

16 September 2021

## General comments

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Progress on harvesting and drilling continues with a frenzy of activity. New crop oilseed rape and winter barley are coming through well – the benefits of some moisture. Yields vary across the country – average to slightly above seems standard, and reports on quality also seem OK. We have had a few questions about ergot which is a very seasonal issue and relates most commonly to wet weather at harvest. Highly toxic so it will lead to issues with rejections, and you should also note which fields are affected in terms of your quality assurance audits. You may also see it in grasses (grass crops, grass weeds and grass margins). Take great care with animals where you see it in crops intended for grazing or for hay.

## Regional comments

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### Orkney

Saturday brought a full day of heavy rain, the like of which we have not seen for many months. This freshened up the grassland and will help the ripening process for those spring barley crops still to be harvested. Crops which have been cut have yielded quite well despite the cool spring and dry summer. There is however some concern related to the limited supply of propionic acid, with alternative products such as non-corrosive popcorn and alkaline based treatments not yet fully accepted due to their unfamiliarity with some farmers.

### Caithness

A tremendous spell of weather over the period bar a couple of wet days at the weekend, has seen great headway made in the spring harvest. Combines and balers have been going apace throughout the area. The majority of spring barley will now be in the sheds with a fair bit of spring oats now completed too. Most straw has been baled up. Continuation of preparation for winter crop in great conditions. Although small in number, the potato producers in the area have started harvesting, again in great conditions.

### Aberdeenshire

Weather in the local area has continued to be variable over the past few weeks, resulting in harvest operations being frequently stopped and started. Most farmers are well through spring barley and winter wheat harvest. So far, grain and straw yields reports have been mixed, depending on location. Winter oilseed rape crops are mixed in growth stages due to variable sowing dates. Flea beetle and slug pressure should be closely monitored due to the wet weather.

### Banff & Buchan

Harvest has progressed well with last week's spell of hot weather seeing the combines out in force and make great progress. The weekend however, brought the first substantial rain for some time, meaning that the

combines have sat idle for a couple of days with most either finished or on the home straight. This has however allowed straw to be cleared and fields to be ploughed for winter barleys and wheats. Spring barleys have yielded well, are making malting quality despite fears that *Ramularia* may take its toll and with several new stores in the area, movement seems to be good. Wheats are also yielding well, although grain size is perhaps on the small side. While the dry summer has been good for harvesting, it is not so ideal for the establishment of next year's crops. Most oilseed rape have come through although some crops have struggled to germinate due to the lack of moisture. Barleys are also beginning to be sown and are receiving their pre-emergence sprays, although just how effective they will be on the dry soil, remains to be seen. Grass reseeds have also struggled and indeed most grass fields are showing the effects of the dry summer.

## **Kincardineshire**

A mixed spell of weather with some localised differences in rainfall has seen the south of the area progress well with harvest. A lot of growers are now finished with only the larger growers still having some spring barley and winter wheat to cut. In the West of the region those on higher ground would be around 50% complete with their spring barley harvest. Spring barley yields are a little erratic depending on soil type and rainfall in the spring. In all it will be an average or just above average year for spring barley. Reports are that winter wheat yields are above average so far. Winter oilseed rape is all sown with crops varying from 5 true leaves for early sown crops, to cotyledon stage for later. There was a flurry of cabbage stem flea beetle in the area a few weeks ago but seems to have slowed again. Winter barley and winter wheat sowing is progressing well with good ground conditions. There are reports of high slug pressure especially after winter oilseed rape.

## **Angus**

Harvest is largely finished in the area, with only a few fields of Spring Oats and Spring Barley left to be cut, there are a few wheat fields also left to cut. Spring Barley yields have been variable, with winter wheat yields having been good. The majority of oilseed rape has been sown and is starting to emerge. Potato harvest has started in the area.

## **Perthshire**

Cereal harvest is now largely complete with only a few fields of spring oats and winter wheat left standing in later areas as well as combining beans. Winter oilseed rape has established well and is mostly now past the risk period for flea beetles. Volunteer cereals have also established well and have required graminicide treatments. Winter cereals are now being drilled into good soil conditions, often earlier than the ideal timing but it is hard to pass up a good seedbed after the experiences of the last few autumns. The earliest sown cereals have now emerged and are now at the two-leaf stage and growing rapidly with warm weather alongside intermittent rain events.

## **Fife**

Fife combines are coming to the end of their busy spell! In the main, wheat and barley are cut, spring oats are in the process of being cut and spring bean fields are being eyed up with a view to cutting as soon as moisture/weather looks right. Some late fields of WOSR, alongside early winter barley and winter wheat are all being sown, there does seem to be a lot more min/zero tillage drills operating in this area this year! The stable spell of weather should allow pre-emergence weed control to be applied this year! August sown WOSR germinated rapidly and is at 3 true leaves or better already! The later sown crops will need to be watched for flea beetle damage and treated accordingly.

## **Lothians**

Notably little rainfall across the Lothians through the first half of the month to 15th September (12mm Crichton, 8mm Haddington and 5mm North Berwick). Moreover, combining progress has been hampered more by the haar in northern and eastern regions with parcels of spring barley and wheat remaining to be cut

here. Whilst spring barley and wheat came together for many, most have coped with storage and movements off farm, the drier conditions diminishing what might have been a backlog of wet grain waiting to be dried in light of reduced regional capacity this year. Spring barley yields have varied more with soil type than by region, but grain nitrogen is repeatedly sampling below 1.5%. With questionable English malting barley quality this year hold stocks on farm, if possible, just in case demand materializes. Wheat is being drilled a day or two behind the plough in many cases and soils look to be holding sufficient moisture for an even germination despite the dry conditions.

## **Borders**

We've had only 7mm so far in the rain gauge for September. Although harvest is almost finished, with only a few crops remaining standing, humid conditions have meant that grain moisture has been slow to drop. Storage has also become a problem, with most farmers experiencing a real shortage of lorries to shift grain. There have been some pleasing reports of winter wheat yields of over 11 tonnes/ha and spring barley yields of 8 tonnes/ha and some excellent harvest spot prices for both cereals and oil seed rape. Autumn drilling of cereals is well underway, with soils in good friable condition. Oilseed rape is between 3 & 4 leaf stage, with some slug damage & minimal amounts of flea beetle damage.

## **Stirling**

The harvest is finished and most of the straw lifted off the fields. Yields have varied across the region. Currently winter barley is being sown with preparations being made for winter wheat. Localised heavy showers have stopped sowing in places.

Oilseed rape sown early is much further ahead of last year and clean, the later ones are coming through well. The earlier winter barleys are at the one leaf stage, where direct drilled, there is a bit of slug damage but nothing serious.

## **Lanarkshire**

The good weather has continued and all, but a few fields of spring barley, are cleared. There has not been much sign of cultivations for winter crops, but it is still early enough, and the forecast is for reasonable weather. There have been some showers. With soil temperatures still relatively high, this has led to some rapid grass growth. Good ground conditions will mean this will be made good use of and will help to shorten the winter.

## **Ayrshire**

The weather has been a little more unsettled over the past fortnight, but temperatures have remained high, meaning that grass growth has taken a real jump. Those that have had lighter cuts earlier in the year have taken this as an opportunity to get some more silage made. Winter and spring cereal harvests are pretty much done in the region, with most of the straw baled and cleared from fields. On the whole yields are looking good with spring barley at 2.7t/acre and some winter barley at 4.2t/acre. A few farms in Ayrshire are growing spring beans for an alternative protein source, these remain to be harvested but overall are looking good. Autumn cultivations are now underway with some winter cereals already in the ground.

## **Stranraer**

Harvest is largely finished, and straw has been cleared from fields. Winter Oilseed Rape has been planted and is emerging well. Attention now turns to getting dung out and ploughing for winter crops, soils are in good condition and although weather is now more broken crops should go into the ground in good conditions. Silage is still on the go and for those cut in the last couple of weeks aftermath growth has been incredible.