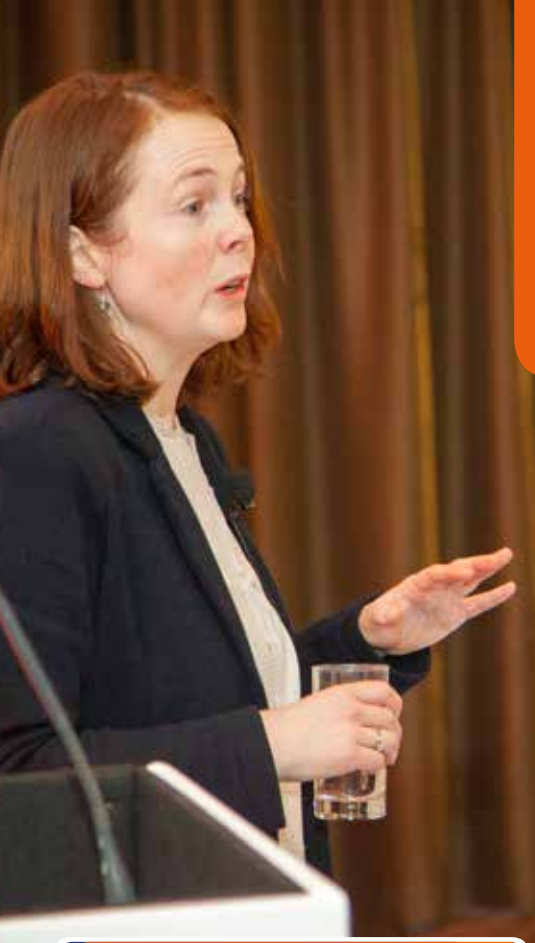
Fieldwise
AGRONOMY NEWS FROM HUTCHINSONS
MARCH 2018 EXTRA



Looking into the future for plant breeding

Advances in scientific technology are revolutionising plant breeding and promise to help overcome many challenges facing growers, attendees at the annual Hutchinsons agronomists' conference have heard.

From constantly evolving disease races to the loss of key active ingredients, there are many pressures facing growers and agronomists. But, while the negatives often dominate the headlines, there are plenty of new ways that scientists are rising to meet these challenges.

"There is so much technology available, the challenge is how we fit it into breeding programmes," NIAB's Dr Alison Bentley told agronomists gathered near Towcester.

She highlighted a number of examples, summarised below, some of which were closer to commercial reality than others (i.e. short-term versus long-term).

SHORT-TERM	MEDIUM-TERM	LONG-TERM
Speed breeding	New sources of disease resistance	Hybrid varieties (wheat)
Gene editing	Novel crop traits	Synthetic biology

1.Speed breeding

This technique involves breeders growing plants under glasshouse conditions where the light can be controlled to produce 22-hour days.

This increases plant growth and could double the number of generations produced in a year from three to six, dramatically cutting the time taken to select desirable traits and transfer them into commercial varieties through conventional breeding techniques.

"It currently takes around seven years from the first cross to putting a variety into National List trials. Speed breeding could deliver genetic gain to farmers far more quickly."

However, there are challenges to overcome, particularly around the energy requirements of artificial lighting and whether the process inadvertently selects varieties suited to higher light levels not available in field conditions. Also, vernalisation in winter wheat is still needed and methods to speed it up don't yet exist.

Continue overleaf >>>

Fieldwise ViewPoint

Est. 1938 80 YEARS HUTCHINSONS Crop Production Specialists

Stuart Hill
HEAD OF TECHNOLOGY AND INNOVATION

Embracing Change

2018 is a milestone year for Hutchinsons, marking eight decades of service to UK agriculture.

They say challenge and adversity breed innovation. Never is this truer than today in the farming industry.

Brexit is firmly on the horizon and we are now very familiar with the landscape of increased regulation and consequent increased development costs of new active ingredients and re-registering of existing active ingredients. The net effect is uncertainty.

This changing landscape is a challenge, but more importantly it is a great opportunity. It has allowed us to step back, look at the long term, challenge what we do and ultimately be more innovative.

Continue overleaf >>>

Outline/timeline

What's coming?

1. Speed breeding
2. Gene-editing
3. Disease resistance
4. New quality/products
5. Hybrids
6. Synthetic biology

NIAB

STEM RUST ALERT

Growers and agronomists have been urged to look out for wheat stem rust, after scientists confirmed the first case of the disease in more than 60 years.

A single infected wheat plant was found at a site in Suffolk in 2013 and genetic tests have confirmed it was the same strain that caused outbreaks elsewhere in Europe and Africa.

Having been eradicated from the UK decades ago, stem rust has not been a focus of breeding programmes and around 80% of modern varieties are thought to be susceptible.

Dr Bentley said vigilance was essential and any suspected samples of the disease should be sent to the UK Cereal Pathogen Virulence Survey (UKCPVS).

>>> 2. Gene-editing

Gene editing is used by researchers in several crops and gene-edited crops such as potatoes with improved shelf life and browning-resistant mushrooms, are already available in the US.

Legislation has slowed European adoption and its use in wheat is lagging behind due to the crop's complex genome - wheat has nearly six times the number of DNA base pairs as humans.

The process uses **"molecular scissors"** to identify a specific sequence of DNA within an individual (e.g. the gene responsible for rust susceptibility) and cut the sequence at that point, deactivating the gene.

"It's a very targeted single change to a gene that leaves no evidence within the plant. It's not like conventional GM where you're introducing a new gene into an organism."

The technique has **"huge opportunities"** for plant breeders and consumers. One area being investigated at NIAB is the use of gene editing to remove the allergenic components from wheat by modifying gluten to make it non-toxic for Celiac patients.

3. Disease resistance

Improving disease resistance is an on-going task for plant breeders made harder by the emergence of new races with exotic origins. This expansion of pathogen diversity will continue, so faster identification with tools such as DNA sequencing is key.

Breeders are also looking to identify desirable traits in wild grasses, such as stem rust resistance, and incorporate these into commercial varieties.

"We have the tools to partition out interesting parts of genetic information and sequence them, allowing us to select the traits we like and remove those we don't.

Disease resistance remains a challenge, but we're much better placed to address the challenges with new technology."

4. Novel crop traits

There are many crop quality or health traits that researchers are exploring, one of which is the use of spelt (hulled wheat) in breeding programmes. The crop has a niche **"health food"** status in the UK, but its agronomics and grain characteristics make it hard to grow and process commercially.

Researchers are looking at crossing wheat and spelt to produce crops with the agronomics of wheat, but the grain health characteristics of spelt.

5. Hybrid varieties

Hybrid barley and oilseed rape varieties are available in the UK, but hybrid wheat, which offers yield improvements over conventional line-bred varieties, has proved more difficult to develop, due partly to challenges with seed multiplication.

There is a long way to go before hybrid wheat becomes a commercial reality, although investment has accelerated in recent years.

6. Synthetic biology

This technique involves scientists building the core DNA code and component parts of an organism to create new biological systems with specific traits. It has potential to **"revolutionise"** plant breeding.

One example is investigating whether the chemical pathway controlling capsicum production in chilli peppers can be integrated into tomatoes to produce spicy tomatoes.

The OpenPlant initiative has brought together a number of researchers to find ways of advancing synthetic biology techniques.

>>> Fieldwise ViewPoint

It has also pressured our research and development partners to become more innovative. There are new active ingredients on the horizon that must be protected from the inevitable certainty of resistance. We are jointly developing introductions of new varieties, traits and nutrition to support building crop biomass, as well as yield and data driven technologies to help decision support.

Already we view the farm business in a more holistic sense and recognise the need to work with you, to jointly understand and manage costs strategically. Increasingly we are looking to sustainably improve your soils, manage productivity on a field by field basis using multi-year data and ensuring your farm is the environment and not that the environment is just part of the farm.

In parallel to this, we are reviewing the avalanche of potential, exciting new technologies to ensure innovations will enhance decision making between you and your agronomist and lead to a tangible benefit in productivity, efficiency, time saving and profitability.

In our 80th year, looking back over the last two decades we have seen significant advancements in information and communication exchange, but it has not fundamentally changed how we have worked on farm. With the next generation of technology we will absolutely see a fundamental change and we look forward to embracing this with you.

Stuart Hill

Farms must look beyond food production post-Brexit

Likely changes to agricultural support after Brexit will require farmers to become savvier about marketing and how they use farms to cater for a wide variety of needs beyond food production, BBC Countryfile presenter **Adam Henson** told the conference.

"We'll still have to manage crops and produce high quality food as efficiently as possible, but post-Brexit we will all have to look really carefully at land use and how farms can be used as a wider resource."

That could mean anything from producing added-value products, generating energy, establishing environmental measures on unproductive areas, converting disused farm buildings, or dedicating areas of the farm to recreational activities for the public. The key was to remain open to new ideas and build flexibility into the business, he said.

At his 650ha farm in the Cotswolds, run jointly with his business partner on a 20-year Farm Business Tenancy, this approach has influenced many areas.

For example, a new 4,000t grain store has a "multifunctional" design, suited to storing grain, but with the flexibility to be easily converted to other uses if needed. The farm also adds value where possible by growing premium milling wheat on contract with Warburtons, producing malting barley for a real ale brand and cold-pressing oilseed rape for cooking oil. Land is in the Higher Level Stewardship scheme and some parts of the farm have been opened up for horse riding trails.

"Marketing and making the most of what we've got is key."

Agronomists were ideally placed to offer an outside view on business direction, as well as provide agronomic advice, so building and maintaining close working relationships was crucial, he added.

"These are challenging times and Brexit will inevitably bring some casualties, but there will be opportunities for others."

Central to future success on global markets was the wider promotion of **"Brand Agriculture"** to the public to highlight the credibility, high standards and quality of British produce, Mr Henson continued.

"It may be a niche market, but it's a trusted one. We've all got to tell our story about the food we're producing to a public that is clearly interested."

He highlighted the popularity of *Countryfile*, which attracted up to 9m viewers in its primetime slot, and also the success of other TV initiatives such as *Lambing Live*.

"Viewers, i.e. the public, are engaged and want to know more about how their food is produced, so we've got to build on that."

Misconceptions and **"fake news"** about food production had to be handled sensibly without overreacting, he added.

"We're on the crest of an exciting wave, but we have to ride it carefully and responsibly."

Acknowledging the 80th Anniversary of Hutchinsons, Mr Henson added: **"I've been farming for 46 years, which is around half the time Hutchinsons has been going. Let's hope you're here for another 80 years, leading the country in what you do."**

Fieldwise Answers

"What would be the most environmentally and economically beneficial options to grow on my non-productive areas?"

Dr Bob Bulmer makes some suggestions...

The first step in the process is to identify low yielding areas within individual fields. There is a useful function within Omnia which uses yield maps to look at yield variance within fields. Once low yielding areas have been identified investigate the reasons behind the low yield performance. Often these areas are associated with problems that can be addressed and productivity restored, for example acid patches or soil related issues like compaction. Hutchinsons have specialists who are trained to assess these problems and make recommendations.

If the problem cannot be corrected, then consider including the area in greening measures, for example fallow. Each year five percent of the arable area has to be included in greening measures and this is one way of achieving the target. Recent research has show that taking these areas out production actually saves money by reducing costs.

To further improve the farm environment, consider the new arable offer for **Countryside Stewardship**. This is a simplified scheme which is accessible to most farmers provided the criteria are met:

One percent of the arable area has to be sown with a pollen and nectar mix, 2% sown with winter bird food and a further option has to be selected from the resource and habitats section - winter feeding of birds, hedgerow management, buffer strips and lapwing plots are some of the options available in this section. Funding is available via the Countryside Stewardship scheme to assist in the establishment and maintenance of these features. Again, Hutchinsons have advisors who can provide you with assistance in this area.

For further details see: www.gov.uk/ government/news/ countryside-stewardship-detail-of-new-simplified-offers

If you have a question or challenge about crop production issues you are facing on your own farm, please email us: information@hlhltd.co.uk and put 'Fieldwise Answers' in the title.

Winter Wheat for the 2018 Cereals Challenge

Six teams from Universities and Colleges from across the country have been presented with this year's Cereals Challenge; to grow a virtual crop of winter wheat in a testing set of circumstances.

Launched in Solihull earlier this month, teams from Nottingham University, Newcastle University, Harper Adams University, Writtle University College, Hartpury College and the Royal Agricultural University were presented with this year's Challenge where the scene was set to grow the best plot of winter wheat on land that has a resistant black-grass challenge and is following a crop of oilseed rape leaving Clearfield volunteers to manage.

Now in its 9th year, the Cereals Challenge aims to encourage a new generation of agronomists and farmers into the industry by offering them a 'crop' to manage and is organised by crop production specialists Hutchinsons and farm business management company Velcourt.

Speaking at the launch, **Paul Hobson** of Hutchinsons explained the reasoning behind the virtual approach. "Previously teams have been given a real plot to manage at the Cereals event site, however with such a geographical spread of teams, this disadvantaged those further away who were not able to visit the site. By creating virtual plots this makes it simpler and fairer for all."

"A new twist for this year is that we set up the challenge using videos where Keith Norman of Velcourt and Dick Neale of Hutchinsons describe the scope of the challenge; these were from the field where the virtual crop is being grown, and it's possible to see and get a feel for the soil structure and early weed populations."

As the spring unfolds the next three steps of the challenge will be conveyed via the Hutchinsons Facebook page - each video blog will highlight what's happening in the crop and technical experts Dick and Keith will describe the task for the teams to solve.

"We hope this reflects the changing ways in which many young people access information today."

The wheat plots will still need to be grown and managed as if it were a 'real' crop and each team will still have complete responsibility for their crop - from choosing which variety to grow and cultivation and drilling details through to making the real-time agronomy decisions on inputs, emphasises Mr Hobson.

Last year's winners Writtle University College believe that the Cereals Challenge is a very valuable way of finding out what it is like to grow a crop like a farm manager or agronomist, needing to make recommendations and last-minute decisions according to the season.

"It's also a really good chance to raise our profile with potential future employers, as the Challenge receives lots of attention and media profile, so it's well worth the effort," says this year's team captain David Parker who is doing a MSc in Crop Production with a view to being a successful arable farmer.

The winners of the Cereals Challenge will be announced and presented with a trophy, £1000 to share as well as £500 for their College, on the Hutchinsons stand at the 2018 Cereals Event at Chrishall Grange farm in Cambridge on Wednesday 13th June 2018.

Follow the 2018 Cereals Challenge on Twitter #CerealsChallenge2018 where you can meet the teams and keep up-to-date with what is happening on the plots.

As part of this year's Challenge, teams will be asked to write a technical piece on Farm Diversification that would be suitable for publication on a farming website. It will be judged by representatives of the Guild of Agricultural Journalists and has a separate prize of £400 per team and £100 per college. "This element was introduced for the first time in 2017 and proved to be a big hit with the teams and added a new dimension to the competition," says Mr Hobson.

Fieldwise 2018 Agronomy Survey

Enter our 2018 agronomy survey for your opportunity to win:-

1st Prize: FREE 12 months agronomy advice to the value of £5,000

Plus, TWO runner-up prizes of 200ha of Omnia service and TWO Healthy Soils assessments to be won.

Hutchinsons would like to know the agronomy issues that are affecting your business and make sure that what we print in Fieldwise is most relevant to you. Please enter your farm details, complete the survey overleaf and during 2018, future editions of Fieldwise will address the most popular agronomy issues identified in our survey. For a chance to win, just complete and return this tear-off survey form.

TERMS & CONDITIONS: No purchase necessary. All entries received by **30th April 2018** will be entered into a draw, with the winners being notified after the Cereals 2018 event (13th-14th June). Agronomy services will be offered for one full growing season only. The prizes are for agronomy services and no cash prize alternatives are available. Runners up will receive EITHER a Healthy Soils assessment OR up to 200ha free Omnia precision including: mapping, variable application plans for seed and fertiliser, yield map analysis and Cost of Production analysis using Omnia's unique Multi Dimensional Analysis and advice from an Omnia specialist for 12 months. The company's decisions are final and no correspondence will be entered into. Values of quoted prizes are exclusive of VAT.

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Please enter your details here:

Name:

Position:

Trading Title:

Address:

Town:

County:

Postcode:

Tel. / Mobile:

Email:

Farm Size (hectares):

Your cropping details (ha):-

Wheat		Barley		OSR	
Sugar Beet		Potatoes		Legumes	
Pasture		Fruit		Other	
Protected Crops		Field Vegetables			

(please specify)

Do you currently use an agronomist: Yes ☐ No ☐

Name of agronomy company:

Privacy Notice: Here at Hutchinsons we take your privacy seriously and will only use your personal information to provide you with relevant information for the benefit of your individual agricultural requirements. However, from time to time we would like to contact you with details of our other services and carefully selected products, which may be of interest to you.

If you consent to us contacting you, please confirm your preferred method of communication: PHONE ☐ POST ☐ EMAIL ☐
We will never pass your details onto other 3rd parties and you have the right to opt-out of our marketing at any time.

Simply detach your completed survey, fold along the dotted lines, seal and return to us by post.

SEEDS, SOIL & CULTIVATION TECHNIQUES:

Q1: What are the main soil types on your farm?

Heavy: ____ %
Medium: ____ %
Light: ____ %
Organic: ____ %

Q2: What is your main cultivation technique? PLEASE TICK

Ploughing:
Shallow minimum tillage:
Deep minimum tillage:
Combination of the above:
Direct Drilling:

Q3: How often do you undertake soil health assessments on your farm? PLEASE TICK

Never:
Every 10 years:
Every 5 years:
More frequently:

CROP NUTRITION:

Q4: What is the main influence when deciding your farm's base (P, K & Mg) fertiliser programme? PLEASE TICK

Agronomist:
Fertiliser manual (RB209):
Fertiliser Supplier:
Other (please specify): .....

Q5: Do you apply micronutrients to your crops? PLEASE TICK

Never:
Routinely:
After tissue testing:
If visual symptoms seen:

HERBICIDES, PESTICIDES & FUNGICIDES:

Q6: What are your major grass-weed problems?

	TICK	RESISTANT?
Black Grass:		
Rye-grass:		
Wild oats:		
Brome:		
Annual meadow grass:		

Q7: What do you see as the biggest pest or disease threat on your farm in:-

Cereals: .....
OSR: .....

FIELDWISE NEWSLETTER:

Q8: Which 3 topics would you like to read more about in this newsletter? PLEASE TICK

a) Black grass control:
b) Disease / pest control:
c) Crop nutrition:
d) Soil management:
e) Precision farming:
f) Strategic agronomy advice (multi-year):
g) Farm business management:
h) Environmental stewardship:
i) Other (please specify): .....

Q9: Are Fieldwise articles generally... PLEASE TICK

Too long:
Too short:
About right length:

Q10: Having read a Fieldwise article, do you: PLEASE TICK

a) Discuss it with your agronomist:
b) Keep it for future reference:
c) Seek further information:
d) Visit our website to find out more:

GENERAL QUESTIONS:

Q11: Does your agronomist meet your requirements for advice in the following areas? PLEASE TICK

	Never	Sometimes	Always
Soil management/cultivation techniques			
Seeds			
Crop nutrition			
Herbicides, Pesticides and Fungicides?			
Precision farming			
Strategic agronomy advice (multi-year)			
Farm business management			
Environmental stewardship			
Manure management planning			

Q12: What is your attitude towards our Regional Trials Centre Open Days: PLEASE TICK

a) I usually attend
b) I'd like to attend but I'm too busy
c) I'd attend if they covered different topics
d) I attend other field open days
e) I don't go to field open days
f) What would you like to see there? (please specify)

.....

Q13: Precision Farming Techniques: Which applications of Precision Technology are you using / would you like to know more about?

PLEASE TICK ALL THAT APPLY

	I am using	I wish to know more about
Variable rate Seed		
Variable rate Lime, P & K		
Variable rate Nitrogen		
Variable rate Crop protection products		
Yield map analysis		
Cost of Production mapping		
Farm mapping using GPS techniques		
Not for me, thanks		

Q14: Social media: Do you use Social Media. If so, what are the top 3 that you use? *(e.g. Twitter, Facebook, Linked-In, Instagram etc.)* PLEASE SPECIFY

1) .....
2) .....
3) .....

I don't use social media

THANK YOU FOR COMPLETING THE SURVEY YOUR DETAILS WILL BE ENTERED IN TO OUR PRIZE DRAW

HUTCHINSONS

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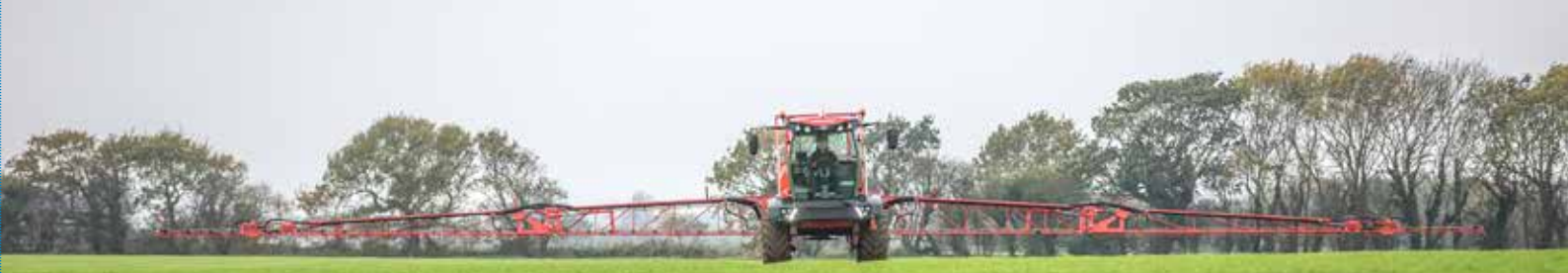
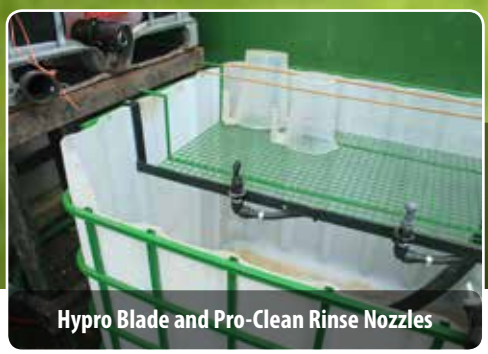
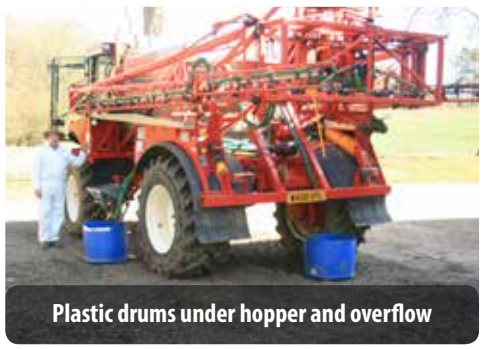


Spring spraying – getting the best from your sprays and sprayer

Tom Robinson (independent applications specialist) **gives his personal recommendations for improving efficiency when filling the sprayer.**



Hypro Blade and Pro-Clean Rinse Nozzles



Plastic drums under hopper and overflow

Mid-March to mid-April is the busiest time of the year for the sprayer on most arable farms. Last year in Fieldwise we looked at nozzle choice and water volumes. In the interim, there have been no significant changes. Let us now look at some of the other factors for successful spring applications.

Typically, circa 30% of the spraying day is spent in filling and transport, therefore the key to successful application is to avoid unexpected problems and their resultant delays and to improve efficiency when filling the sprayer.

Tank mixing and filling the sprayer

One can tank mix any number of products, as long as they are recommended for the crop to be sprayed and the timing. Many product labels unhelpfully request that 'this product' is first in the mix. It is well worth following the established tank mix guide as a base. However, if in doubt, the first call should be to your agronomist and if unavailable, contact the manufacturer's help desk, who will have the definitive list of physical compatibilities.

- Depending on the water type on your farm, some products may require a water conditioner to prevent cations in the water locking up the active ingredient in the crop protection product. Water conditioners require the water to be conditioned prior to adding the susceptible product, which will mean adding the conditioner early in the filling process, while adding the susceptible product as late as possible, ensuring the maximum amount of the spray water has been neutralised before it can lockup the product.
- Trace elements, particularly manganese and magnesium salts are common culprits for incompatible tank mixes. They should always be added last. The liquid formulations tend to cause less problems than solid formulations.
- Some products can be susceptible to creating foam, and where identified should be added late in the filling sequence.

Overflowing, caused by foaming in the spray tank while filling, is probably the biggest cause of contamination at the filling site. It also wastes a lot of spraying time, getting rid of the foam. A 100l catch tank made from a 200l drum cut in half, placed underneath the tank overflow pipe, will safely catch the spillage during the moments it takes to turn the sprayer off. The resultant foam in the tank can be quickly dispersed by the addition of an anti-foaming agent. The caught spray mix can then be added back into the sprayer via the induction hopper.

When filling the sprayer, it is good practice to fill up over a catch tank and to have a bottle of anti-foam available at the filling site.

Pouring and Rinsing

The time taken to pick up a container, open it and pour the contents into the induction hopper varies by only seconds between containers of 1l -10l, so you will save filling time by using the largest containers possible for any given product.

Rinsing containers is the lengthiest part of the filling procedure. Similarly, there are big time savings by the deployment of larger container options. Where comparable in performance, time can be also be saved by choosing products that are easier to rinse. In the event that one has to use a difficult to rinse product, then a first rinse with recirculating spray mix, followed by a second rinse with clean water during the final filling of the sprayer, will get the best results. Technology of rinse nozzles has improved and the recently developed 'blade' type rinser is very effective at cleaning the bottoms of large containers that have held 'sticky' products.

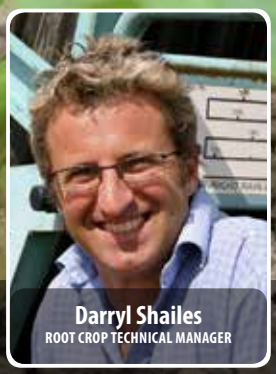
Questions about this article?

Please email us: information@hlhltd.co.uk

Acknowledgements: Steve Lake, Iain Robertson, Matt Redman, and Sands Agricultural Machinery

Beet Yield Competition
- a successful start

Darryl Shailes (Root Crop Technical Manager) **reports on an encouraging start to a new sugar beet yield competition.**



Darryl Shailes
ROOT CROP TECHNICAL MANAGER

The Beet Yield Competition (BYC) was launched in 2017 and although the first harvest results are coming in, not all fields are lifted at the time of writing, so as yet there are no winners in this the launch season. Although with yields being so high this season, we might well say that it is a success already.

The BYC is a joint collaboration between the British Beet Research Organisation (BBRO), British Sugar (BS), The National Farmers Union (NFU) and Hutchinsons, with Dr Philp Draycott as an independent member of the board.

The whole idea of the BYC is to look at growers' sugar beet yields and to calculate how close they are to the yield potential for their particular situation. The aim is then to drive innovation and collaboration, to try to get growers as close as possible to their yield potential. This calculation is only possible due to the 'BeetGro Model'. The BeetGro model is a computer model based on research done by Brooms Barn and then further developed by BS and BBRO.

The model can take into account many factors that are critical to the growth and subsequent yield of sugar beet in the UK. These factors include soil type, rainfall and other weather factors, drilling date, ground cover and lifting date. All this data is then fed into the model and the grower's yield can be calculated as a percentage of the total theoretical yield for any given situation.

So, rather like a golf handicap, a grower on the best silts can be compared to a grower on the thinnest of sands, to work out who is closest to achieving their theoretical yield potential.

Also, a grower lifting early to get in a wheat crop after beet can be compared to another grower, who is lifting in the last week of the campaign.

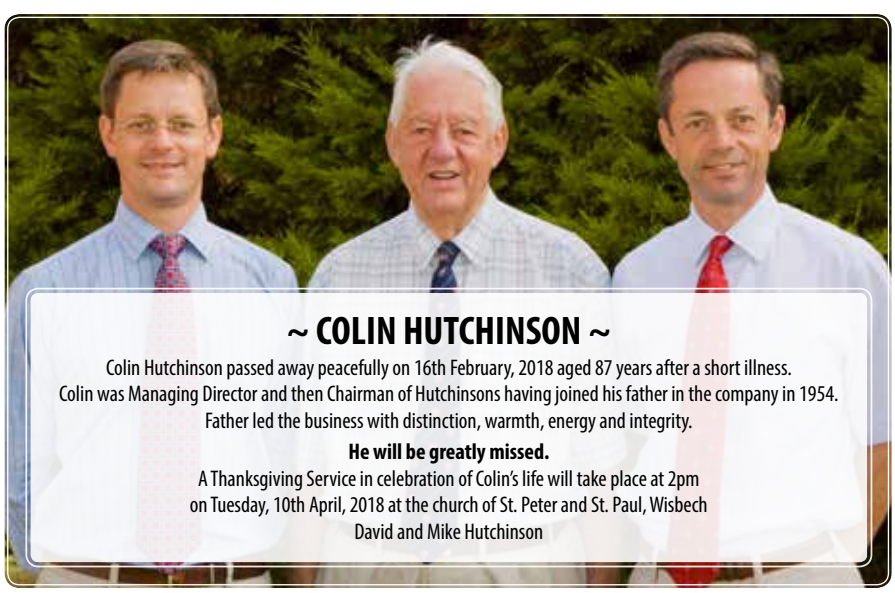
All growers in all situations can take part, as the highest yielding silts may not win the competition, because a lower yielding sand or clay may capture more of their yield potential.

In the 2017/18 season there have been 30 entries with a geographical spread from the Humber down to Woodbridge and all points in between.

The earliest sowing date was the 10th of March, with the latest the 9th of April and the average day was 26th March. Seed rates ranged from 1.1 to 1.31 units per ha. Like all crops in 2017, the establishment was tricky due to the long dry spell after emergence and whilst the average establishment was 99,500 ha, they ranged from 85,000 to 120,000 plants per ha. So far those fields lifted range from 75 tonne ha to 114 tonne ha, with the percentage yields on average 87% to date.

All of this data collection is possible because British Sugar have selected the BYC fields as part of their monitored fields and the enthusiasm and dedication of the Area Managers in collecting the data is essential to the success of the project.

In summary, a very encouraging first year and entries for the 2018/19 season are now open. To register your interest this season, please go to www.bbro.co.uk.



~ COLIN HUTCHINSON ~

Colin Hutchinson passed away peacefully on 16th February, 2018 aged 87 years after a short illness.
Colin was Managing Director and then Chairman of Hutchinsons having joined his father in the company in 1954.
Father led the business with distinction, warmth, energy and integrity.

He will be greatly missed.

A Thanksgiving Service in celebration of Colin's life will take place at 2pm on Tuesday, 10th April, 2018 at the church of St. Peter and St. Paul, Wisbech
David and Mike Hutchinson