

04 August 2022

General Comments

Drought rather than disease is really the main thing impacting crops at the moment. Earlier reports of potato blight outbreaks around Perthshire highlighted the blight risk in warm humid weather but the dry weather and cooler temperatures are obviously helpful, but we are in that critical part of the programme where blight sprays need to be tightly maintained. Worth checking out any white head patches in wheat as we are seeing quite a bit of take-all and eyespot in the crop clinic. We are seeing ramularia moving into spring barleys but hopefully this is late enough not to be damaging to yield.

Regional Comments

KIRKWALL

The good growing conditions have continued, leading to more hay and wrapped silage being made as farmers try to reset grazing fields which have grown beyond the livestock. Spring barley crops are approaching the dough development stage and are looking promising in terms of straw length and grain yield.

CAITHNESS

Winter barley harvest is underway in the area with early reports suggesting very good yields. Spring barley is unlikely to be too far behind with some crop expected to be sprayed off shortly. Hay and silage making continues but a lot has been secured, with noticeably more hay made this year, due to improved weather and also increased cost of wrap for silage bales. Limited areas of swedes grown have improved in the period due to some much needed rainfall while potatoes have started to be lifted in the area.

MORAY

Some much needed rain showers have arrived over the past few days which has hampered some last minute haymaking but for others is helping with grass growth. Winter barley harvest is complete with decent yields on the whole. Winter wheat crops are turning colour and are at the hard dough stage. Winter oilseed rape crops have been desiccated and harvest should get underway shortly. Spring barley crops are a mixed bag both in terms of growth stage (some crops are ripe whilst others would be at the late milk/early dough stage) and yield potential (reports of only 22-24 grains per ear on some light land). Many potato crops are now being flailed off.

INVERNESS

In the Inverness area the past fortnight has seen warm weather with intermittent showers. For the most part these showers have been welcome, and some areas would welcome more. Winter barley harvest is largely finished now, yields have been mixed with most lower than average. OSR harvest is now starting and although at an early stage indications are that yields are good. Spring barley crops are on average at the hard dough stage however earlier crops will soon be ready, with harvest likely to start next week for some. Winter wheat is also at the hard dough stage.

BANFF & BUCHAN

The Harvest is now very much in full swing with winter barleys finished, on the whole, reports range from average to good with no records being broken. The hot sunny weather however has meant that most crops have been able to be cut at 15-17% moisture so at least won't need much drying. Oilseed rapes should be combined or picked up over the next week with some thick standing crops and large swathes seen. Spring barleys will start to be sprayed off this week, and like the other crops this is at least a week earlier than normal. With glyphosate and fuel prices spiralling over the last few months, for some there is the dilemma of the cost of the roundup versus the benefits, which will vary from farm to farm and even field to field, especially on lighter soils where the crop has died off early. The hot weather did bring some heavy (and on the whole welcome) showers of rain. With some spring barleys at their heaviest, this has however seen some areas looking a bit tousled as they struggle to stay standing. Potato crops are rogued and inspected with haulms now being pulverised. Grass growth has suffered in the dry weather and some second cuts have been disappointing. Ploughing has started for next years crops, the with odd shower of rain at least providing some moisture for seedbeds. With grain prices falling and inputs continuing to rise, the profitability of harvest 2023 looks to be very different from the current year and good establishment will be more important than ever

KINCARDINESHIRE

Over the past couple of weeks winter barley has been cut in the area with average or above average yield results. There are also reports of a lot of straw from these crops. Winter oilseed rape is just starting to be cut but is struggling to be ready. A couple of showers of rain a few weeks ago seem to be keeping the winter wheat and spring barley and oats going. Winter wheat is at the hard dough stage and is looking well. Spring barley is a bit more variable and looks to be short which will have a knock on with straw supplies. Spring oats are at the soft dough stage and look better after the rain. Crops are going to be variable over the region but until they are cut it is difficult to know how they will perform. Potatoes are being flailed at the moment and grass is starting to green but there is little growth. Second cut silage is going to be poor if the dry weather continues.

ANGUS

Harvest is well underway in Angus with the winter barley crops cut and in the shed. Yields have been pleasantly surprising despite the dry weather; moistures have been low and straw yields high. The oilseed rape has been sprayed off for over two weeks, with the occasional grower giving it a try but finding high moistures. Spring barley and winter wheats are nearing the desiccation timing where applicable. Potatoes are being flailed with early crops such as Innovator already burnt down.

PERTSHIRE

Winter barley harvest is all but complete and combines are now well through winter oilseed rape also. Spring barley and winter wheat are ripening rapidly with glyphosate having been applied to some of these crops and combines expected to start next week. Yields to date have been average to good but some of the earlier harvest crops did run out of moisture. The first of the new crop oilseed rape has been sown into good seedbeds and recent showers should get them off to a good start.

FIFE

Fife winter barleys seem to be all harvested, yields and quality vary widely across the region largely down to soil type. Anything on light sandy soil that suffered drought stress has been poorer yielding with higher screenings. Those crops grown on heavier soil types or on higher ground (that got slightly more moisture) seem to have yielded well and report high specific weights. Grain driers have mostly been used to cool grain rather than take out excess moisture! The lowest ex-combine moisture so far in Fife was Craft winter barley at 11.8%. WOSR crops have started to be cut but yield reports have not come in yet. Some winter sown spring oats were harvested over the weekend and some spring barleys are approaching harvest fast. Winter wheats still retain some green leaf in most fields but are rapidly dying off. Flat out harvesting will soon be upon us, so let's hope the weather stays dry.

STIRLINGSHIRE

Prolonged dry weather has resulted in crops ripening quickly. Winter barley crops have been harvested with yields variable. Most winter wheats have lost all their green leaf with notable presence of sooty moulds creeping into crops with the recent humid weather. Wheat crops are in the soft to medium dough development stage. Spring barleys are all clean and ripening quickly. Crops have been widely observed at soft to medium dough development stage. Oilseed rape crops have been desiccated and some crops have been harvested. Recent wet weather is slowing OSR harvest progress.

LOTHIANS

A warm couple of weeks but heavy cloud cover and intermittent showers for some has hampered baling progress of the remaining winter barley straw in the swath. Initial yield indications are positive, although still in line with the 5-year average of 7.5t/ha with specific weights reported in the 65-67 range. Straw is yielding well too, with values quoted of £8/bale in the row and £90t delivered from further south. The earlier, lighter crops of rape have been combined with the expectation that heavier yields are still to come. Spring barleys look as though they will come off ahead of the winter wheats, but the lack of heat recently means many will still be around 10-14 days off cutting. Oats still look green in the straw in places although the grain is fit; straw yield looks good. Whole crop wheat is currently coming in and fodder crops planted on barley stubbles. Soils are incredibly dry still and may force some to delay plantings in the hope of more rain for an even establishment

BORDERS

It has been an exceptionally dry July with only 34mm of rain in the gauge. Grass growth continues to be a worry on fields with sandy soil, whereas clay soils are faring much better. Winter barley harvest is finished, with most reports of average yields, with little requirement to dry. Straw yields appear to be above average, however it is too early to get the oilseed rape harvest is now underway. Conditions appear favourable, with seed going into the shed dry. Localised showers are meaning harvest on some fields is start stop. Winter wheat is between soft dough and hard dough, with little green leaf remaining. The decision on whether or not to use glyphosate this year is one to be decided at an individual farm level. Spring barley is predominantly at soft dough, however there are some reports of early crops being ready for harvest next week.

LANARKSHIRE

Although a smaller area than usual, all winter barley has been harvested with straw baled in good order. Most fields are now cleared. Some winter wheat has been sprayed off and clearly starting to change colour. Most spring barley is still needing a week or two before being considered for glyphosate. The hot, dry spell of weather is now over but rainfall has not been so high as to adversely affect ground conditions. If the forecast is correct, this should be the case for the next 10 days. The recent rain has been welcomed by those on light soils with stock to graze or, unusually, silage to make. Grass growth had been stalled by the lack of moisture and high temperatures, but recent rain has seen things green up again.

AYRSHIRE

Another couple of weeks of relatively dry weather has meant that a lot of combining of winter barley has been on the go. Yields have been variable with some having good yields and some not so much with them ranging between 6.9 – 9.5t/ha. A common comment is that grain size is on the smaller side. Straw yields have similarly been variable. Winter wheat is sitting around late dough development at GS87. Spring barley is also variable with some crops looking better than others. After some recent heavy showers some crops are starting to go down. Silage cuts continue to be done; the recent weather has favoured grass growth in the region with many pits filling up.

STRANRAER

Winter barley harvests are still under way with a wider range in yields than usual. Highest confirmed yield has been 4.2t/acre whilst there are many hovering around 1t/acre. These lower yielding crops appear to be consistent with crops from fields suffering from manganese deficiency earlier in the year. A return to rolling in the Autumn will be required this year. Winter wheat harvest should get underway next, and this early harvest has led to some wholecrop wheats being taken through to harvest instead of going into the pit. There are numerous cases of yellow rust in the area this year and some crops have suffered due to spray timings being missed because of windy or wet conditions and the shorter window for opportunity due to early harvest. Burn off of spring barleys are expected to get underway next week and overall, the spring crops have had good growing season with good moisture throughout.