

ABOUT CORSKIE MONITOR FARM

Farm Name **Corskie Farm, Garmouth, Fochabers, Moray, IV32 7NN**

Meeting Number **14**
 Meeting Date **Tuesday 9th July 2019**
 Next Meeting **Tuesday 15th October 2019**
 Report Date **Wednesday 12th July 2019 (SS)**

Corskie Farm is run by Iain Green in partnership with his mother and father. The family have been farming in the area for over 60 years. Over 1,440 hectares (3,560 acres) in total is currently farmed by the business.

Arable: The main arable enterprise consists of growing Spring Barley (535ha) for malting. Winter Wheat (86ha), Winter barley (70ha) and Spring Oats (11ha) are also grown, with the majority being used on-farm as livestock feed.

Cattle: The family run 380 cross cow suckler herd, alongside a 200 cow pedigree Simmental herd. Simmental and shorthorn bulls as well AI is used to spread out calving across the year.

Sheep: There are 600 Mules and Mule cross Texel sheep which are lambed in April.

Pigs: At Corskie there is an indoor breeding herd of 380 sows, producing breeding gilts for Rattlerow.

"The different farm enterprises are fairly well integrated," Iain says, "as well as growing our own feed through the cereals side, we also use the manure from the livestock on the arable fields and pasture. We apply it differently in different areas, using our soil and yield maps to make sure we are controlling our inputs and maintaining good soil fertility and nutrient balance."

Management Group

Andrew Anderson (Chair), Hugh Thomson, Robbie Newlands, Martin Birse, Robert Manson, Charlie Gray, Cameron MacIver, Ian McHattie, Stewart Grant, Stewart Stronach and Stewart Rothnie.



Photograph of one of the trailers touring people around the arable fields.

KEY MESSAGES

- Stewart Rothnie, Agrovista & Iain Green
 - Start management from the soil up; analyse the soils (know what you are working with), ensure good seedbed and crop establishment, tailor fertiliser to crop needs/soil status and target with a good fungicide programme throughout the year.
 - Newer varieties look to have better disease resistance, reducing the chemicals required to protect and treat and outbreaks. Make sure that management of the crops are altered to match variety.
 - Disease resistance becoming ever more important as the 'toolbox' to tackle crop diseases is ever decreasing.
- Katie Murray, Syngenta
 - Laureate and Diablo now the preferred varieties by maltsters.
 - Winter barley hybrids work well with N applications split on a ratio of 50:20:30.
 - Syngenta always looking to develop new varieties with high grain quality, spec. weight and a good disease resistance profile.
 - SY Kingsbarn performing well, now replacing Bazooka. Sunningdale continues to perform particularly well in the North.
- Charlie Birnie, GrainCo Scotland
 - Wheat futures have travelled between £140-159/t over the summer. (£145/t today).
 - World markets are affecting prices locally & currency weakening.
 - Although RL trials show SB yield improvements over the last 10 years in Scotland, the on-farm yields remain static at around 5.75t/ha (2.3t/ac). What can be done differently to change this on your farm?
 - Look at reducing growing costs on-farm to increase margins from crops, manage crops differently to increase yield.



AREAS OF DISCUSSION

- Over 50 farmers enjoyed an interactive day discussing; grain markets, winter wheat management and spring & winter barley varieties.
- Ian McHattie, member of the Management Group, welcomed everyone to Corskie and gave a run down of the day planned ahead.
- The group travelled over to West Mains, Duffus (one of the farms owned by Messrs Green) to look at Winter Wheat and Spring Barley (Diablo).

- A large field at West Mains has been in continuous winter wheat since 1987, with only 1 year having to grow spring wheat due to the weather in the previous year. No take-all after the break year in spring wheat. In the 80s the seed was treated with Jockey/Latitude to reduce take-all in the crop.
- The land at West Mains is all Grade 2, rarely lime is applied due to high pHs up to pH7. The soil P&K status is low, but nearing moderate after application of muriate of potash and farmyard manure. Manganese deficiency is a problem on these soils.
- Also at West Mains there is an annual cost of around £5.40 - £6.50/acre for a pumped drainage system, this is due to the land only sitting just above sea level, some of which used to be under water forming part of the loch or sea. The drainage system is linked into the Spynie Canal, all landowners in the area are required to pay annual costs to keep the drainage system in operation.
- There were two WW varieties being grown in the field, Motown in the headlands and Barrel in the center. Both had been treated exactly the same, however Barrel was not coping as well with the disease pressures of 2019, including having yellow rust (see photo showing difference).
 - The WW missed its T1 spray due to the weather conditions, T2 was applied at flag leaf (inc. PGR) and the T3 received an enhanced strobilurin as T1 was missed.
- The total cost to date for seed, fertiliser, sprays etc. at West Mains for the Winter Wheat (Motown & Barrel) is £235.08/acre and for Spring Barley (Diablo) is £152.55/ac.
 - The costs for WW & SB include £9.70/ac for wild oat sprays;
 - Bagged fertiliser costs are estimated to be £15-17/ac more at West Mains than at Corskie due to less muck and slurry being applied to the ground.
- Back at Corskie, we visited the Spring & Winter Barley trials. Katie Murray from Syngenta talked the group through the varieties and their traits, growth in the Scottish climate and management.
 - WB varieties included Belmont, Sunningdale, Bazooka, Libra, Belfry and SY Kingsbarn.
 - SB varieties included Fairing, Laureate, Diablo, Astroid and Scholar (feed variety).
 - Iain requested that a feed variety be grown in trial along with the malting/distilling varieties to compare yields. Historically the feed varieties have been higher yielding, which supports the need for an increased price for malting/distilling grain.



- Charlie Birnie from GrainCo Scotland discussed the grain markets in the UK and worldwide, looking at why wheat futures prices falling consistently over the last few months.
 - With Brexit looming it adds uncertainty to the UK markets:
 - Export tariffs to the EU likely to be around £10/t (estimate).
 - Based on the UK Tariff Schedule (published March 2019) the UK has chosen to eliminate/reduce the tariffs on imports for 12 months – to protect consumers from food price increases. This is a huge concern for all farmers.
 - Charlie highlighted the potential opportunities for local growers with the ability to work in cooperation with distilleries that ever more looking for grain provenance.
 - Looks like Laureate and Diablo will be the maltster's varieties of choice going forward with Concerto on its way out. Concerto may be worth growing if you are receiving an additional premium for doing so.
 - Spring barley 2019 harvest area reduced by 5% from 2018, however are the newer varieties with higher yields able to make up the shortfall?
 - Wheat varieties must now be notified to the buyers as some processors won't pay a premium for certain varieties. Varieties should also be stored separately.
 - Oilseed Rape area being grown is reducing after the removal of seed treatments making it difficult to grow the crop, with crops being decimated by pests as it is establishing.
- The meeting finished with a BBQ to help engage the community group and encourage further discussion. Overall the meeting was very positive with good interaction from the community group.



FARMERS UPDATE

- The Corske rain gauge has seen 250mm from 1st April 2019 – today.
 - In 2017 it was almost exactly the same amount of rainfall (only 8mm difference), but most of the rain in 2017 all fell in June.
 - In 2018, for comparison, there had only been 94mm of rainfall from 1st April – 9th July.
- Harvest is going to be later than planned (2.5 / 3 weeks away) due to rain and lack of sunshine.
- Straw supplies are running low (straw required all year round for the pigs), therefore early cutting would be beneficial to save purchasing more straw this summer.
- In general, the crops are looking healthy, although some of the headlands are suffering with the weather conditions.
- No more grain forward sold, prices sliding back.
- Soya is normally purchased forward (mainly used for pig enterprise), however very little forward purchased this year, the least ever.
- Some feed barley purchased forward.

- Corskie has had success at the Royal Highland Show, with all females being placed and their homebred cow, Disco, taking home the championship.
- Silage has been very start/stop due to the weather. Work began on the first cut at the very start of June and was completed into the start of July.
 - Large yields this year, but the earlier cuts are likely to be the best quality as they were cut at the optimum stage – analysis will be done later in the year to determine forage quality.
 - A field was also cut for hay, large yield, made it more difficult to dry quickly. Record crop.
- Sheep clipping now complete; again was start/stop due to the varied weather.
- The team will be going through the lambs to pick out any ready to be sold.
 - All lambs received a wormer and multi-vitamin bolus several weeks ago.
- A selection of heifers has just begun a program to implant embryos into in around 2 weeks time.
- Plans have been made to flush 8 Texel ewes this year, nearing the end of September.

OPPORTUNITIES/CHALLENGES

- Opportunity to look into entering contracts direct with the distilleries, as they look for grain provenance from Scotland or a particular localised area.
- Shortage of locally available straw during the late summer. This will be overcome once winter barley is combined, but at the moment supplies are tight.
 - Reluctance to import straw from further south due to increased risks of black grass.
- Large grass yields this year mean that there is scope to replenish winter forage stocks on farms to build a buffer into the stocks for this coming winter and following years.

ACTIONS FROM LAST MEETING

- Yield map and quality test SB & WB trial plots at harvest;
- Enter 2019 costings data into FarmBench;
- Analyse silage and hay, draw up winter rations for cattle;
- Begin plans for 2020 cropping.

FACILITATOR CONTACT DETAILS

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