditions
- 200 kg N 60kg SO₃
- 200gm/ha Atlantis
- T1: 0.75l/ha Kestrel + 1l/ha Imtrex + 1l/ha CTL
- T2: 0.75l/ha Kestrel + 1l/ha Imtrex + 1l/ha CTL



Spring barley (including trial)

- Drilled 20 April
- Main variety (around the edge): Planet
- Trial varieties: Golden Promise, Fairing, Anneli, Brage
- 140 kg N 30kg SO₃
- Pre-em 0.3l/ha Liberator
- T0: Corbel 0.35l/ha
- T1: 0.5l/ha Siltra + 1l/ha Bravo 500
- Showing signs of water stress
- Use of older varieties for speciality markets (eg Golden Promise for brewing) was discussed



Maize (Rubiera)

- Drilled 19 May following a wheat crop that didn't grow in the spring
- Farm yard manure has been added
- 100kg N
- 37kg P + 56kg K
- 100g/ha Maister + 0.75 l/ha Callisto
- Conditions unusually dry since drilling with only 12 mm rain between 26 April and 15 June
- Showing signs of phosphate deficiency due to lack of water
- Limited growth due to restricted N uptake
- This is an early maturing variety
- Harvest should be the first week in October



Hybrid rye (Daniello)

- Drilled 20 October
- Pre Em 0.4l/ha Liberator+ 0.1l/ha Sempra
- 100kg N + 30kg SO₃
- 0:75l/ha Kestel+ 1l/ha
- 0.5l/ha Kayak
- First time this has been grown on the farm
- End use: digester (short chop size needed)
- Drilled in autumn after digestate application
- Advantages: early harvest (first week in July)
- Disadvantages: cost of seed; will the AD plant pay enough to cover the cost of production?
- The potential of hybrid rye for pig feed was discussed



What are the main challenges the business faces?

Ideas/suggestions from the monitor farm group to be discussed at winter meetings

Soil

- Structure
 - soil structure
 - soil type
 - light land (drought)
 - moisture
 - maintaining soil structure (too intensive)
 - soil structure for extremes
- Cover crops
 - cover crops - cost vs. establishment costs
- Nutrition
 - utilising organic matter – digestate
 - own biodigester
 - soil index (maintaining K levels after rye)

Rotation

- Lack of opportunity – wheat
- Not enough opportunity for 1st wheat
- Balance of spring and winter crops
- Cost-profit for rye
- Why no peas/beans?
- Growth regulators and fungicides in spring barley
- Backward maize
- Crop silage

Weeds

- Weed control
- Weed control – groundsel
- Herbicide resistance

Weather

- Changing climate

Cost control

- Input costs
- Conacre – annual rent
- Establishment costs
- Machinery cost
- Owning machinery vs contactor
- scale

Markets

- Potential markets, eg Golden Promise
- More grown for market

Brexit

- Profitability post-Brexit
- Single farm payments and EU subsidies post-Brexit
- Security of NI cereals industry
- Lack of certainty for agri-environment grants – needs more appeal)
- Loss of support pay

Environment

- Environment restrictions
- Loss of chemicals
- Reduction in chemical availability

Labour

- Labour
- Access to skilled labour
- Time management

Other

- Take on more land – good markets

Find out more – Links to AHDB information sheets or research

[AHDB's WeatherHub](#)

[GREAT Soils](#)

[AHDB's Recommended Lists for cereals and oilseeds](#)

[AHDB's Market Intelligence](#)

[Encyclopaedia of pests and natural enemies in field crops](#)

[Encyclopaedia of cereal diseases](#)

[Encyclopedia of arable weeds](#)

[Managing weeds in arable rotations](#)

AHDB's Brexit toolkit, resilience checklist and Horizon documents can be found at ahdb.org.uk/brexit



Winter meeting dates

- 27 November 2018: Benchmarking and setting the scene
- January 2019 (TBC): Machinery costs and precision farming
- 19 February 2019: Soil nutrient management, weed control and rotations
- 5 March 2019: Soil health – structure and cultivations

For more information or to find out more about Farmbench, AHDB's benchmarking tool,
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