

Farming for a Better Climate



Soil Regenerative Agriculture Group Farmers Supporting Scottish Soils

Case Study - Douglas Ruxton, Moss-side of Esslie

Douglas Ruxton farms Moss-side of Esslie, near Fettercairn, a 121 hectare arable unit. Soils are predominantly sandy silt loams.

Healthy soils

With over 6km of ditches on the farm, Douglas looked at improving drainage as one way to benefit farm soils. He noted that bigger tractors and more heavy machinery were having an impact on farm soils, so looked at what else he could do.

Direct drill

Following some research and investigation, Douglas moved away from traditional ploughing to direct drilling, investing in a Claydon Strip Till Drill and straw harrow. Moving to this system in 2012, Douglas has learned a lot about his soils already, and on the whole, is very encouraged by the results to date. A reduced spend on fuel, less wear and tear on the drill and improved 'resilience' in terms of carrying capacity are all benefits Douglas has seen following the switch. However there have been some challenges on the way, for example the wet autumn in 2012 and dealing with slugs, although the straw harrow has been an effective tool to reduce slug habitat and expose slug eggs.

More worms

The change in soil management meant worm populations have noticeably increased across the farm, with plenty of worm casts in evidence on the soil surface. A healthy earthworm population really benefits farm soils, aiding nutrient availability, better drainage and improving soil structure.

What's next?

Douglas is keen to see what else he can do to benefit farm soils. Douglas said "You need to get the basics right before going to high tech. Your farm soils are one of your biggest assets - speak to others, do your homework and have a go. Don't be scared to do something different".

Name:	Douglas Ruxton
Farm:	Moss-side of Esslie
Locality:	Aberdeenshire
Farm type:	Arable



Douglas is one of five farmers taking part in the Scottish Government funded Farming for a Better Climate Soil Regenerative Agriculture Group. You can read more about the other farmers participating in the initiative and some of the practical ideas they are taking forward at www.farmingforabetterclimate.org Facebook and Twitter @SACFarm4Climate.



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