

BREEDERS DIGEST

Crop, variety and seed news for agronomists

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Managing spring barley establishment this year

With more spring barley looking set to be drilled this season, but weather conditions already posing challenges, it's worth remembering that correct agronomy at establishment can pay dividends when it comes to harvest.



Establishment has a big impact on spring barley output

ALTERNATING conditions of frost followed by rain may have created drilling delays for spring barley growers in England. But with spring barley being a crop which 'prefers' to establish itself quickly, it's vital not to rush it in to poorly-prepared seedbeds.

Otherwise, any resultant capping (or frost heave) could have a big impact on growth and yield potential over the rest of the season.

Instead, ideal seedbeds should be fine, firm and free from clods. In England, it can be much better to drill a crop into a good seedbed in March than a 'forced' one in February.

Seed rates

As well as preparing good seedbeds, remember also to match seed rate to variety and drilling date with spring barley.

Most people already know optimum seed rates for established varieties such as Optic and NFC Tipple, but with newer varieties such as Quench (brewing) plus Publican and Forensic (distilling) now gaining real

momentum (see over page) it will be important to use optimum seed rates for these too. The table below has been compiled to provide examples over coming months.

Fertiliser use

Finally, fertiliser use must also be correct.

In England, if drilling is delayed until the end of March, consider bringing fertiliser application forward or applying it all as soon as tramlines are visible, to help crop growth catch up. If growing as a second or third cereal (because OSR couldn't be sown) soil nutrient levels may be somewhat depleted. So this needs taking into account. Any micronutrient deficiency, especially manganese, should also be corrected – e.g. with the first fungicide spray.

Example seed rates in good conditions

Seed rates are dependent on soil conditions, rotation and time of drilling: the more difficult the environment, the higher the seed rate must be to compensate for potential plant loss

	Quench	Publican	Forensic
England seeds per sq m			
Feb	350	325	325
Mar	350	350	350
Apr	350-375	350-375	350-375
Scotland seeds per sq m			
Feb	350	350	350
Mar	375	375	375
Apr	400	400	375-400

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Other variety news – winter and spring cereals

Winter wheat

Gallant

Quality winter wheat variety Gallant took the top slot for group one yield on the new HGCA Recommended List 2009/10 at the end of last year. With a UK treated yield figure five percentage points above Solstice, it could deliver more than an extra 0.5 t/ha.

Gallant is also very early maturing – important for spreading harvest workloads. Plus, it has a high Hagberg, high specific weight and high thousand grain weight. It has also produced good quality in very different growing seasons – 2006, 2007 and 2008. Watch out for more news on this exciting variety as the season unfolds.

Ketchum

New quality winter wheat Ketchum was also added to the HGCA Recommended List 2009/10 – this time a nabim group two.

Combining yield with high thousand grain weight, it offers growers a high output option in this market sector. It also scores well for resistance to mildew, yellow rust and Septoria tritici and (provisionally) very good resistance to Fusarium ear blight.

Winter barley

Volume

In winter barley, the new hybrid Volume was also added to the HGCA Recommended List 2009/10. Like Boost and Bronx, it



shares 'core hybrid values' of high yield, high specific weight, early maturity and improved disease resistance. However, Volume takes hybrid yields to an even greater level – with a UK treated yield of 111%.

Spring barley

Quench



As well as receiving numerous malting approvals across Europe – including promotion to Provisional Approval 2 for brewing use by the Institute of Brewing and Distilling (IBD) – high-yielding variety Quench also became the fastest-growing

spring malting barley for seed multiplication area across European countries. The latter was from European Brewery Convention statistics for 2007 and 2008 where it increased by a massive 140%.

Publican

High-yielding spring barley variety Publican was also promoted by the IBD late in 2008 – progressing to full approval for distilling. That made it the highest-yielding variety with full IBD approval for distilling on the HGCA Recommended List.

Forensic

Hot on the heels of Publican, distilling-targeted Forensic has undergone its C1 launch for this season. As well as malt distilling, high DP levels mean Forensic is also being evaluated for grain distilling. If successful, it could give the market a brand new option in this important sector.

Cropton

New spring malting barley variety Cropton was also added to the latest HGCA Recommended List 2009. A potential brewing variety, it has produced similar grain yield and quality to Quench, albeit with a slightly lower grain nitrogen. Besides high yield, Cropton also has excellent resistance to brackling and lodging.

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