

05 Aug 2021

General comments

Crops are ripening rapidly, and winter barley harvest is well underway or complete for some. Yields so far seem encouraging. Spring barley crops have suffered the dreaded combination of warm moist conditions for much of their growth followed by heat after flowering – in essence very like continental European conditions where the disease is even more prevalent. Rain is again forecast so harvest next week will be a stop start affair.

Regional comments

Orkney

Very little rain has fallen in the last fortnight, but some haar and heavy dews have helped to get some moisture onto the land. Any grass which has been cut for winter fodder or topped has found it difficult to recover, particularly where the soil is light and/or shallow. Spring barley appears to be coping much better with the conditions. Whilst straw length and bushel weight looks to be less than average, the drought has pushed the crops on, and harvest may not be as late as the cold spring and early summer suggested.

Caithness

Winter harvest is in full swing in the area with early indications of yields being higher than expected. Similarly, spring crops are looking like they might exceed expectations too. Hay and silage are tidied up with odd areas of second cut silage to be completed. Yield is certainly reduced across the area. Early try outs of growing potatoes have also seen higher than expected yields.

Moray

Winter barley crops in the area have been harvested with reasonable yields of both grain and straw, better than some were expecting. Winter wheat crops are beginning to turn to a more golden colour and grains are now firming up. Spring barley crops now seem to be a bit more even with the later sown crops catching up on their earlier sown neighbours. Winter oilseed rape crops are now beginning to be sprayed off.

Inverness

Like the majority of the country the past fortnight has seen regular showers and heavy downpours in places. Unfortunately, this rain will have arrived too late to have a significant impact on grain fill. Winter barley harvest is under way in the area, yields are reported to be very mixed. Spring barley is ranging from soft dough to hard dough. The earliest fields will soon be sprayed off. The past two weeks have seen *Ramularia* enter a lot of crops to varying degrees. Winter wheat is also at early to mid-dough and looking clean. Oil seed rape is now at the pod senescence stage.

Aberdeenshire

Aberdeenshire has experienced some heavy rainfall over the past few days, pausing harvest operations of winter barley and causing damage to crops in some areas. Oilseed rape desiccation has now begun in the earliest areas.

Banff & Buchan

The combines have begun to roll although the spell of glorious sunny weather which greeted the first of the combines has given way to more overcast weather with some heavy showers in the past week. First impressions have been mixed but given how weather beaten many crops looked in April perhaps better than might have been expected. The sunshine in June and July has helped fill the grains which has undoubtedly made a big difference to some crops. Oilseed rape crops are beginning to be swathed with the uneven flowering, translating into some swaths which are greener than normal. The swather is still king in this corner of the country, although there are some crops desiccated. Winter wheat crops are beginning to senesce, and some may be ready before the spring barley on some farms, with some take-all also being seen. While the heavy rain showers didn't do too much damage to the winter crops, the same can't be said for some of the spring crops, although lodging has been mainly limited to double treated areas. Spring barleys had been clean until a couple of weeks ago, however, Ramularia is now present in some crops. Grains look to have filled however, so hopefully the infection has come in too late to affect yields and quality to any great degree. There also seems to be disease in the ears with blind sites and fusarium present. Potato inspections are wearing to an end with reports of virus in some crops. Second cuts of silage are being made with some reasonable yields. The dry June and July has taken its toll on grazing fields however, with the green grass fields starting to turn brown. Some fields of fallow have been ploughed and prepared for sowing oilseed rape, just one year's cropping cycle comes to an end another begins in earnest.

Kincardineshire

Harvest is progressing in the area with growers working through winter barley. Initial reports are that yields are pleasing and there are good amounts of straw too. Winter oilseed rape has been desiccated or swathed and looks promising if the weather is kind in the next week or so. Winter wheat is ripening fast and again is looking well in the area. Spring barley is ripening too and will probably be ready before the wheat. Some spring barley crops are at mixed stages of ripening which may cause some issues. Second cut silage is ongoing in the area, but grass has been slow to bulk. Grazing grass is also slow to grow at the moment.

Angus

Harvest is underway with most of the winter barleys being combined. Winter oilseed rape is coming onto two weeks from having been sprayed so will be ready to harvest by the end of the week. Early spring barley and winter wheat is starting to be sprayed. 2022 oil seed rape crops have started to be sown.

Perthshire

Winter barley harvest is now well through with large amounts of straw and reasonable grain yields being reported. Winter oilseed rape has now all been sprayed off or swathed and combines should begin harvesting by the end of the week, weather permitting. Spring barley is now also approaching the glyphosate stage and Ramularia can be found in many crops this season. Winter wheat on early land is also around the glyphosate stage. Thoughts are turning to establishing new crop winter oilseed rape, much of which may end up being sown before the old crop has been harvested.

Fife

Winter barley in Fife is around 50% cut, early reports seem good for quality and yield. A field of winter oats was seen to be being combined this morning with a massive bout of straw left behind the combine. Spring barleys and wheats are ripening with green leaf disappearing fast. Diablo spring barley seems to be ripening quicker than laureate but seems to have a smaller head and slightly shorter straw in most places. Heads are remaining clean so far in wheat, the benefits of warm sunny days! Both spring barleys and winter wheats look to be 3 to 4 weeks away from harvest, though this gap could shorten if the 30 degree weather was to return!

Lothians

Good progress in the Lothians with recent good weather and around 70+% of winter barley being cut and straw being cleared in good time. Farmers have been reporting yields and quality are average to good. Winter oilseed rape is on average 7-10 days away from harvesting with a mixture of ripening in crops. Many farmers are preparing ex winter barley land for oilseed rape in good conditions for now. Winter wheat is ripening fast with 4

most around the soft to mid dough with crops looking good. Spring barley is ranging from mid to hard dough with some on verge of being harvested, again most crops looking well. Very little lodging or brackling reported with any crops so far.

Borders

A dryer than average July (45mm) has allowed most winter barley and winter oats crops to be harvested, with some pleasing straw and grain yields reported so far. Some of next seasons oilseed rape crop is already in the ground. For pre-emergence herbicides, the challenge will be to ensure a good covering of fine settled soil on top of the seed. Spring barley crops are between soft & hard dough, with some crops having been sprayed off. It has been a *Ramularia* year, with the disease coming into crops post flowering. The hope is that infection has been delayed long enough to prevent yield losses. Most winter wheat crops are between soft & hard dough, with crops turning brown. Take-all can be found in some second wheats. Many oilseed rape crops have been sprayed off, with seeds black, but in most cases still soft. Some combines will be rolling towards the end of the week, weather permitting.

Stirling

Harvest has been on the go for a few weeks now across Stirlingshire. Winter barley crops are about 90% harvested, thanks to the good weather with most straw baled and cleared from the fields. Whilst yield data is still to be collected, it is expected that the winter barley will yield well as disease and pest damage has been minimal and growing conditions were optimal this season. Winter oilseed rape crops have all been desiccated in the last three weeks and are about 50% through harvest. Yet again yield data is still pending, and this will be interesting as there has been a huge range of crop conditions. The winter wheat on the heavier ground is looking disappointing compared to the lighter soils, believed to be impacted by some yellow rust, *Septoria* and poor rooting earlier in the season. There are small ears and mould present in some winter wheat crops. Spring barley is looking good on the lighter ground and have larger ears in general than those on the heavier carse clay. *Rhynchosporium* has been an issue in some spring barley crops. In all cereal crops areas have been flattened through a variety of different causes, including lodging, bird damage and the weather. Winter oilseed rape has already been sown direct drilled in some fields.

Lanarkshire

The continued good weather has seen most of the winter barley coming off the field at relatively low moisture content. The resulting straw has been baled in good condition. Winter wheat and spring barley is still a week or two off harvest. The forecasted heavy rain didn't materialise, and most crops are standing well. Some of these crops have been taken for wholecrop already. Grass growth has been variable throughout the area. Those on heavy soils are enjoying the lack of rainfall, whereas those on lighter soils have a lack of grass and some are having to buffer feed cattle. Despite being a good year for forage conservation, a continuation of the dry spell may eat into winter reserves.

Ayrshire

Some welcomed rain arrived in Ayrshire last week, however we could really do with more as sandier farms and those with shallow soils are burning up. Combining of some winter crops has started and with the dryer weather the straw has been baled and, in many cases, cleared from the field. A yield of 4t/acre was reported for winter barley at the weekend along with a decent swath of straw. The spring barley is still a little green but is catching up with the winter crops as it goes through dough development (GS 85). Apart from being on the short side, the spring barley generally looks well, with just a touch of *Ramularia* on some plants. Winter wheat is also looking well with the crop now at GS 91, if the dry weather continues this should be combined within the next couple of weeks.

Dumfries

There has been little rain over the past couple of weeks. Grass growth in the area has nearly stopped due to the prolonged lack of rain. Sandier, lighter land has been burning badly. Second cut silage yields have been down and expected quality will be poor due to stressed grass heading early. In certain areas of the region there has been some sporadic heavy showers which has resulted in a bit of damage in spring barley crops. Winter barley harvest is near finished and reported yields have been good at around 8.6t/hectare of grain and 5

4.4t/hectare of straw. Spring barley is ripening quickly with some crops being harvested for wholecrop over the past week.

Stranraer

There has still been very little rain in the last two weeks, so the grass shortage is largely unchanged. Rain is forecast for this week, however it will take time for fields to recover so forward planning is still needed. The majority of winter barley harvest is complete with initial reports on grain yield pleasing. Ground conditions have been excellent and the need for drying grain will be low. Wholecrop harvests have also commenced, in some cases in an effort to beat the forecasted rain. For those crops undersown the grass swards are variable, and rain will be needed urgently to see if the grass will come away.