

# Malmesbury Monitor Farm meeting report

Meeting 2: Precision farming – does it pay?

Speaker: Ian Beecher-Jones

Date: 7 November 2017

Location: Oaksey Golf Club, Malmesbury SN16 9SB

For more information, visit:

[cereals.ahdb.org.uk/malmesbury](http://cereals.ahdb.org.uk/malmesbury)



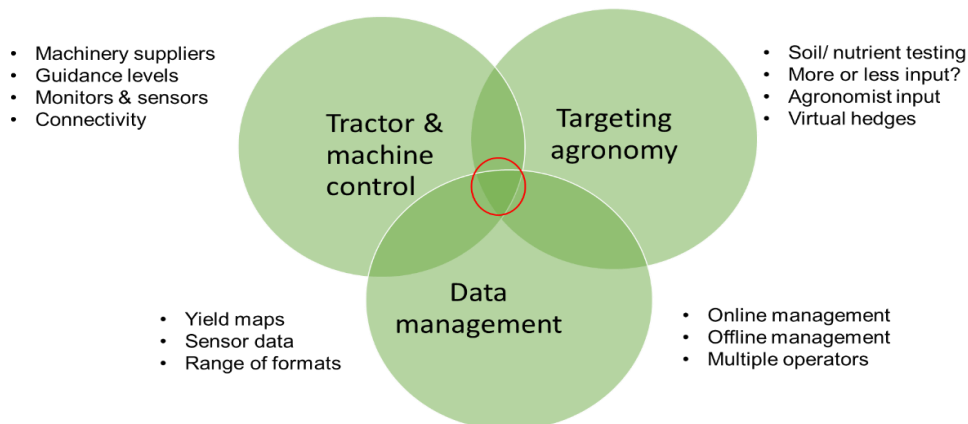
## Meeting summary – key messages

- Measure your accuracy – you may not need to invest
- Walk with a spade to identify variation within field
- Identify aims and objectives at the outset before investing and achieve them in steps
- Compare what you're already doing in an area with its potential – spend money where there are gaps

## Precision farming

There are positives and negatives to precision farming. Ultimately its objective is to improve profitability but the starting point dictates the percentage improvement that may be achieved and hence what return may be achieved on any investment. Identify aims and objectives at the outset before investing.

### What is precision farming?



- Few are experts of all 3 areas with the perfect combination of skills in the middle
- What provides the best return on capital? Assess what you are doing in each area, compared to potential and spend money where the gaps are
- Be prepared to get help and work in partnership

#### **Benefits of tractor and machine control:**

- Improved accuracy
- Fuel and time savings
- Variable cost savings
- Less driver fatigue
- More concentration on machine operation efficiency
- Farming more area with fewer people

**BUT – get your tape measure out!** Measure machines and tramlines. It's the cheapest start. If already accurate, do you need to invest?

Areas to target management for optimal returns on investment:

- Equipment compatibility
- Staff training and backup
- Signal and software reliability

## Variable rate farming

#### **How do you start targeted (variable rate) agronomy?**

- Identify the variation – a walk with a spade is the cheapest entry
- Measure to manage – measure at a scale you can manage with your machinery
- Every farm and farmer will have a different solution – the only rule is it must suit you
- Decide on aims, achieve in steps
- Generally agreed, VR seeding best first investment to achieve even crops for subsequent fertilising, crop protection and harvesting management

#### **Data management:**

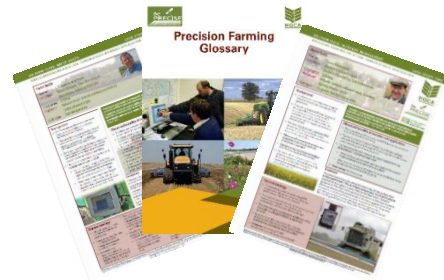
- Get data sorted at the start
- Make digital maps same as physical ones
- Avoid multiple systems
- Let software and data in the farm office be the centre and control all operations
- Identify the farming need and then use the software and precision farming to make it happen

## Find out more – Links to AHDB information sheets or research

[Precision farming glossary](#)

[Precision farming case studies](#)

[RR71: An up-to-date cost:benefit analysis of precision farming techniques to guide growers of cereals and oilseeds](#)



## Next meeting

**Date:** 4 December 2017

**Topic:** Soil management (Philip Wright) ([register to attend](#))

**Time:** 11:00

**Location:** Oakey Golf Club, Malmesbury SN16 9SB

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**To find out more about Farmbench, AHDB's benchmarking tool, contact:** David Pett

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