

2 Sept 2021

## General comments

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As ever harvest weather has been a mixed affair – but with the added rub that some areas have had a ‘best ever’ run in very good conditions while other pockets have had to endure a more stop start affair. Certainly making progress on our central trial sites has been a challenge. The chat on-line forums just now reflects the wetter than usual harvest conditions in the far south east of the UK who are getting a taste of what is probably more normal to us.

Yield reports in our areas really reflect the season. Around Inverness and the Black Isle where there was sufficient moisture in season and an easier harvest, the yield reports are all pleasing. Other areas are more variable – but to be fair many grumbles of being ‘back on last year’ reflect the fact that last year was exceptionally good.

## Regional comments

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### Orkney

The main barley crop is still around 1 week away from cutting for propcorning. However, much more barley than normal is being cut early for crimping and urea treatments due to the lack of propcorn availability. Ground conditions are excellent for harvesting, which greatly helps the straw curing process for baling as there is little rising damp. Greylag geese, however, are never far away and it is extremely difficult to stop them from landing in cut fields to feed from dropped grains and contaminating the straw with their excreta. Grazing grass is not abundant due to the exceptionally dry weather and this is likely to lead to store cattle being cashed earlier than planned for most.

### Caithness

Spring harvest is up and running in the area, with timings on a par with 2020. Yield is certainly back on the year but to be expected. Quite a lot has been sprayed off and will be ready for combining this week, weather permitting. Spring oats in the area have really come on in the past few weeks and a number of fields are close. Preparations for the winter crop going back in are going very well, in very dry conditions. Odd pockets of 2nd cut silage have been completed in the past week and that should be the mowers and choppers housed for another year now.

## **Inverness**

The past fortnight has seen settled warm weather for harvest. Temperatures in the high teens and low 20's are making for good combining conditions. Spring barley yields are reported to be better than expected, although light fields have poor patches. Quality is good with low Nitrogen content and screenings. Winter Barley and Oil seed rape have been planted in good conditions.

## **Moray**

A fantastic spell of dry weather that led to a flying start to the spring barley harvest in Moray has been severely hampered by the unsettled and mostly damp conditions over the last three – four days. Yields so far are alas well back on, for many, last year's record high yielding harvest and are only just making the 2 tonnes per acre mark. Thankfully high prices are helping make up the shortfall somewhat. Straw yields are about average. Whilst the combines are stood still many producers are getting on with sowing cover crops. Some more oilseed rape has gone in the ground and potato haulms are being burnt off.

## **Aberdeenshire**

The cloudy and patchy weather has caused some stopping and starting of combines in the spring barley harvest now, but early reports are of good yields, with some skinning issues. Most if not all the WOSR is sown, and emerging now, but growers need to watch out for cabbage stem flea beetle activity. Some Winter Wheat is being harvested as well, as it has ripened quickly over the last couple of weeks, and again early reports are good (so far). With dry weather forecast for next few days, I'm sure a lot of spring barley will be harvested in the next week.

## **Banff & Buchan**

Harvest continues with most growers either having just started or looking to start on their spring barleys although the glorious sunshine has given way to more overcast conditions. First reports are that yields are decent although back on last year's exceptional results. Nitrogens are low, bushel weights are good and screenings are acceptable. There does seem to be more awns than normal in some samples however, – perhaps a reflection of the more overcast harvesting conditions or the crop may not be quite as ripe as it appears. There is also a reluctance by some growers to increase the drum speed of the combine following last year's skinning issues. Winter barleys and winter oilseed rapes are all finished and winter wheats are ripening off quickly. Next year's oilseed rape crops are nearly all sown and indeed in most cases through the ground in a matter of a few days. Keeping vigilant for the presence of slugs and flea beetles is now the order of the day. Ground is also being ploughed for winter barleys and wheats with sowing to start shortly. While the high grain prices are a source of optimism the high fertiliser prices are focusing the minds of growers with more enquiries relating to nutrient budgeting and trying reduce applications to take account of FYMs and where soil analysis allows. Machinery prices have also risen considerably of late, meaning that more thought is being given to replacement policy.

## **Kincardineshire**

A good spell of weather over the last few weeks has seen harvest progress in the south of the area, in the West growers are just getting started. Spring barley is yielding well probably around the average for the area or slightly higher. Straw yields are less than average. Winter oilseed rape is

mostly cut with variable yields but most around the 1.75t/ac. Winter wheat harvest is progressing with good yields of both grain and straw. Next years oilseed rape is now mostly sown and there are signs of flea beetle in the area, with some crops being severely attacked. Autumn cultivations are progressing, and sowing will start again for the majority in the next few weeks. Some growers have already started sowing. Grass is growing steadily and 2nd cut silage has been made in most of the area.

## **Angus**

A long dry spell in Angus has helped harvest enormously, with a huge amount of crop cut in the last week. All of the winter barley and oilseed rape is cut with most of the oats also complete. There is some spring barley still standing in the fields, and some wheat left to complete. New season rape has emerged and is at the two cotyledon stage in most cases, some crops have been affected by flea beetle especially where near old season rape stubbles. Yields have been mixed, however the price is good and nitrogens are low in spring barleys.

## **Perthshire**

The recent settled spell has meant that harvest has progressed more or less unhindered over the last 10 days and spring barley is mostly complete and winter wheat is also now well through. Moisture levels have been low and quality has been good. Early sown winter oilseed rape crops are now around 2 true leaves but flea beetle can be found in most crops and insecticides are warranted in many instances and pressure will mount on those crops still to be sown or to emerge.

## **Fife**

Combines and balers have been very busy in Fife over the last week. Large areas of spring barley and winter wheat have been cut at fairly low moisture content. Quality seems to be good but yields are not bumper, still probably better than average. Winter oilseed rape is emerging in some places, with others still waiting for the straw to be cleared from the proposed fields to allow sowing to take place. Where crop is emerging it is coming through evenly, but there are some signs of flea beetle damage in some fields. Ploughing of stubbles for winter barley and winter wheat are progressing well in the mornings while folk wait for the damp to lift from the crops left to harvest.

## **Lothians**

Harvest in the Lothians has been progressing well with the settled dry weather we have been experiencing in most places. OSR harvest is 100% complete with OSR sowing conditions overall being good, sowing 95% finished. Wheat and barley harvesting is 60-70% complete with some damp sea haar conditions hampering progress in some areas. Yields and quality have been average to good in most cereal crops.

## **Borders**

Harvest has been progressing well, benefiting from some sunny days last week and slowed down due to damp weather over the weekend. Winter barley and winter oilseed rape harvest is finished. Spring barley harvest is progressing with varying yields of both grain and straw being reported. Winter wheat has continued to ripen well with harvest underway and great yields of over 4t/acre

being recorded. Straw is being baled and fields cleared efficiently. The last of the winter oilseed rape is being drilled. Flea beetle damage can be seen in some crops and slug damage is also evident at low levels.

## **Stirling**

The fantastic spell of weather means that the harvest in Stirling is almost complete. There are some fields of wheat and spring oats still to tidy up. Most of the straw has been baled, all in ideal conditions. This must be the earliest finish to harvest ever in this area. Winter oilseed rape has been sown and the earliest is through and at 5 leaves, little sign of pest or disease damage.

## **Lanarkshire**

The extended spell of good weather has given those with spring barley to harvest a great chance. Many fields are now cleared and much needed straw also in the shed. The dry weather has resulted in good levels of moisture, reducing the need for drying and widening the options for acid or alkali preservation treatments. Little cultivation can be seen on the cleared fields. This may be down to a good forecast ahead or that the decision whether to put in winter crops has not yet been made. Early morning dampness and ground temperature still holding up has given rise to a late increase in grass growth. This is suiting graziers and late silage makers.

## **Ayrshire**

With the dry weather over the past week, combines have been out in force in Ayrshire. On the whole yields are looking good with reports of spring barley at 2.6–2.78t/acre and some winter barley at 4.2t/acre. Straw yields are also looking good with the winter barley straw at 2t/acre and the spring barley just a little under this. Some farmers have commented on the grain size being a little smaller this year. With the straw cleared some cover crops and stubble turnips are in the ground. Farmers have also taken advantage of the good weather to get in later second cuts and third cut silage.

## **Dumfries & Galloway**

Harvest is well underway on the spring crops at the moment. We have had a dry week which has helped things along. Spring barley grain yield reports have been good with most crops achieving above 2.5t/acre and ranging from 14–18% in moisture. Straw yields have been reasonable at around 1.2t/acre. Grass growth over the past week has been motoring. Third cuts are still getting harvested and farmers are getting on with grass reseeds which have ideal cultivation and growing conditions at the moment.

## **Stranraer**

Conditions in the Southwest are still largely very dry for this time of year. The settled weather over the last couple of weeks has helped harvest progress but combines and silage contractors still have plenty of work in front of them. Grain and straw yields from Spring crops and Winter Wheat are pleasing with crops on heavier land having fared better. Grass growth has been exceptional over the last month with plenty still to be cut for silage and very much needed to get pits filled for winter. Most farms will have taken an additional cut this year and with a local fodder shortage still forecast

the preparation of a feed budget will be very important. After a slow start, forage crops have taken a big jump this month with the combination of heat and moisture. There has been no major insect pressure reported in crops yet and most crops appear to be winning the race with weeds.