

Ardoch of Gallery

Maximising farm efficiency

Ardoch of Gallery
Climate Change Focus Farm

Notes from the Discussion
Group Meeting on 15th
February 2017

This was the seventh meeting of the Ardoch of Gallery focus farm discussion group, considering practical and profitable ideas to improve the farm business.

Ardoch of Gallery update

Host Willie Officer outlined progress at Ardoch of Gallery

Willie updated the group on what's been happening at Ardoch; key points included:

- Further on with winter ploughing this year than ever before.
- This is the last year of their contract with Diageo for spring malting barley.
- Less winter barley being grown as it's not financially viable. Only a small area now grown to give early entry for bulbs.
- Oilseed rape crops are looking very good.
- Haulage side of business has been really busy over winter – mainly hauling tatties for McCains.
- Completed a feasibility study into solar PV to power the sheds and installation work starts on 17th Feb.



Cereals market

Keith Headridge from Scotgrain; timing is critical!

Keith spoke about the current market situation and prospects for this harvest with estimated prices and discussed the drivers that are affecting the grain price with a lot of uncertainty around just now. The key points from Keith included:

- All cereal areas and yields were down on last year in Scotland with the exception of oats.
- There are 3 new varieties of spring barley up and coming worth looking at: Laureate, KWS Sassy and Sienna. Laureate being the main upcoming one.
- Mixture of many positive and negative drivers of grain price in the market.
- November 2017 wheat futures ex. Farm approx. £133, Oilseed rape £350, milling oats £130 and feed barley £115.
- Take home message – **If you're selling, don't hang around waiting on prices to increase. If the price puts you in a profit then sell the grain instead of holding onto it.**

Efficient nutrient use

Aiden Monahan from SOYL reminded the group about the benefits of precision farming in cereal production

Aiden highlighted the difference between macro and micro factors; macro are out of our control, but micro factors can be influenced to the benefit of cereal production. Aiden provided some useful reminders, including:

- pH drops by 0.1-0.15 units per year so **analysis is vital** for liming.
- When thinking of the crop being grown don't assume all are similar, do nutrient budgets based on P and K offtake figures.
- Mapping software will help you to build a picture of what's going on and influence management decisions. Use data from P and K maps, pH maps and yield mapping
- GPS spreading and variable rates can balance out fields, help identify problem areas and target areas to receive more or less nutrients as required.



Variable N application

John Middleton from Yara highlighted potential nutrient deficiencies and went on to discuss N sensor technology.

Key points from John included:

- Approximately 57% of soils are found to be low in 2 or more micronutrients essential to plants.
- Variable rate spreading allows more even distribution of nitrogen to get where it is required. At the same time helps avoid potential problems with lodging in crops.
- The use of N-sensors can allow nitrogen to be variably applied based on crop greenness.

The group discussed the use of nitrate versus urea as fertiliser. One of the key considerations was that nitrate is readily available to the plants in the form they need it where as urea has to be converted in the soil before becoming available

Improving soil and nutrient status

SAC Consulting's David Ross demonstrated how precision farming can benefit the farm over time

David closed the meeting with a presentation on fertilisers use and how precision farming techniques has made a difference to the soils and nutrient status at Ardoch over the last year. The P and K status and pH are all starting to come more in line, reducing the range of pH values seen across the farm.

There are nine climate change focus farms in Scotland. Keep up to date with their activities at



www.farmingforabetterclimate.org

Meetings are free to attend and all farmers are welcome.

For Ardoch of Gallery, contact farm facilitator David Ross in the SRUC Stonehaven Office on 01569 762 305 or david.ross@sac.co.uk

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