

FARMERS FIRST

FRAM
FARMERS
GREAT BRITISH FARMERS CO-OPERATING

Issue 59 | Spring 2021



PAGES 8-9

THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT IN SOLAR PV



PAGE 13

IMPROVED CALF HEALTH THROUGH LIVESTOCK SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS



PAGE 17

FRAM FARMERS FERTILISER POOLS DELIVER SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS FOR MEMBERS

Members' spring update – p14-15
Photo provided by Wakely Cox.

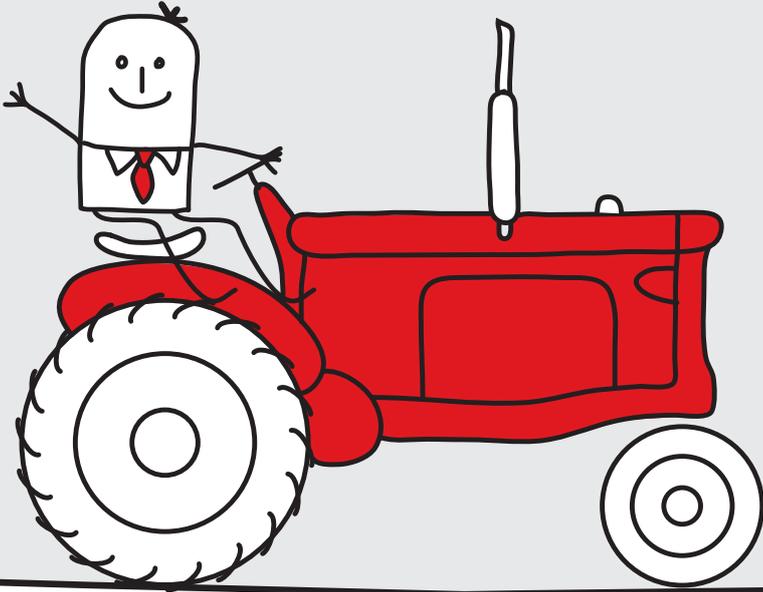
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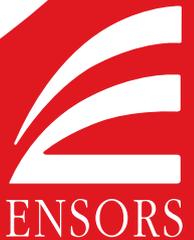


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OPTIMISM FOR A POSITIVE YEAR AHEAD

The autumn and winter brought many challenges, and the wet start to 2021 delayed chances of arable members getting onto land much before the beginning of March. It has also been heavy going for livestock producers, including our many members producing outdoor pigs, who have battled with all of the elements. Arable, vegetable growers and livestock farmers alike are looking forward to drier days, and we're keeping our fingers crossed for some much needed sunshine this spring.

Now is a good time to remind members of the value of membership; the Fram Farmers fertiliser and grain marketing pools have performed very strongly (more detail on page 17), demonstrating the value of combining expert advice and market intelligence, plus strong commercial negotiations by the Fram team. This combined helps members to manage risk in volatile markets, minimise input costs and maximise crop returns, all while reducing workload.

In this issue, we're pleased to bring members a number of updates from Fram Farmers HQ, including the launch

of FRAM26, a new 5 year plan which will focus on the future of the cooperative and our new 'Women of Fram' initiative. We also introduce some new faces within the Fram team, and report on an exclusive arrangement with newly launched Oxbury Bank – see pages 4-5.

Some of the newer business services, headed up by Dan Cox, are explored in this issue; we take a closer look at the advantages of solar PV on pages 8 and 9, and provide an update on farm support schemes on page 19. Members are also reminded of our partnership with Scrutton Bland to provide farm insurance services to members on page 23.

Sharing news of member activity, we've spoken to a number of members about projects on their farm that have benefited from the Fram Farmers membership, including a new wedding venue that has been helped by the building materials team – find out more on pages 6-7. A dairy farmer member in Gloucestershire also shares with members how the Fram livestock team has helped them to improve calf health

...we've spoken to a number of members about projects on their farm that have benefited from the Fram Farmers membership...



Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers

(page 13), and we introduce a member in West Sussex who will be taking part in some YEN wheat trials (page 11). The 'Harvest Round Up' in the autumn 2020 issue was well received, so on pages 14-15 we have revisited those same members to see how things are progressing on their farms as we head into spring.

Optimism for a more 'normal' second half of the year is giving us hope for hosting some member events in the summer, and a chance for me personally to meet many more members following the Government announcement to open things up towards the end of June. We hope to be able to provide details of these events soon, which will follow in future issues of Farmers First.

FRAM FARMERS
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Every precaution has been taken to ensure that the material published in Farmers First is accurate at the time of printing. For further details about anything featured in this edition please call Fram Farmers on 01728 727700, or Juliette Tompkins at Kendalls PR and Marketing on 01502 475110. If you would like to opt out of receiving Farmers First, please email mail@framfarmers.co.uk

CONTENTS:

News.....	4-5
Building Materials.....	6-7
Renewable Technology.....	8-9
Member News.....	11
Livestock - Village Farm, Elberton.....	13
Spring Update.....	14-15
Fertiliser Pools Updates.....	17
ELMs Update.....	19
Rural Charities.....	21

MEMBER'S DAYS

Fram Farmers is pleased to announce a series of members days, which are due to take place throughout the summer months in four locations – south east, south west, Suffolk and Cambridgeshire.

These events will take place on member's farms, and will provide the opportunity to meet and talk to fellow members, as well as the Fram Farmers team and local and national suppliers. With the cancellation of many events last year and the Suffolk Show this year, these events will also provide the first opportunity for many members to meet CEO Andrew Knowles in person since his appointment in July 2020.

More details will be sent to members shortly, as the events may be subject to Covid restrictions.



Alice Foreman
Marketing Executive

STAFF UPDATES

As many members may be aware, there have been a few updates to staff roles in recent months; Gordon Cummings is now managing building materials alongside machinery and fuel, forming the General Farming Inputs team, and Dan Cox will take over management of insurance services and membership development, in addition to business services, including utilities, renewables and grants.

There are no planned changes to services available to members, and the same familiar faces will be on hand to answer any questions.

We are also delighted to welcome Alice Foreman to the role of Marketing Executive. Alice joined the team in January, and replaces Holly Hicks, who has left her role in the marketing team to join the police force.

Suffolk born and bred, and an avid photographer, Alice studied English literature with creative writing at UEA, and has since worked locally in marketing roles for an independent holiday cottage company and at The Red House in Aldeburgh.

Alice has settled into the new role well and is thoroughly enjoying being part of the Fram Farmers team.

Members may be aware of the recent launch of Oxbury Bank at the beginning of February. The bank has now fully launched its savings and loan operations, and Fram Farmers is pleased to announce that there will be preferential rates for Fram Farmers members on some products.



The bank will be offering three primary services:

- **Oxbury Farm Credit** - a short-term lending facility that allows farmers to buy now and repay when it suits their cashflow, suited for farm inputs.
- **Long-term loans** - from £25,000 to £10m – for farmers looking at land acquisition, large capital expenditure like new dairy parlours and grain stores, or carbon positive initiatives including renewable energies and rural diversification projects.
- **Savings Accounts** – personal savings accounts, farm savings accounts and the Oxbury forest saver.

Through Fram Farmers, and exclusive to its members, there will be a preferential savings rate for the farm savings accounts. This arrangement with Oxbury Bank will bring additional benefits to members, in addition to the Fram Farmers Finance Service launched in April 2020, which is suited to asset purchases such as machinery.

Fram Farmers is the first organisation outside the banks' shareholder partners to have linked up with Oxbury Bank plc, enabling Fram members the ability to purchase through their existing Fram Farmers account, and also take advantage of the new Oxbury Farm Credit Scheme (subject to Oxbury Bank PLC approving your credit facility).

For more information on the services exclusive to Fram Farmers members, please speak to Nick Hindle, Fram Farmers Financial Controller, who can put members in touch with representatives at Oxbury Bank – 01728 727700 | nick.hindle@framfarmers.co.uk

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FRAM26

Fram Farmers has officially launched FRAM26, a new 5 year plan, which focuses on increasing the relevance and value of its services to existing members through more proactive support, as well as attracting new members to the cooperative.

This initiative was launched at the 60th AGM, which took place in November 2020, and the management team are now translating the overall plan into how it is practically implemented in the different parts of the business and product groups.

“We are really looking forward to putting FRAM26 into action, having spent a long time getting this right and thinking about what we want the cooperative to achieve over the next 5 years. We have set out our aims and goals and we are looking forward to sharing these with members,” explains CEO Andrew Knowles.

“At the core of the plan is Fram Farmers more proactively delivering to members exceptional value in farm inputs and

maximising crop outputs, convenience and ease of doing business, and providing expert impartial advice. We can achieve this by enhancing our commercial excellence and making better use of data and business insights within the organisation, but we will also remain faithful to the values and cooperative ethos that Fram was built on 60 years ago.

“We have added, and will continue to selectively add, services to our portfolio, where we are confident they are relevant to the needs of members and respond to opportunities in these changing times. Towards the end of this year, the investment in our IT system will deliver more ease and convenience for members, and we will of course continue to offer the

same network of reliable and reputable suppliers,” Andrew concludes.

The details of FRAM 26 will be shared with members soon, and we encourage members to share their thoughts and feedback on the future of the cooperative.

Alongside the launch of FRAM26, Fram Farmers is also creating new members packs for the farm office, making it easier for members to be aware, and make fuller use, of the services on offer, both in terms of farm inputs and purchases, as well as wider business services.

We hope for this to be available to members in the next month.

NEW WOMEN OF FRAM INITIATIVE LAUNCHED



Fram Farmers has kickstarted a new initiative to support and encourage women in farming - Women of Fram – with the aim to create a network for women within our membership; a community and a place to collaborate ideas and experiences.

Discussing the new initiative, Wendy Houston, Vice Chairman of Fram Farmers explains, “We have many other successful groups, namely the pig group and regional groups, so we are adding to that so we can actively engage with all of our members.

“The hope is for this to be a group to exchange ideas, and find solutions to the challenges we face. We need your thoughts and ideas to better understand what this opportunity can do for its members, so that Women of Fram can achieve a new community amid our membership”.

“There has only ever been two female figures on the Fram Farmers board, so we are encouraging more women to become involved and consider standing for the board in the future; we’re hopeful that this is a good starting point. There is a wealth of talent across a wide range of skills within our female membership that we are not currently tapping in to.”

The first virtual event took place virtually on Monday 8th March at 7pm, with Fram Farmers extending the invitation to female members, as well as wives, partners and daughters of members.

The event ran for approximately one hour, and was hosted by Wendy Houston, Vice Chairman of Fram Farmers. Guest speakers included Emily McVeigh, Events Manager at Kenton Hall Estate, and Kate Dale, Co-ordinator of the Yorkshire Rural Support Network, who discussed their experiences of being a woman in agriculture.

Please contact the Fram Farmers office for more information and keep an eye out for future Women of Fram events – 01728 727700.

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JUST IN TIME FOR THE WEDDING RUSH...

From rare bat species to Covid-19, how Fram Farmers member Lt Col Jeremy Troughton has been able to overcome the challenges, with a little help from the Building Materials team, and is set to open his new wedding venue to guests when restrictions allow this summer.

During a period of such uncertainty, it is pleasantly uplifting to hear some of the positive stories coming out of the challenges of the global pandemic. For Fram Farmers member Mudie & Troughton Farms Ltd, the prospect of providing bespoke solutions to an anticipated backlog of weddings is a welcome opportunity, one that could not have been predicted when plans for a new wedding venue venture were initially envisaged back in 2015.

We are now in a very different world, and having negotiated the twin challenges of Covid-19 restrictions, while having to make special provisions for rare bats identified during the renovation project,

Mudie & Troughton Farms' managing director Lt Col Jeremy Troughton is now looking ahead to what he hopes will be a successful new venture, when the venue opens in stages from Summer 2021.

The diversification project originated when Lt Col Troughton retired from a 30-year career in the Army as a cavalry officer in 2015, returning to live in the main farmhouse on the land farmed by his family, since his maternal grandfather took on the farm after demob from the Indian cavalry in 1947.

"The adjacent farm buildings were in need of a lot of TLC, having been unused for decades and steadily decaying. We had



Lt Col Jeremy Troughton

20 years of property experience behind us, having run two rental property portfolios, so the idea of repairing, renovating and converting our Granary barns into holiday lets was born," explains Lt Col Troughton.

"Our amazing Tudor Threshing Barn has also hosted some epic parties, and we have had weddings in our paddocks over the years, so the idea of combining it into a wedding and events venue also evolved

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into the vision of 'The Sancroft Barns',” he adds.

Growing wheat, sugar beet, OSR and occasionally maize and barley on rotation over 300 acres in Fressingfield, north Suffolk, the business has been a long-term and active Fram Farmers member, so it was logical to work with the Fram Farmers team when diversification plans developed.

“Records show we’ve been members since 1980, but I suspect the reality is we were early adopters well before that date,” explains Lt Col Troughton, believing his grandfather’s non-farming background would have encouraged the continuing principle of seeking the advice and expertise from Fram Farmers.

“Our sugar beet goes to British Sugar, while the wheat and OSR goes into the Fram Farmers marketing pools,” he adds, “The delegated responsibility of using these pools to gain sound average prices is a key benefit, as is the security of the bad debt insurance and offering advance payments of monies to fund the autumn cash-flow.

“Additionally, the majority of the farm inputs have been bought through Fram Farmers, as well as the bulk of the materials for the main Barn,” says Lt Col Troughton.



The renovation has retained the original roof profile, and a courtyard area, also purchased through Fram Farmers, is due to be laid outside the barn.

Having enlisted the help of Diss-based Durrants Building Consultancy in October 2017, planning was granted in February 2019 for a combined events venue with holiday lets. However, almost instantly the project hit its first snag when rare bats were identified in the buildings, before the global pandemic then took hold, with its associated restrictions on weddings and holidaymaking.

Throughout the project, Fram Farmers Building Materials team have been extremely supportive, according to Lt Col Troughton.

However, work started, and the Threshing Barn roof was completed in December 2020, with Covid-19 adjustments meaning phases of work concentrated on the main Barn and surroundings, rather than the whole site, including the landscaping and holiday cottages.

“Nick Millar and Gemma Oliver have been enormously helpful since we started the project, sourcing materials for the Barn roof. A quick count shows well over 100 email exchanges plus numerous phone calls since early August,” he says. Usually going out to at least three suppliers for quotes, Fram Farmers has

been able to help the estate make savings at every step.

Almost everything has been purchased through Fram Farmers, including the timber and fixings for a 90cu metre bat loft in the barn, installed to allow safe uncluttered flying space and hibernation for all the bat species.

Despite the challenges and adjustments, Lt Col Troughton says the venue will be available from this summer 2021, depending of course on Covid-19 restrictions.

“The Sancroft Barns consists of the 2.5-acre paddock site where you can have a completely bespoke wedding or party 'in the countryside' exactly to your specifications, anytime from summer 2021,” explains Lt Col Troughton.

The Barn will be ready for use in early 2022 for weddings and parties, consisting of a beautiful 450-year-old, 120sqm Threshing Barn in a unique and stunning setting. The adjoining Portuguese limestone stepped courtyard offers 150sqm of space.

“In due course, likely 2024, we will be converting the Granary Barns into the three planned holiday lets, one of which could be a cosy 1-bedroom suite for the bride and groom. We do see a high demand for venues in 2022, mainly because of the inevitable backlog in weddings and other celebrations that will have built up, and we hope our Sancroft Barns site will be popular,” concludes Lt Col Troughton.

THE CASE FOR INVESTMENT IN SOLAR PV

Since launching the Renewable Technology service at Fram Farmers, the team has been inundated with enquiries from members looking to generate their own renewable energy. Here, Dan Cox, Fram Farmers Business Services Manager, discusses the benefits of investing in renewables.

There are many reasons that farm businesses may consider investing in renewable energy; for some it is due to pressures from customers to improve their green credentials, for others it is because they want to make a conscious decision to reduce their carbon footprint and contribute to the country as a whole achieving its net zero target. For most, it is ultimately to save money and reduce their energy bills.

“The majority of enquiries have been for solar projects but some of our members’ energy usage profiles make the investment questionable,” explains Dan. “Solar arrays are the most popular and cost-effective choice in many instances,

however some farmers’ usage profiles would benefit more from a hybrid system of solar, wind and potentially battery storage.

“The key variable to make solar PV financially viable is the amount of electricity you save. With no government funding currently available to incentivise investments, members should invest in a solar PV system that has been specified to the annual electricity demand of your operations, and investment should be bespoke to your supply and output demands,” he continues.

“What we have seen from working with our members is that single activity



operations, such as grain storage, often do not have the annual electricity demand to justify the investment into solar PV. The heavier demands come in the autumn months for drying activities and the

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Rumen Protein % Inclusion	-	-	64.1%	72.5%
Bypass Protein % Inclusion	-	-	35.9%	27.5%



heaviest solar PV generation months of between May and August are often gone to waste because the energy demand is so low. Other single activities operations, such as cold storage, grading and irrigation also do not always have an adequate annual electricity demand profile and the peaks in demand do not match the generation.”

BIG OPPORTUNITIES FOR MIXED FARMING OPERATIONS

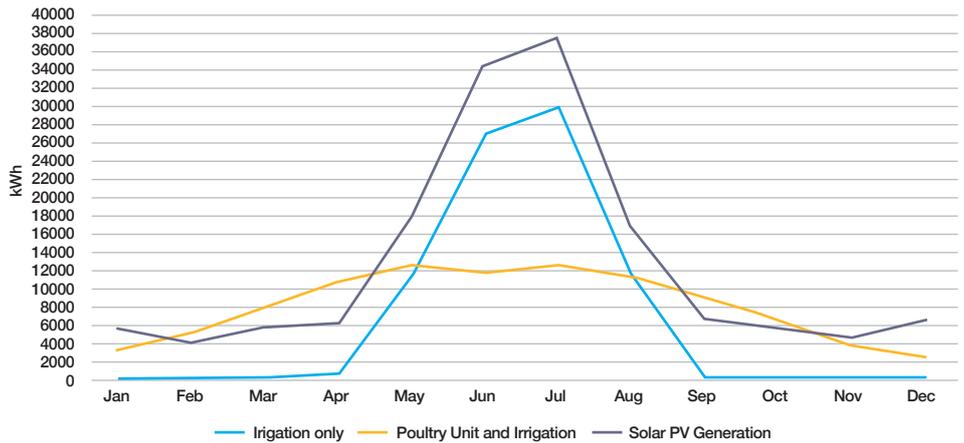
Mixed farming operations or diversified businesses can offer the best opportunities to invest in solar PV; the annual usage profile of a cold store and irrigation system using a single electricity meter would present a strong opportunity for solar PV supplementation. Farm shops, event venues and holiday homes can also provide a mixed electricity demand which, in turn, improves the case for solar PV.

“Poultry units are a great candidate for solar PV,” suggests Dan.

“They have a high background electricity demand and demand increased usage during the hot summer months due to internal conditioning services. The relatively flat aspect roof space of a poultry shed is also ideal, and often, having a poultry unit on the same electrical supply as an irrigation system or grain dryer can improve the financial case for solar PV.

“Another key point to raise is the carbon accounting - what financial and operational impact may it have on farming in the future? Solar PV is arguably one of

Electricity Demand Vs 100kW Solar PV Generation



the cheapest renewable technologies, and it can offer one of the most accessible solutions to offset an operation’s carbon footprint while also providing financial returns.”

The graph above illustrates the production of a 100kW solar PV system (orange line) against the standard demand profiles of an irrigation pump (blue line). For 8 months of the year, when the irrigator is not in use, the solar panels are generating energy that the business is not using. In this case, it amounts to just 50% of the energy generated, which could still provide a seven-year payback on the investment if the additional energy is exported to the grid.

The grey line illustrates the electricity demand of the same irrigation pump, but with the addition of a poultry unit. You can now see that the business is using 89% of the solar energy generated, thus providing a much better case for investment in solar PV with a payback of just four years.

If you are considering investing renewable energy for your farm business, please contact Dan Cox to discuss the options to suit your requirements - 01728 448207 dan.cox@framfarmers.co.uk

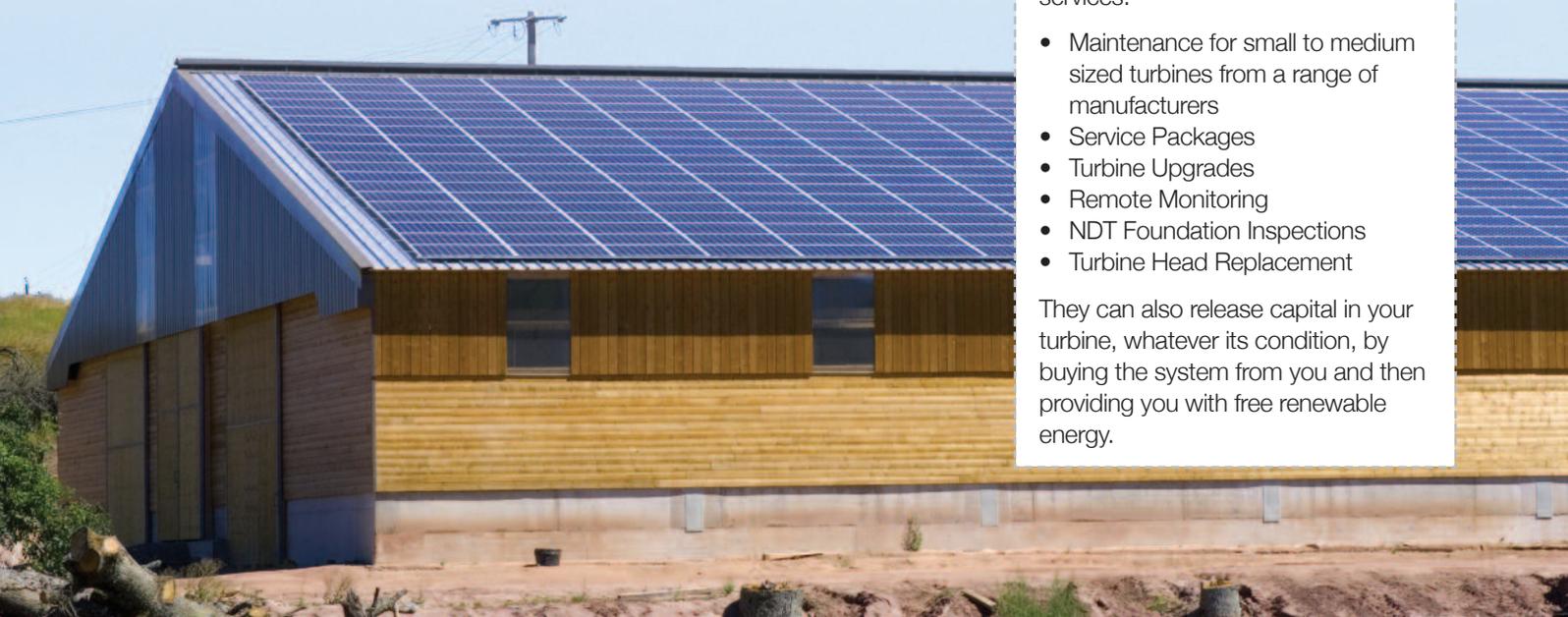
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FRAM MEMBER TO TAKE PART IN YEN WHEAT TRIALS



Fram Farmers member Ryan Gue is taking part in this year's YEN wheat trials, run by crop scientists ADAS.



Ryan Gue

Ryan farms at Huddlestone Farm in West Sussex alongside his parents Tim and Marion, and brothers Keith and Matt, growing maize, grass for silage, group 2 wheat and

winter barley over 2000 acres. They also have a 400 head herd of dairy cows. The business joined Lewes Farmers in 1998, becoming a member of the Fram Farmers cooperative when the two merged in 2005.

The trials that Ryan will be taking part in are run by YEN - Yield Enhancement Network - the aim of which is to consider the yield potential of the season and compare it to the actual yield achieved. There are individual networks set up as

part of the wider initiative, each covering different crops i.e. Forage YEN, Pea YEN and Potato YEN - Ryan has joined the Cereals YEN, and will be focussing on wheat production.

He has one 13acre wheat field in the trials, which has been sponsored by Origin fertilisers. The farm business purchases Origin fertilisers through Fram Farmers, which is how the sponsorship was arranged through the crops team, and Ryan will be treating the trial plot with Origin's OEN product, a granular urease inhibitor.

"I was getting frustrated that we weren't taking much interest in the breakdown of our crops, yet were expecting to achieve good yields, so I want to gain a deeper understanding," explains Ryan.

"Potential yield is calculated for each

individual member, and is based on soil type, stones, condition of plant counts, seed and tiller counts, along with weather conditions, to see what could be achieved – potential yield.

"Members agree to collect data throughout the year, such as such as soil and leaf tissue analysis, and at the end of the year, we benchmark our actual yield as a percentage of potential yield.

Ultimately, we want to know why the crop does not reach potential yield, and why. I see this as less of a competition and more of a learning experience. It would be great to come out on top, but I am looking forward to learning where our pitfalls are and ways we can improve."

We will be following Ryan's journey in future issues of Farmers First as the trials progress.



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IMPROVED CALF HEALTH THROUGH LIVESTOCK SUPPLIER RELATIONSHIPS



The Fram Farmers livestock team works with a large network of suppliers, sourcing an increasing range of feed supplies, livestock equipment and animal health products on behalf of members. We speak to a dairy farmer member in South Gloucestershire about a specific purchase to help increase calf health on their farm.

James Meredith, alongside his parents Steve and Cheryl, of Village Farm, Elberton, has been a member of Fram Farmers since 2005, purchasing various farm inputs through the cooperative such as feed, dairy chemicals, fuel, seed, fertiliser, and electricity, as well as vehicles and machinery.

Employing two full-time staff and three part-time staff, they are milking 250 cows in a year-round calving system. Spanning roughly 600 acres, 150 acres is arable land, growing maize and wheat, and the remainder is grass, both silage grade and pasture grazing.

All calves are kept on-farm, with the beef calves finished in-house. Using sexed semen for all dairy placements, and a combination of British Blue straws and Aberdeen Angus bulls on-farm they are aiming to get the age at first calving to under 24 months. Finishing approximately 150 beef cattle per year, the calves are finished under a Tesco contract with Kepak.

“We aim for 100 dairy heifers each year, and the rest beef. In terms of finishing the calves, the Anguses are finished at around 20-22 months, and the British Blues are finishing at 24 months. We’re noticing significant gains in calf health in the early months, so we’re hoping this will have a knock-on effect and bring some improvements to finishing times,” explains James.

Housing the calves in hutches at the time, James had been exploring different options for housing the calves on farm, including the option of putting up a new shed.

“Back in June last year, I came across an article in Farmers Weekly, discussing High Health Calf Units from Buitelaar and the benefits they had brought to other dairy farms. They looked better than the hutches we were using, with the more



appropriately pitched insulated roofs, so I contacted Buitelaar directly. They were able to introduce me to a farmer in Somerset who had purchased some, so I went to have a look,” James adds. “I knew that Fram Farmers has a connection with Buitelaar, as we have sourced milk replacement powder through them in the past, so I gave Jodie a call and asked if we could get them through Fram Farmers. By July, Jodie had set the deal up and we got a 10% deal on all 10 units.”

“We’re noticing significant gains in calf health in the early months, so we’re hoping this will have a knock-on effect and bring some improvements to finishing times.”

Taking around 6-8 weeks to be delivered, they were fully installed in early September, after James spent time putting down a concrete pad. The 3m X 5m units are delivered in a flat pack format, and are put together on farm,

each housing up to ten calves.

“The units themselves look and perform like a permanent shed, but they’re bolted into the concrete. They are made of Paneltim and have a honeycomb structure, which is much easier for disinfecting and managing hygiene protocols between batches. They are considered portable, so we weren’t required to get planning permission, which was a bonus.

“We’re using them for both the dairy and beef calves, and in the last 7 months, we have found that we’re using slightly less bedding than we were with individual hutches. Growth rates have also improved because of the enhanced environment; the units are ventilated and have an insulated roof, which helps to keep out the bitter easterly wind in the winter and keep them cooler in the summer.

“We’re really pleased we made the decision to install the units, and I would recommend them to other Fram members – the process was smooth from start to finish and we’re getting healthier calves because of the better start they’re getting in life.”

To find out more, please contact the Fram Farmers Livestock Team: 01728 727716.

SPRING PROGRESS ACROSS THE COUNTRY

The past few months have been challenging for many, with a particularly wet winter, followed by heavy snow. Now that Spring is on the way, we have caught up with members across the country to provide an update on their farm progress since Autumn, both arable and otherwise.

STUART PADFIELD, HERTS/ESSEX BORDER

We were fortunate to get everything drilled by the last week in October; 90 acres of winter beans, 90 acres of winter barley and 170-180 acres of winter wheat.

Everything is looking okay and seems to be growing well, apart from one field which is showing a damage from frit fly that appeared in mid-November, leaving us with a few bare patches.

We have previously grown oats, maize and winter rape, but not for the last 10 years, and we made the decision to stop growing spring crops 50 years ago.

We've had so much rain this winter and the ground is laying extremely wet underfoot – 37 inches in total last year, plus more the beginning of 2021 – but I'm predicting tremendous drought this year.

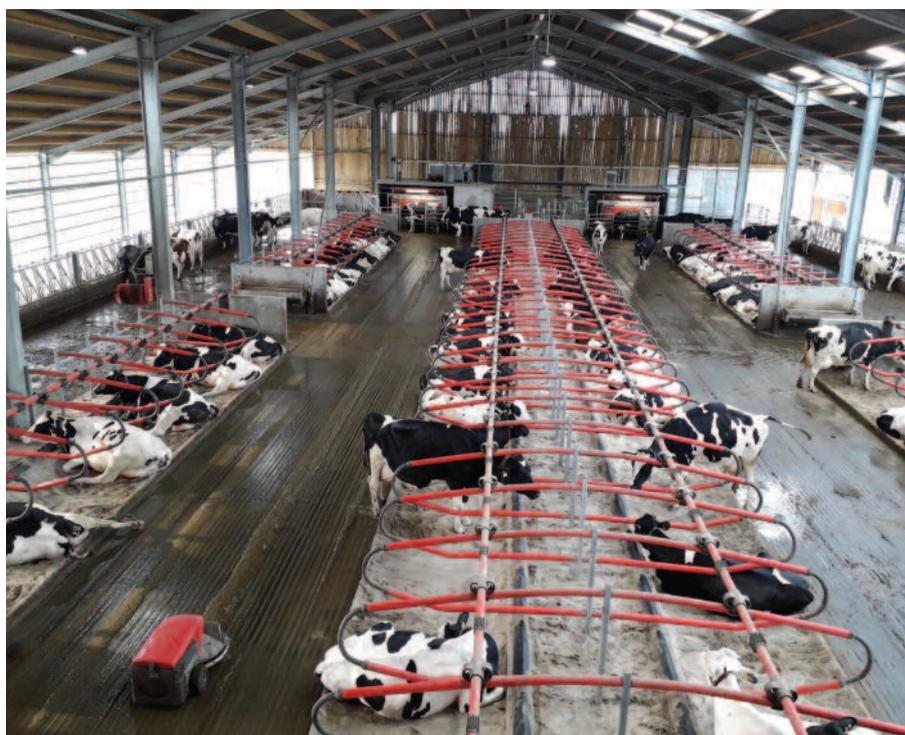
Overall, I'm feeling pretty optimistic, and we hope to get some fertiliser on in the next few weeks.



NATHAN WIFFEN, SUFFOLK

Fortunately, all crops were drilled last year – the OSR was drilled at the end of July, and is looking good at this stage (as long as we can keep the pigeons off), the barley was drilled in the last week of September, and we got all wheat in the ground by mid-October.

We sent a trailer load of bales up to 'Caring for Life', a charity based in Leeds, and had a busy Christmas helping out at the Hog and Hen Farm Shop, a family business venture that has been in operation since 2018. All turkeys and chickens sold out in our own farm shop, and we also supplied other local farm shops. The Hog and Hen brand is growing and demand for our free-range chicken from the farm is increasing.



SIMON WARD, CORNWALL

Our autumn cultivation and drilling were completed in November, which consisted of Graham winter wheat being grown on the edge of Bodmin moor, and crops look healthy considering the rainfall since then.

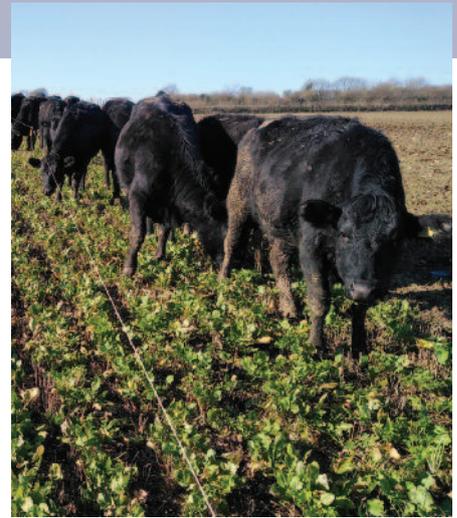
Our maize area which has been in broccoli, was harvested just before Christmas, but will need a long period of dry weather before we can start preparations. Seven months after completing our building project and installing two robot milkers, the cows have settled well into the new system.

WAKELY COX, DORSET

After considerable amounts of rain and then very cold temperatures (though here we only had a few flurries of snow), lambing has started with good grass for turnout.

The oil seed rape failed, even though it had been drilled later than usual to try and avoid the flea beetle. Early January drilled Wheats which went in after mustard and early grazed turnips which are looking very good and about to have their first doze of liquid nitrogen with Spring Barley to be drilled in fields later after cattle have finished grazing the turnips. The new grass leys and all other winter cereals have come through well with very little damage from slugs or the weather.

Four large groups of 450kg Store Cattle have been sold through Salisbury Market over the past months, some of them coming straight off grass or turnips and going straight to market. Calf rearing has gone well, some being sold as weaned calves and others kept for summer grazing on the new leys, with the stores going on to graze the extensive meadows.



JAMES HOPKINSON, ANGUS

All early drilled wheat is looking very well with 100% field cover. Linseed established and over-wintered very well, so there's some exciting potential there. Beans have established well, with very few bare patches (all direct drilled with Claydon), but later wheat is patchy with one field requiring re-drilling with spring wheat. The general rule of thumb has been where more tillage has been used, the establishment has been poorer. Less is more in my book, and our focus for the future is cover crops and direct drilling.



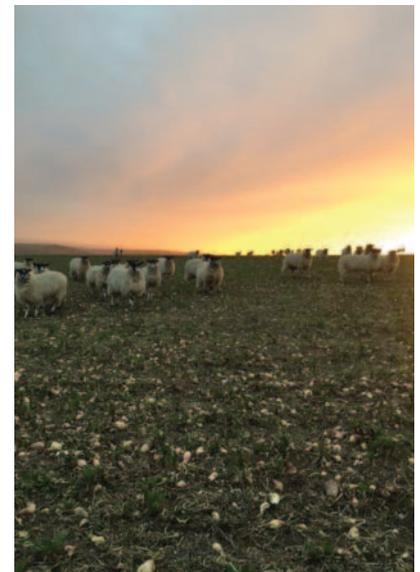
We still have 226ha spring oats, 110ha spring wheat, 87ha spring barley to drill and LLO for vining peas and seed potatoes.

We are planting 4ha of hemp for seed production as part of a newly formed Scottish hemp growing group. We will be scanning a block of land with Hutchinson's new gamma ray soil scanner for the full suite of nutrients, CEC, SOM and soil carbon for a baseline available supply from the soil. We will also monitor SAP analysis from leaves throughout the season to manage crops based on good plant health.

TOM GRIBBLE, EAST SUSSEX

After a later start to sowing to ward off blackgrass we ended up with some patchy drilling with varying seedbeds. Most of it has wintered remarkably well, however so has the blackgrass in some winter oats. We made the decision to start again, so had neighbour Duncan Ellis (fellow Fram member) come in to direct drill spring oats on 24th February.

The lamb trade has been fantastic, and they finished really well on stubble turnips, grown after Winter Barley, on top of the South Downs. Unfortunately, I don't have any more to sell and have my ewe lambs grazing the last of the stubble turnips before we go in with more spring oats.



BARRY CONNOLLY, CUMBRIA

Our crops have fared okay through the winter, apart from the odd area that has been flooded out, and they're looking much more promising than this time last year.

All winter stubbles were sown with winter cover crops, which has helped weed control, soil erosion and nutrient run off.

Looking forward, we'll be drilling spring beans for home grown protein and spring barley for home grown feed. Our soils are sandy loams and need very little working to create a seed bed.

Around 40kg N is being applied this week, now that the ground has dried out a bit, plus dairy slurry via dribble band.

In late September, we sowed grass seed that was purchased through Fram from Nickerson Seeds. This has established well and we're impressed with the cover, considering how late it was sown and the heavy rain fall we experienced in early autumn. The grassland has already had the first slurry application, with the second this week, and we're hoping to take first cut by 15th May.

We are also looking into a carbon off setting project with our milk buyer.

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APPLICATION RATES & TIMINGS

To be used only when there is a recognised need. Do not exceed recommended application rate.

Cereals	0.75-1.5 l/ha from 6 leaf stage to early tillering for rooting. Repeat during periods of rapid growth and/or nutrient stress to development.
Oilseed Rape	1.0-2.5 l/ha from 6-8 true leaf stage. Repeat during, or just prior to rapid growth.
Potatoes	1.0 l/ha at early tuber bulking. 2.0 l/ha during tuber bulking.
Brassicas/Vegetables	2.0-3.0 l/ha from 6-8 true leaves. Repeat at 14-21 day intervals.
Lettuce/Herbs	1.5-2.5 l/ha from 7-10 days post-planting. Repeat at 10-14 day intervals.

Crop Rooter Plus is formulated as a totally water-soluble liquid for ease of use. Crop Rooter Plus should be added to the spray tank first, into a minimum 50% of total water volume, followed by the remaining water and any other tank mix partners. Maintain agitation throughout mixing and spraying operations.

Crop Rooter Plus is physically compatible with a wide range of potential tank mix partners. Check compatibility prior to adding to the spray tank.

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FRAM FARMERS FERTILISER POOLS DELIVER SIGNIFICANT SAVINGS FOR MEMBERS

Fram Farmers has a long history of operating pools on behalf of its members for both grain and fertiliser. Here, we outline the advantages of the Fram Farmers fertiliser pools, and hear from one member in Suffolk about the benefits of purchasing a key input using this method.

Over the last eight years, Fram Farmers' fertiliser pools have become increasingly popular with members wishing to make purchases in a way that minimises price volatility within a buying season, with a high level of certainty.

Managing risk has become more important during the last decade, and the Fram Farmers fertiliser pools help members to do that, achieving excellent average prices across all products since their launch in 2013. Every year, the cooperative runs fertiliser pools for five key products (see table below), to help minimise the risk of price inflation and ease potential financial pressures on cash flow. With direct accounts with key manufacturers and suppliers, the FACTS qualified experts in the crops team are able to secure favourable prices.

2020-21 Results

Product	Pre Harvest Pool	Post Harvest Pool
Granular Urea	£209.00	£235.45
Imported AN	£180.29	£187.67
Nitram	£195.00	£211.03
DoubleTop	£208.00	£218.71
SingleTop	£193.00	£215.00

“Constant monitoring of the markets enables our team to buy when prices are favourable, removing the issue of time constraints from farmer members. Committed tonnages also put us in a strong negotiating position, so members benefit from attractive prices and lower risk,” explains Annie Buckingham, Fram Farmers Fertiliser Buyer.

“The fertiliser pools run from June to September and October to January. I truly believe that our pools offer some excellent savings from a monetary perspective, as well as time. I would encourage any of our members considering this as a risk management strategy to give me a call to chat through the potential benefits for their business, both grassland enterprises, as well as arable farms,” adds Annie.

David Scott, of Bedingfield Hall Farms, near Eye in Suffolk, is a firm believer of the benefits of Fram Farmers membership, and of the cooperative's fertiliser pools. An arable farm, also with a poultry unit and finishing pigs, the business has been a member of Fram Farmers since its formation over 60 years ago.

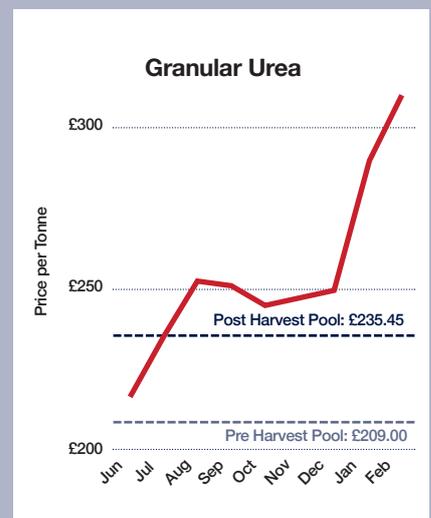
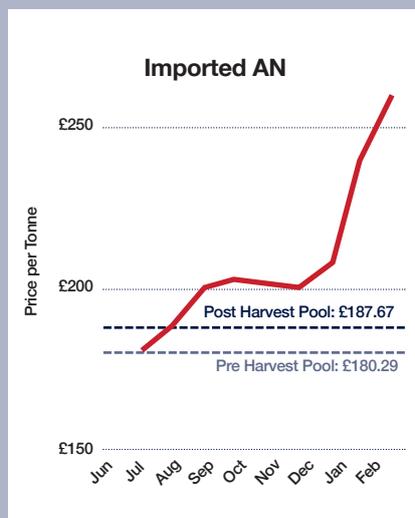
Growing wheat, barley, OSR, sugarbeet, and vining peas, the farm is also in a countryside stewardship scheme. David joined Fram Farmers principally to benefit from lower prices on other farm inputs, and soon found that committing to the fertiliser pools could bring additional benefits to the business.

“We apply urea plus sulphur, straight urea, and enhanced urea. For the straight urea product, the majority of our own farm and all contract farms are in the pool. Not only are the prices favourable, but the pools are also good for cash flow – they take half in October, and half in March, which suits me, and importantly, I know in which month the payment will fall.”

The urea price for the season has been volatile this year, and committing to the pool has enabled David to make some clear savings (see graph below).

“The Fram Farmers fertiliser buyers in the crops team are watching the market on a daily and hourly basis, and have a world-wide view. Although I use their advice for their spot purchasing, I am not in contact with the team regularly enough to know what is going on in the fertiliser market, so I rely on their knowledge and expertise to help manage my risk and make business decisions.

I have purchased some at £214 per tonne outside of the pool, but the pool has still done better than me at £209 per tonne. That's a lesson for me to take forward to next year – more commitment to the pools!”



Contact Annie Buckingham for more information on fertiliser pools: 01728 727715.



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AGRICULTURAL TRANSITIONAL PLAN 2021-2024

The announcement by George Eustice on the 30th November 2020 set out the Government's plans for the English support system as it transitions away from the Basic Payment Scheme and towards ELM to provide money for public goods. We hear from Dan Cox, Fram Farmers Business Services Manager, to provide a summarised update on what this means for members.

Although there is an indication of what the various levels of support are going to look like, there is still plenty of detail missing, namely the remuneration that participants in the schemes are going to receive. Updates on the various schemes is to be on-going, and as this information is released a better understanding of how businesses can adopt them will become evident.

The reduction in BPS support has been set out for the next four years and can be seen in the table below:

Payment Band	2021 scheme year	2022 scheme year	2023 scheme year	2024 scheme year
Up to £30,000	5%	20%	35%	50%
£30,000 to £50,000	10%	25%	40%	55%
£50,000 to £150,000	20%	35%	50%	65%
£150,000 or more	25%	40%	55%	70%

By 2024, farmers will be receiving at least 50% less BPS than they did in 2020, and for the larger businesses this reduction is even greater. The table below further shows these reductions. For comparison purposes, a farm that received a BPS of £40,000 in 2020 relates to around 172ha, (425 acres).

Payment Value 2020	Future Payments			
£5,000	£4,750	£4,000	£3,250	£2,500
£10,000	£9,500	£8,000	£6,500	£5,000
£20,000	£19,000	£16,000	£13,000	£10,000
£40,000	£37,500	£31,500	£25,500	£19,500
£80,000	£70,500	£58,500	£46,500	£34,500
£160,000	£134,000	£110,000	£86,000	£62,000

Apart from agent fees and costs associated with greening or cross compliance, the BPS is effectively 100% profit to a farming business. Going forward, farmers and landowners will be required to carry out work in order to receive a payment, so although the total income to the business may be the same, the overall profitability will be lower.

As the transition has already begun, there are a number of options available to farmers and landowners to help them

through this period; the Countryside Stewardship Scheme is set to continue for applications until 2023 and there is an increase in budget to facilitate more successful applications and to help farmers adapt their farms to accommodate Environmental Schemes that they may not have previously been a part of. The application window for the current year opened on February 9th for Higher Tier, Mid-Tier, Wildlife Offers and Capital applications.

OTHER AVAILABLE SCHEMES:

- SFI (Sustainable Farming Incentive)** – opening in 2022 as the first Tier of ELM, this will initially only have four elements with further parts being added at a later date. Initially this will cover livestock management, pest management, nutrient management and soil management. Funding on these is expected soon.
- Farm Resilience** – expected to open in March 2021, there will be funding for farmers who currently receive the BPS to access support by organisations with expertise to help them plan for the transitional period.
- Farming Investment Fund** – due to open in Autumn 2021.
 - *Equipment and Technology Fund* – grants towards the cost of specified items to improve farm performance. Similar to the CPGS of recent years with a quick and simple online application process.
 - *Farming Transformation Fund* – grants towards the cost of substantial investments in equipment, technology and infrastructure to transform business performance. Two stage application process with expression of interest and then invitation for final application.
- Slurry Investment Scheme** – aiming to reduce pollution from farming to contribute to 25-year Environmental Plan and net-zero commitments, available autumn 2022.
 - Funding to help farmers invest in new slurry stores that exceed current requirements.
 - Funding to meet significant proportion of one-off capital cost and other associated equipment.
- New Entrants Support Scheme** – co-designed with county farms and other landowners to create opportunities for new entrants. Funding will create start-up innovation hubs and provide access to land, infrastructure and opportunities for new entrants. Due to be released in 2022 with eligibility criteria.

Fram Farmers will continue to update members on these and any other support schemes as and when information becomes available. If you require further information and advice, please contact Dan Cox, Business Services Manager - 01728 448207.



EAMU GRANTED FOR MESOTRIONE

Linseed growers still have a means of controlling difficult-to-control broad leaved weeds thanks to an ‘Extension of Authorisation for Minor Use’ (EAMU) granted for the herbicide Basilico (mesotrione) for use in both spring and winter linseed.

Manufactured by off-patent manufacturers Life Scientific, Basilico contains 100 g/l mesotrione and is reverse engineered from the reference product, Callisto. Previously used as a post emergence herbicide in crops of grain and forage maize to control annual broad-leaved weeds. Basilico’s new EAMU allows the product to be used on both winter and spring linseed as a pre-emergence treatment. The maximum rate of use is 1.5 l/ha.

“The area of linseed is increasing in the UK as growers look for alternative break crops to oilseed rape, so it’s great news to be able to offer an additional herbicide option for this crop,” says Ruth Stanley, Life Scientific’s country manager.

“We have worked closely with linseed specialists, Premium Crops, who have helped us with the EAMU submission.”

The pre-emergence herbicide will be available for application on spring linseed crops this year, assures Premium Crops company agronomist, Hannah Foxall. Concerns were raised because of holes

being opened up across the weed control spectrum. Maya (Bromoxynil) is being withdrawn, with an end date/use-up date of 17 September 2021.

“Fat hen control is important in spring linseed because it is a tall competitive weed which can make combining more difficult. However, with a diminished toolbox, fat hen control could become difficult.

“Basilico has activity on charlock, black nightshade, chickweed, field pansy, fat hen, volunteer oilseed rape and redshank. As it is applied pre-emergence, there are no worries about scorch, such as you might see in spring crops when applying post-emergence herbicides.”

“Even when there has been a lot of rain after application, with the threat of it being pushed down through the soil profile, it has been found to be really safe,” Hannah adds.

She points out that one of the problems is that for EAMU approvals for minor crops such as linseed, CRD requires the same detailed information on seed residues and the environmental profile as for major crops. Minor Crops do not have the resources to do this.

“This means for linseed that we have to extrapolate from data collected on other oilseeds, such as oilseed rape, even though many cereal herbicides are safe on linseed.”

“However, some of the herbicides used on rape are not suitable for linseed, so it is



Ruth Stanley
Life Scientific UK Country Manager

crucial to choose one which has activity across the weed spectrum and yet not damage the crop. This makes replacing lost chemistry challenging for linseed and getting new products approved, such as Basilico, useful and an important part of the herbicide toolbox.”

BENEFITS OF GROWING LINSEED

WINTER

- Solves many issues associated with over-cropping of OSR
- Reduces build-up of OSR as a weed
- Allows excellent control of Runch, Charlock and Cranesbill
- Halts declining OSR yields from club root and virus infections
- Presents no slug problems in subsequent wheat crops

SPRING

- Linseed is an excellent break crop - growers usually report the highest wheat yields following linseed
- Presents no slug problems in subsequent wheat crops
- Linseed does not shed or shatter like OSR, which means it is reliable and low-risk
- Weed control is significantly better in linseed than in other spring break crops, particularly Spring OSR, beans and peas
- Great opportunity to include linseed as part of your blackgrass control strategy



The EAMU can be downloaded from the CRD website or lifescientific.com/wp-content/uploads/Basilico-Linseed.pdf

HELP IS AT HAND FROM RURAL CHARITIES

In this issue of **Farmers First**, **Fram Farmers** highlights the incredible work of rural charities, providing resources, support and reassurance to the farming community.

2020 was a particularly hard year for many; the weather was challenging, the ongoing pandemic meant many were left isolated, stressed, lonely, and without the close contact of many family members and friends, as well as looming changes to policy and farm business support bringing uncertainty.

Times can get hard for everyone, but help is at hand. Through just one phone call, farmers in need can access free, impartial, and confidential support from many national and local charities that are all here to help.

The Addington Fund is a truly unique charity that helps farmers in severe financial difficulty. We invest in property and let at a cheaper rate, providing homes for retiring farmers or farmers who have to leave their tenancy.

The Fund also provides feed and forage to those who have insufficient supplies due to natural disaster, bad weather or even just a case of bad luck. **To find out more visit www.addingtonfund.org.uk**



The Farming Community Network (FCN) is a voluntary organisation that supports farmers and families within the farming community through difficult times.

FCN runs a confidential national helpline and e-helpline, which is open every day of the year from 7am-11pm, and has approximately 400 volunteers located throughout England and Wales. These volunteers provide free, confidential, pastoral and practical support to anyone who seeks help, regardless of whether the issue is personal, family or business-related.

The FCN helpline number is 03000 111 999 or visit the website www.fcn.org.uk



Forage Aid's sole objective is the relief of the suffering of animals by the emergency provision of feed and/or bedding and/or the transportation or, contribution of feed or bedding.

Relief will be available to members of the farming community in Great Britain in possession of a DEFRA holding number or equivalent who have been affected by an extreme weather event.

To find out more visit <https://forageaid.org.uk/>



The Royal Agricultural Benevolent Institution, RABI has provided guidance, financial support and practical care to farming people for generations. Tailored to individual needs, this confidential support is available via RABI's free helpline 0808 281 9490 or through referral.

Against the backdrop of growing challenges in the sector, RABI has continued to evolve the charity's services including: the introduction of a new online wellbeing and counselling service in 2020; and the launch of the 'Big Farming Survey' in January.

To find out more please go to www.rabi.org.uk



YANA, You Are Not Alone, is a simple, sustainable, highly effective rural mental health charity which:

- Provides a confidential helpline, manned by Samaritans trained volunteers which can result in fast-track access to fully funded counselling
- Builds a better understanding of mental health
- Invests in:
 - Mental Health First Aid training – equipping nearly 100 people to date with the skills to support their families, friends or colleagues
 - Suicide Prevention – the '7 Tractor Facts to Save a Life' campaign encourages those who are concerned about someone to ACT

www.yanahelp.org | 0300 323 0400 | @yanafarming



The Prince's Countryside Fund launched its National Directory of Farm and Rural Support Groups. The directory lists 69 regional, national, and membership organisations who can provide support, advice, and guidance to farming and rural communities. The directory signposts to support for farmers who might be in crisis. Poor mental health is on the rise in rural and farming communities, so making support groups easy to find and accessible is vital.

www.princescountrysidefund.org.uk/directory.



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INSURANCE SOLUTIONS FOR FRAM FARMERS MEMBERS



For the past 18 months, the Scrutton Bland agricultural team has been working in partnership with Fram Farmers by accessing a broad panel of insurers to provide members with more choices at competitive premiums.

Operating as a privately owned and independent insurance broking business, Scrutton Bland has been providing insurance advice to businesses for over one hundred years and specialises in dedicated insurance protection for the agricultural sector.

They understand how diverse agricultural businesses can be, and will visit members' premises to undertake a personal assessment of risks as part of the service, to ensure that the right cover is in place. In the event that a claim needs to be made, members will have access to a dedicated claims handler who will guide you through the claims process to help you achieve a prompt and fair settlement.

The Scrutton Bland PMI package is exclusive to Fram Farmers members and not available elsewhere. In line with the co-operative aims of Fram Farmers, this is a group rated scheme, meaning premiums will be determined by the overall claims performance of the group, which can mean they may go up or down each year.

For further information or to talk to one of the specialist insurance team, please contact: 0330 058 6559 or email hello@scruttonbland.co.uk.



Scrutton Bland Group refers to Scrutton Bland LLP, Scrutton Bland Financial Services Limited, Scrutton Bland Insurance Brokers Limited and S Merrick Hill (Commercial) Limited. Scrutton Bland Insurance Brokers Ltd is authorised and regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority. Our FCA number is 828934.

THE FARM INSURANCE ENCOMPASSES A RANGE OF INSURANCE COVERS INCLUDING:

- Farm Buildings and Contents
- Business Interruption
- Livestock
- Diseases – including: Avian Influenza, Salmonella, Bovine TB
- Business Liability – Employers, Public, Products, Environmental, Contracting
- Goods in Transit including Third Party Haulage
- Diversification including Livery, Shoots, Fishing Lakes, Glamping
- Renewables – Solar, Wind, Biomass
- Cyber and Financial Crime
- Property – Multiple Locations – Property Owners
- Vehicles – Agricultural, Private Car, Commercial

PRIVATE MEDICAL INSURANCE SCHEME EXCLUSIVE TO FRAM FARMERS MEMBERS

Scrutton Bland has worked with Aviva Health UK Ltd to create an exclusive PMI scheme for Fram Farmers members.

Private medical insurance (PMI) is designed to cover the costs of private medical treatment for curable, short-term illnesses and injuries, and will usually cover the cost of in-patient and day-patient treatment as well as some out-patient care. The main benefit of having PMI is access to prompt treatment, without the worry of waiting on an NHS list.

The Scrutton Bland scheme also includes several other valuable benefits including:

- Access to a digital GP.
- 24-hour stress counselling hotline.
- Cancer cover as standard. Includes chemotherapy, radiotherapy and targeted therapy and up to 10 years of monitoring post-cancer treatment.
- Specialist claims teams. Aviva have claims teams specialising in areas such as oncology and mental health to ensure there is an informed person who understands your situation.
- Free PMI cover for second and subsequent children. Younger children are covered if you take out PMI cover for you and your eldest child under 20.
- Discounted gym membership - up to 25% off membership of a range of UK health and fitness clubs.
- Bespoke PMI cover - Scrutton Bland understands that every farm business is different, so the PMI scheme includes a range of options to choose from which can enhance or reduce premium payment options.
- Security of using an award-winning insurance provider - Aviva has won the Best Health Insurance Company award for the last ten years.
- Local agricultural insurance professionals - Scrutton Bland has a specialist agricultural insurance team with extensive knowledge of local farming businesses.

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