



Issue 101 -
March 2019

The Farm Consultancy Group



Welcome to our 101st edition of the newsletter. Included in this months newsletter are articles on new sulphur based fertilisers, rights to work in UK, whole cottonseed, commodities updates, beef genetics, soil testing grassland, important grant information dates and making tax digital.

Your feedback and comments are most welcome. If clarification is required, please contact the article contributor or for more articles and news visit www.fcgagric.com.

Edited by Gerard Finnan of David Bardgett Ltd and The Farm Consultancy Group Tel: 07976 426420.

Sulphur on Grass? - Andrew Jones

Results from a recent study would say yes to the above, based on saving you money by growing more protein on farm. I've had several clients looking to grow more protein on farm by using red clover in their silage leys and this has seen the crude protein levels in silages increase, but is there a simpler answer or another way to improve proteins on farm?

A recent study carried out has indicated that falling crude protein levels in grass silage may be due to falling levels of sulphur on grassland, with indications that sulphur may account for 30% of the variation in grass silage crude protein levels.

Sulphur is essential for the production of two essential amino acids (the building blocks for proteins), methionine & cysteine and without sulphur proteins cannot be synthesised efficiently. In two trials, where sulphur levels were restored to optimum levels the proteins increased between 5-7% and yields lifted between 1-2 tonnes per hectare. In the past sulphur was available from the background pollution, but this is no longer the case, and so we need to add sulphur to our grasslands.

This is a relatively low cost compared to buying proteins in. Would you not prefer to be feeding your cows a lower protein cake and/or blend during the winter? Adding extra protein to a ration is usually the most expensive component so why not try and grow more protein on farm? On deficient soils, 20kgs/ha per silage cut and 20kgs/ha per year on grazed land is recommended.

Contact Andrew today on 07717 442888, or email andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk, to see what sulphur based fertilisers best suit your requirements.

Right to Work in UK? - Gerard Finnan

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It's a legal requirement to check and record that prospective employees have a right to work in the UK. Failure to do so can result in fines for you of up to £20,000 per illegal employee. Up till recently Employers had to check paper documentation from the employee, such as a passport or relevant visas.

Last April the government launched a secure on-line service at www.gov.uk/employee-immigration-employment-status which is free to use. This online check is sufficient on its own to demonstrate compliance with this rule.



As this service is voluntary for individuals and employers, it needs both parties consent to use. But if not, you'll still need to do it the old-fashioned way.

Contact Gerard at gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com or call 07976 426420, for more information on employment matters.

A copy of this newsletter can be downloaded from our website @ www.davidbardgett.co.uk



Whole Cottonseed- Andrew Jones

I have recently taken on a new nutrition client who is a Waitrose producer (who are unable to feed any form of soya to cows). I have introduced whole cottonseed as an alternative cost-effective source of fibre and energy with positive results. I used this myself in Australia to feed up to 5kg/head per day during the wet season. It is not an easy product to handle as it cannot be augered. It is a fluffy product that clumps together but it can be handled quite easily with a loader.

The table (right) compares it to Soya Hulls, Palm Kernel (Exp) and Dry Sugar Beet Pulp (unmolassed). It has higher levels of ME & Crude Protein, with reasonable fibre, high oil levels with a reasonable level of DUP – Digestible Undegradable Protein (Bypass Protein). The Price/t is approximate price delivered for a full 18t load based on prices in early March 2019.

	Soya Hulls	Palm Kernel (Exp)	Dry SBP (Unmolassed)	Whole Cottonseed
Dry Matter	90.00	91.40	90.00	96.00
ME	12.30	12.67	12.67	15.00
Crude Protein	11.75	18.89	10.00	21.30
Crude Fibre	39.10	17.22	20.00	25.50
Ash	6.00	4.44	6.94	3.80
DUP	0.04	0.07	0.04	0.08
Price/t £	146.00	128.00	209.00	240.00
Price/ME DM £	14.65	12.09	20.37	17.36
Price/CP DM £	15.34	8.11	25.80	12.23

At the current prices PKE is the attractive option, but if it reached the prices it did last summer then that would

change. For my Waitrose client, where soya products are not an option, I believe it is potentially a good alternative to Soya Hulls.



Other nutritionists that are recommending feeding the product on several farms have told me that the results have been very positive, and I am looking further at using the product in dairy diets.

For all your nutrition requirements contact Andrew on 07717 442888, or email andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk

Commodities Update (12/03/2019) - Andrew Jones

Over the past month the pound has continued to strengthen, against both the dollar and euro. Oil price has risen marginally also. Brexit and trade war are the continuing drivers. GDT has continued to rise, for the seventh successful auction, with only SMP showing a significant drop at the last auction.

Milk Powder - has remained stable this month.

Feed - Wheat has continued to ease back slightly over the last month, Barley has dropped more, so larger price differential now. Looking ahead, prices are continuing to ease as we get closer to harvest. Soya is easing and is now sub £300/t, excluding transport etc., with a small increase for this time next year. I think now is the time to be considering taking some cover for next winter. General opinion is that the on-going trade war and Brexit negotiations nearing conclusion, will lead to a stronger currency and thus lower prices. Rape price has also decreased slightly but as old crop stocks become short this could change but are then looking to ease back to sub £200/t at harvest this year.

Fertiliser - Urea prices have continued to fall slowly with the strengthening of the pound, with prices almost as good as last autumn. I am starting to hear of a few potentially good deals around because of merchants being overstocked and looking to push products out before prices fall even further. Nitram last week had its price cut to remain on parity with urea, so still looks overpriced.

Ps & Ks are continuing to hold at their current levels. Fertiliser prices are expected to ease further longer term. However, in the short term if you haven't made any purchases yet now might be the time to look for a deal in an over supplied market. Delivery lead times are getting tight with many people leaving it late, so some merchants are having longer than expected delivery times.

For up to date specific quotes, contact Andrew on 07717 442888 or email andrew@davidbardgett.co.uk

Genetics Rather Than Cosmetics! - Tom Malleson

We are seeing an increasing number of beef clients looking to source quality rearing calves directly from dairy farmers, to reduce the risks of disease and low colostrum intake associated with buying from unknown sources at market. However, a common complaint is that dairy farmers are choosing their beef AI sires based on the limited criteria of gestation length and calving ease. The new Dairy Beef Index https://www.icbf.com/wp/?page_id=12504 recently introduced by the Irish Cattle Breeding Federation (ICBF), includes carcass weight and quality traits alongside calving ease and gestation length. The ICBF website provides a wealth of further data used in calculating this index.

This information could be very powerful in enabling dairy farmers to work with beef calf customers in producing more desirable calves based on genetics rather than cosmetics, without risking difficult calvings or longer gestations.



On my own dairy farm, I am working with a calf customer who has had an input into our beef bull choices for 2019 service. We are also continually blood testing calves to ensure sufficient colostrum intake. When these decisions come to fruition in around 3 years' time, we hope to benchmark the financial and physical results of these decisions against a group of similar farmers within our beef discussion group, as well as a direct comparison of individual animal performance within the beef farmer's business.

With the likely increase in uptake of sexed semen by dairy farmers over the next few years, the supply of beef calves from dairy farms will only increase. Using better genetics and working with calf customers will be important in positioning yourself at the top of a marketplace which may be oversupplied in the coming years.

Contact Tom at tommalleson@fcgagric.com, or call 07496 760242 for more information.

Soil Testing Grassland - Last Chance! - Gerard Finnan

I came across a farmer recently who had been renting Grass Keep for 20 years + and applied 130kg N/ha per year with very modest yields as he perceived it to be permanent with low production levels. He bought this land two years ago and tested the soil straight away for P & K & lime. Results came back at Indexes 0 and 1s !!! He has been losing 3-4 tonne of Dry Matter (DM) /ha of grass per year by not correcting the soil fertility. The return on the soil fertility corrected would have been 50-100% pa.

1. If soil pH is less than 6, correcting this could increase yields by 10%.
2. The difference between Soil index 1 and 3 for P is 1.5t DM/ha.
3. The difference between Soil Index 1 and 3 for K is 3tDM/ha /year.



There is no point reseeding if soil fertility is not correct in the first place. Each extra Tonne of DM is worth £120-£180/ha every year depending on whether beef, sheep or dairy cattle use the grass.

Last chance this growing season to do some soil analysis in this month before cattle are put out on grass or before silage swards are fertilised. At a cost of £2.50/ha assuming an 8Ha field/sample, you should be sampling a third of your farm annually and acting on the results. Give the office a ring today and we can get some sample bags and soil corer to you to help do this.

The 2018 water Rules make it compulsory for all to soil sample all land every 5 years.

If you cannot measure it, you cannot manage it. Getting more milk and meat from forage starts with growing more forage. Feeding the soil in an informed way will be more cost effective and efficient.

Contact Gerard on 07976 426420 or email gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com, if you wish to discuss a strategy to increase your milk and meat from forage this year.

Important Dates – Emily Wynder

Spring is a busy time for all farmers as soils and crops come to life, but it is also a busy time in the office with a number of deadlines for important Grant, Stewardship and BPS paperwork to be either ordered or applications made.

BPS application is open 14th March till the 15th May 2019.

Small Capital Grant Scheme – likely to open in May. Check out the list of what was available to claim 40% grant on in 2018.

Please [click here](#) for the list of small grant scheme equipment and specifications.

The Environmental stewardship Schemes are now open. The important date initially, is to have ordered the grant application pack. See dates below. There are a range of capital items available in these schemes. The top six in terms of popularity are:

Fencing	(£4.90/m)
Concrete yard renewal	(£27.14/ sqm)
Roofing over manure/slurry/silage store	(£62/sqm)
Self-supporting covers over slurry stores	(£30.5/sqm)
Floating covers over slurry stores	(£5.6/sqm)
Livestock and machinery tracks	(£33/m)

Contact Emily on 07944 680469 or email emilywynder@fcgagric.com, for more information and assistance with the application process.

Scheme	Application Pack Request Deadline	Application Window	Other Key Dates / comments
Higher Tier	31 st March	18 th February – 3 rd May	
Mid-Tier including the four simplified Wildlife offers	31 st May	18 th February – 31 st July	Visits from catchment sensitive farming officer must be requested by 31 st May
Mid-Tier water Capital	31 st May	18 th February – 31 st July	Two-year capital only agreement up to £10,000
Hedgerows & Boundaries	3 rd May	18 th February – 3 rd May	Two-year capital only agreement up to £10,000

Making Tax Digital Reminder – Charlotte Male

Just a reminder that HMRC are implementing Making Tax Digital (MTD) from April 2019. This means that people who keep records on paper or spreadsheets and submit their VAT return manually will no longer be able to do so. From April 2019 all VAT Returns will have to be submitted electronically through a certified accounts package. There are plenty of packages available, these include our own software (FCG Accounting Software), Xero, Quickbooks, Farmplan and many more.

We, at The Farm Consultancy Group provide an on farm secretarial service as well as a bureau accounts service using the above software packages. Our secretarial services are prompt and accurate but will be up to date with the latest HMRC requirements. Moving from paper to a software package will be an opportunity to access more detailed reports and analysis about your business to make up to date management decisions based on fact not gut feel.

If you have any questions, either about the services we provide or need help choosing which software is right for you and how to set the software up, please contact Charlotte at charlottemale@fcgagric.com or call 07980 294816.



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