

3 March 2022

## General Comments

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After such a benign winter with excellent soil conditions, a resumption of more normal Scottish weather services was almost inevitable. Snow and heavy showers have brought early field work to a halt in many areas but probably give a useful reminder about the risks around going very early with spring crops. The snow will have done little to check the disease levels already noted in crops – in fact the little bit of cover, humidity and insulation provided by snow can actually encourage disease. Keep walking crops and make TO decisions accordingly.

## Regional Comments

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### CAITHNESS

A prolonged period of wet weather has seen land work brought to a halt. Still a lot of ploughing to be done in the area. Winter crops continue to look good. Fodder stocks are starting to feel pressure with some producers looking at running out by end of March.

### MORAY

As the first day of spring arrives bringing with it improved weather conditions, oilseed rape crops in particular have started to shoot up entering stem extension stages. Most winter crops have now received some nitrogen with the majority of winter oilseed rape, winter barley and winter wheat crops looking well. Some mildew can be found on the older leaves of winter barley but generally disease levels are low. Light leaf spot can be seen in oilseed rape but at this stage does not appear to be too bad.

### INVERNESS

Since last week the weather in the Inverness area has improved dramatically. The wintry showers have been replaced with clear dry days which have improved ground conditions rapidly. Nights are still cold with frost most mornings, as such crops have not grown much in the last fortnight, however they are looking better after this break in the wet weather. If this dry weather continues as the forecast predicts then ploughing and other spring work will be well underway again shortly.

### ABERDEENSHIRE

More settled weather has seen winter crops growing nicely with start of spring Nitrogen going on now. No immediate problems of note.

## **BANFF & BUCHAN**

The last week has brought a period of settled weather with the sun even making a welcome appearance – all the more surprising given it is Spring Show week! Spring is trying to begin– winter barleys are starting to wake from their winter slumber although wheats are somewhat slower. Green Area Indexes are being measured in oilseed rapes and adjustments to fertiliser application rates and splits considered. GAIs have decreased since the turn of the year with pigeons not helping in some cases– feasting away at valuable leaves and of course in–crop Nitrogen. Fertiliser spreaders are being dusted off, with cereals receiving any outstanding compounds and barleys and OSR also getting some Nitrogen to get them up and running– and in the case of the latter to keep them in front of the pigeons. Crops have remained fairly clean through the winter. Spring cropping decisions have, on the whole, been made with the last of the ploughing being tidied up including those areas under various AECS options. Events elsewhere and their wider effects are being considered by growers – with futures markets rising on the one hand, whilst on the other fears over increasing input prices and concerns over supplies.

## **KINCARDINESHIRE**

A more unsettled couple of weeks of weather has seen winter ploughing slow a little although most growers are well on. Winter barley is generally looking well with low disease levels and perhaps starting to yellow a little as temperatures warm up. Winter oilseed rape crops are looking strong for the time of year and there could be savings made considering the GAI of crops at present. Winter wheats are looking well but growth stage is variable depending on sowing date. First applications of N will be applied in the next week or so if field conditions dry a little. This will be on winter oilseed rape and some of the later sown wheats first. Then onto the rest of the winter crops.

## **ANGUS**

Crops across the region are relatively forward, given the very mild winter. Growers nearest the coast are considering sowing now that March has arrived. In most cases, growers are getting ready for the first applications of nitrogen with compounds being applied to winter wheat and barley, and the first dose of nitrogen on winter oilseed rape. There are low levels of Septoria present in wheat and mildew in barley, but crops are generally clean given the lack of a prolonged cold spell.

## **PERTHSHIRE**

A brief spell of snow has reminded us that winter may not be over. However, fertiliser spreaders are now out applying compound fertiliser to winter cereals and nitrogen onto winter oilseed and winter barley. Crops though generally look well and have not yellowed as much as usual coming out of winter. Disease is still present in most crops but not really increasing.



## **FIFE**

Crops have been slowed by the recent wet and cold weather but are probably still quite well on due to an over-all mild winter. Winter oilseed rape fields are being targeted by pigeons, even the most forward fields have areas that are being attacked. Winter wheat has low levels of Septoria on the older leaves but are fairly weed free, showing the benefit of a good autumn residual herbicide. Winter barleys are well tillered but have a fair bit of mildew showing up.

Winter cultivations are well advanced with few stubbles left untouched. All hedge trimming will have been completed by now and thoughts will be turning to early fertiliser and other spring field work preparations.

## **STIRLINGSHIRE**

Recent wet weather has stopped most field work. Crops in general are looking well but the recent cold and wet weather will be having an effect with wheelings and overlaps starting to yellow. All winter cereals have tillered well, but cold and wet weather means crops aren't moving much yet. Disease is low some mildew and Rhynchosporium on the Winter barley at a low level and Septoria on winter wheat mainly on the old lower leaves. Some of the crops on the lighter ground have just had a top dressing of fertilizer.

Winter oilseed rape is patchy in places particularly on the headlands. Some crops have been well grazed by pigeons, deer etc but they are well established and will survive.

## **LOTHIANS**

Autumn-sown crops looked well going into winter and have maintained that promising structure which bodes well for yield potential this year. Thoughts turn to 1st Nitrogen applications, but the temptation may be to go too soon on cereals; soil temperatures will have been slow to lift given February's colder and wetter weather. Winter barleys are yellowing and looking 'hungry' although it'll only be the oldest tillers colouring off in this transient stage and we could yet return to more wintery conditions, so caution may be wise before committing the first dose. BLW control will be outstanding in many winter cereals as heavy rains shut the gate to the sprayer on many early crops at the backend of 2021. Similarly late October sowings went in and established well with growers choosing to defer any herbicide applications to the spring. Oilseed rape plant stands are encouraging too, with several crops carrying high biomass readings out of winter, some measuring 2.6 on the GAI Index; potential here, therefore, to reduce or delay first N applications.

## **BORDERS**

With plenty of rainfall and choppy weather over the past two weeks, there has been very little progress in the cereals. Winter barley is looking yellow and in need of nitrogen. Low levels of Rhynchosporium can be found in some crops. Winter wheat disease level remains low with Septoria on older leaves. Oilseed rape is beginning to show progress with the crops looking taller as stem elongation is beginning. Some ploughing has been done in preparation for spring crops.

## **LANARKSHIRE**

Lower temperatures have slowed the rate of growth in some winter crops. Heavy rain and a covering of snow has left fields mostly inaccessible with some crops starting to yellow with the

lack of fertiliser. Disease pressure is low and poor ground conditions have also hampered any further attempts to start field work for spring crops. Grass is still growing but it is still too wet to get on with slurry in all but the driest fields. Those looking to start lambing and calving will be hoping for drier, less windy conditions in the coming weeks.

## **AYRSHIRE**

Another wet couple of weeks again in Ayrshire, but the last few days there have been the first signs of spring with a couple of dry sunny days. The odd field has been ploughed, but generally conditions haven't been ready for most of the region. Winter barley is showing manganese deficiency, with a lot of crops looking yellow. Current ground conditions aren't allowing people to get on to spray, but hopefully with a few more dryer days forecast this will change.

## **STRANRAER**

March has kicked off with some glorious weather providing some optimism that Spring may not be far away. It is hoped ground conditions will improve to allow some earlier drilling of Spring crops in an effort to get them established before it gets too dry, which is becoming a more common issue. Rainfall in January was well below last year with 36mm versus 104mm recorded at Stranraer, February was on a par at 98mm.

Attentions are again turned to fertiliser markets and how to ensure that every kilogram is utilised. The volatility of the market appears to be something we will have to contend with for the foreseeable, and the increase in soil samples taken recently demonstrates that farmers are looking to make applications based on facts rather than the same as last year.