

FARMERS FIRST

FRAM
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Issue 69 | Autumn 2023



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FRAM LAUNCHES NEW MUNTONS GROWERS CLUB FOR 2023/2024



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NEXTGEN VISIT TO G'S FRESH



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FITNESS AND WELLBEING CENTRE DIVERSIFICATION FOR FRAM MEMBER



Harvest Round-Up - pages 12-13

Photo by Bill Baker, R.J. Baker Farms, Suffolk



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ANOTHER CHALLENGING HARVEST COMPLETE!

As the weather takes an unexpected turn for the better amid a September heatwave, the Fram Farmers team has been busy supporting members as we experience another disruptive harvest of unpredictable weather.

The Fram Farmers team has attended plenty of exciting events over the past three months, offering an opportunity to catch up with members, share industry updates and offer advice and support on navigating markets.

Some recent Reginal Forums, held in various locations across the country, offered an open dialogue between members and the Fram team to discuss service delivery and product offerings. You can read more on the news and events pages (4 and 5).

We also attended both the Royal Norfolk and the Suffolk Show and hosted a number of member events, including the Cornwall Farm Walk and the Agri Trials Tour. We had an incredible Trials Day and Fram Supplier event at Mowness Hall. All past and upcoming events can be found on pages 4 and 5.

As part of the continued growth of the grain marketing department at Fram Farmers, we are delighted to bring you news of the NEW Muntons Malting Barley Growers Club, which launched earlier this year. Discover more about the club on page 7.

It wouldn't be an autumn issue of Farmers First without a harvest round-up! On pages 12 and 13, you can

gain an insight into members' farming businesses, the ups and downs of their harvest this year, and how they have tackled the downpours, damp weather, and crop pests.

With licences for all three maize seed treatments used in the UK due to expire in January 2024, we have got the inside scoop from Fram Farmers suppliers on what to expect in the coming months – see page 15.

The Midsummer Meet Up with Suffolk Wildlife Trust explored current and future challenges of producing sustainable food whilst protecting and enhancing the environment for wildlife. It was a great event where likeminded farmers could share ideas. Read more on page 9.

Fram Farmers has a strong membership in the north after merging with other like-minded buying groups over the years. On page 11, you will find some member profiles where we update on activity in this area.

Another member profile in this issue showcases diversification at its best. Be Well Barn is a new health and wellness centre nestled in the heart of Suffolk. On pages 18 and 19, read how owners Will and Sarah sourced building materials through Fram Farmers to turn their



Andrew Knowles, Fram Farmers CEO

dream into a reality.

On page 21, we delve into our professional services offering of finance, insurance, grants, carbon farming and trading, R&D tax credits, and energy capital allowances.

Please save the date for our next Farming Conference on Thursday 29 February 2024, at which Henry Dimpleby will be speaking. Plus, a reminder to all members of the new fertiliser photo ID regs. We will be communicating to members about what they need to do and how they can provide Fram with their photo ID for fertiliser purchases after 1 October.

With another year flying by at the blink of an eye, we will soon all be turning our thoughts to Christmas festivities. Until then, we wish you a successful few months getting winter crops in the ground.

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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 McDaniel 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

STAFF UPDATES

As our members grow, so does the Fram Farmers team. We are excited to introduce to you a few new faces who have joined us in the last couple of months. Fram Farmers is proud to have an excellent team of hard working and dedicated individuals who pride themselves on supporting our members with their businesses.

Jennifer Cole and **Michelle Walker** have joined us in electricity to support Ryan with the recent challenges and technical issues for both members and Fram Farmers.

We have a new fuel team, with **Alex Harrison** taking on the role of fuel buyer and **Beverley Hermitage** who is joining us on 18 September as support for Alex. We wish Sam and Kelly the best of luck with their new ventures.

Welcome to **Ella Bowman** who joined the team in June as our crops administrator. Mostly working in crop protection, Ella's new role has given **Kimberley Fearnley** the opportunity to support India Gibbons in fertiliser.

Sadly, we said goodbye to Ed Fuller who had a very successful placement year with us supporting the crops team. Ed has now returned to Harper Adams University to finish his degree and the team wishes him all the best in the future. We are excited to welcome our latest placement student, **Ollie Wright**, who is also from Harper Adams and will be joining us for his one-year placement working closely with Scott and Jono.

Covering Fram's IT support is **Ben Whatmough** who joined us back in March this year.

We are delighted to have **Izzy Farrell** join the marketing team, having spent the last 10 months supporting the GFI and livestock purchasing teams.

We are often on the lookout for new talent to join our vibrant and busy team. Interested in joining us? You will find all our latest vacancies under the careers section on our website.

MOWNESS HALL TRIALS DAY & FRAM SUPPLIER EVENT

We had an incredible Trials Day and Fram Supplier Event at Mowness Hall, kindly hosted by Fram Farmers member James Forrest. The day, in partnership with BASF and Walnes Seeds, consisted of the BASF Real Results Wheat Trials alongside over 50 Fram Farmers' suppliers exhibiting their latest products and services. The date for next year's event will be announced soon.



SUFFOLK SHOW

The end of May saw us return to our local regional show, the Suffolk Show. It was a great success and a fantastic opportunity to speak to lots of Fram members. Our cheese and wine evening, held on the first day, was exceptionally well supported and we would like to thank all that joined us. As always, a huge thank you to FramTrade for the set up and we were delighted to win 'Best Stand Allied to Agriculture' again this year.



AGRI TRIALS TOUR

In June, Agrii very kindly hosted a trials tour for our Essex members at their Throws Farm site. It was a lovely evening which consisted of a Fram Farmers update from the crops team followed by a tour of their wheat and barley variety plots.

NEXTGEN SUMMER EVENT AT G'S FRESH

In June, our NextGen group headed over to Ely to visit the Shropshire family at G's Fresh. They had a full day learning the journey from crop establishment right through to the consumer marketing and seeing first-hand the picking and packaging of the crops. Find out more on page 17.





ROYAL NORFOLK SHOW

Our last regional show in the season was the Royal Norfolk Show. We had a lovely couple of days meeting and speaking to members and were delighted to win the 'Trade Stand Reserve' award for the second year running.



CORNWALL FARM WALK

South West members had a fascinating tour around James and Kiki Willcocks' dairy farm in June. Over the past three years, they have been working to achieve net zero and are now producing carbon neutral milk. There was a lot of food for thought passed on to fellow members so a big thank you to James and Kiki for a wonderful, insightful evening.

FRAM 10K

Huge congratulations to our Fram Farmers team who took on the Fram 10k on the 3 September and won the 'Sponsors Team Award'! Well done to Scott Manning, Barry Howard, David Wilson, Tim Styles, Jono Woollatt, Michelle Keeble, Gregor Black and Morgan Moore.



DIARY DATES:

20 September	Laughton & District Ploughing Match
27 September	Cheshire Ploughing Match
4 October	The Dairy Show
11 October	The Suffolk Skills & Careers Festival
1 November	South of England Farming Conference
2 November	North West Regen Day with Agreea
23 November	North West Arrive & Drive Day with Case IH
28 November	South East Arrive & Drive Day with Case IH
29 February 2024	The Farming Conference 2024

NEW REGIONAL FORUMS

In order to build more direct connections between the Board and members post-Covid, Fram Farmers has recently held Regional Forums in Sussex, Suffolk and Essex, with the Cheshire Regional Forum taking place this autumn.

Holding these meetings provides an opportunity for open, honest discussions and the exchange of views between members and the Fram team on areas where service and offerings could be improved, with the aim that the cooperative can 'be the best it can be' for members.

They will be taking place every six months, allowing time for recommendations from each forum to be taken back to the Fram Farmers team to be actioned and implemented.

The first forums brought forward plenty of feedback, and the key items of discussion are summarised below:

After consistent feedback regarding frustrations with electricity billing over the past 12-18 months, this was a key focus of discussion. Whilst members of the forum acknowledged that this was due to a combination of external events, the prevailing view was that it has been very difficult and frustrating to get answers to questions and queries from Fram, despite the good energy prices achieved.

The good news is that the backlog of historic billing has now been cleared for the current billing period, and Fram Farmers will be moving to more simplified electronic invoices from 1 October, with an additional member of staff joining the utilities team to help improve this service to members. New ticketing software has also been introduced to improve member query response times.

Members felt the individual departmental emails were a little much, so the team will be working on a weekly Fram email to include grain, fertiliser, fuel, feed, and utilities updates in one place. Members have found the grain, fertiliser, and fuel WhatsApp messages useful and Fram will be working on providing more opinions on purchasing opportunities and market updates in future.

As part of the portal update, members were asked if they would welcome the cooperative publishing guide prices for different ag chem products. The guide prices were universally welcomed and approved by the board, and are now being worked on for the autumn, along with including order prices on electronic order confirmations.

Finally, some members were underwhelmed with the current functionality of the new portal, which they don't believe is as good as the old portal. It was explained that new functionality would be coming shortly, including online ordering, once the new core IT system has been stabilised.

Once again, thank you to members for the feedback. The Fram Farmers team is growing and is busy working behind the scenes, making changes to continue providing members with the best possible service.

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FRAM LAUNCHES NEW MUNTONS GROWERS CLUB FOR 2023/2024

As part of the continued growth of the grain marketing department at Fram Farmers, the Muntons Malting Barley Growers Club was launched earlier this year. We provide an introduction to the club and its background, and explore the benefits to members.

The Muntons Growers Club is a collaborative arrangement between Fram Farmers and Stowmarket-based Muntons, a family-owned manufacturer, supplying world class malts and malted ingredients across the globe. Its aim is to develop a group of dedicated malting barley growers within a 50-mile radius of Stowmarket, committed to consistently delivering the quality required for malting.



Muntons provides a full portfolio of brewing malts, crushed malts and distilling malts. Malt is further processed into a range of malted ingredients at Cedars Maltings in Stowmarket and at Muntons Thailand. The company employs 300 people globally, 250 of which are at the Stowmarket headquarters.

The idea for the Club came from a discussion between Fram Farmers grain procurement manager Jono Woollatt and Muntons grain buyer



Sarah Maddever. Muntons, which was founded in 1921 and expanded to the Suffolk site in the seventies, was keen to engage more with local farmers, therefore condensing the supply chain, and providing greater transparency to growers, as well as Muntons' customers and the end consumer.

"The Growers Club initiative has allowed

us to source malting barley on-farm in a different way," explains Jono.

"We have been able to match up local growers with serious intent of producing consistent malting quality with a competitive, London Wheat Futures based contract."

For growers, the main attraction of the Club is the non-replacement contract, something which is rarely available in today's markets. If the quality doesn't meet specification, Muntons and Fram have the option to buy as syrup and/or feed spec barley, but the grower is not exposed to the risk of default against the malting premium.

With samples tested on-site at Stowmarket, the grower can have confidence that the barley will meet the buyer's requirements, and analysis of each load is forwarded to the grower after delivery, providing more clarity and transparency in the supply chain.

"Averaging of quality claims within set parameters is a further benefit, and removes those frustrating claims when one load is slightly out of spec but the bulk is fine," Jono adds.

Other advantages include discount on colour sorting for ergot, if required, and priority access to new opportunities with the latest varieties and supply chain initiatives.

The Club is exclusive to Fram Farmers members and 'Fram Grain Marketing Only' members on a three-year rolling agreement, and Muntons' chosen varieties – Planet, Laureate, Craft and Asteroid – are eligible.

For the 2023/24 season, 3,000 tonnes worth of barley has already been contracted, guaranteeing movement and space into the Stowmarket maltings site on contracted tonnage.



Keen to make the most of the services and opportunities available to members, Fram Farmers member Michael Craske joined the Muntons Growers Club in January 2023. Based in Hadleigh, Michael farms around 700ha, of which 120ha is down to spring malting barley this year - more than usual, having replaced failed OSR in February.

"We decided to grow a larger acreage of Planet spring malting barley this year, a variety favoured by maltsters," he explains.

Having established an excellent working relationship with Jono, Michael had good faith that joining the club was a beneficial decision for his business.

"Muntons is a reputable company, local to the farm and it's nice to know that it's being processed less than 20 miles down the road."

"Quality was good, at around 1.5% nitrogen, which I'm told is exactly what the maltster is looking for if destined for brewing, so it met the spec which I was obviously very pleased with. The price was good, and the transaction was smooth - it left the farm very quickly, which was great, with harvest coming a little earlier this year," he adds.

For more information, contact Jono Woollatt: 07583 037577 | jonathan.woollatt@framfarmers.co.uk

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THE MIDSUMMER MEET UP, WITH SUFFOLK WILDLIFE TRUST

On a sunny Friday on 23 June, over one hundred farmers, advisers and landowners were welcomed to Little Haugh Hall in Norton for an exciting new event – The Midsummer Meet Up - organised by The Suffolk Wildlife Trust (SWT) and sponsored by Fram Farmers.

The event's focus was on exploring the current and future challenges of producing sustainable food whilst protecting and enhancing a thriving environment for wildlife. This challenge is increasingly at the forefront of many farming conversations, press coverage and events, as it is more widely recognised that farm businesses need to support biodiversity in the face of climate change.

The Midsummer Meet Up was designed to address this gap locally, for likeminded farmers who want to engage, learn, and share ideas on this broad topic.

Through new Environmental Land Management Schemes, farmers are being asked to step-up and deliver positive changes ('public goods') that will impact on the landscape we live in, with the ongoing challenge of producing food for an ever-growing population. For Fram Farmers, linking up with SWT for this new event helps to bridge the gap between promoting wildlife-friendly advice and understanding the needs of farming businesses.

Little Haugh Farm provided an ideal location to host this new event. It is not only a beautiful parkland setting, but also an opportunity to see a farm that SWT's farm advice team have been advising from the very start of its journey in adapting to more sustainable and environmentally friendly approaches.

Those that attended the optional morning farm walk with Tatjana Greil Castro



(landowner), Ben Woods (farm manager) and Katie Stocking (SWT farm wildlife adviser), were shown several new project areas on the farm, including the historic parkland with Belted Galloway herd, creation of new wood pasture, and a new regenerative cropping system.

After a locally sourced BBQ lunch, and some time to socialise, guests were treated to a panel of speakers. An introduction from Jenny Rawson from SWT covered important ground around the charity's approach to working with farmers, followed by Sarah Langford, author of 'Rooted', as compere for the afternoon.

Speakers included Suffolk farmers that the SWT farm advice team have been working closely with – John Pawsey, Emily Aitchison and Josiah Meldrum of Hodmedods. The two guest speakers from further afield, were Patrick Holden, co-founder of the Sustainable Food Trust and Tom Haddon from Cambridgeshire, known as 'Farmer Tom' on social media.

Farm clusters and farmers working collaboratively was a common theme. Fram member John Pawsey is lead farmer for the Wool Towns Farm Cluster in west Suffolk, supported by SWT. He spoke about collaborative projects including a new Landscape Recovery bid with the neighbouring Stour Valley Cluster. The SWT team have been working with Emily Aitchison on pond creation projects at their

farm in Mid Suffolk and supporting the set-up of the new Upper Deben Farm Cluster.

Regenerative farming principles, including the importance of soil health and integrating livestock, were described by both Farmer Tom and John Pawsey, who gave an honest and entertaining run through of lessons learnt. Josiah Meldrum from Hodmedods shared his experiences working with farmers to grow pulses in the UK, including themes on diet change and supply chains. Patrick Holden shared his work with the Sustainable Food Trust on their 'Feeding Britain' report, focusing on sustainable diet and the links to sustainable food production in the UK.

The urgency of protecting our natural resources of air, soil, water, and biodiversity needing to be at the forefront of everyone's agenda was highlighted in Fram Farmers' Tom Lee's update. The afternoon concluded with host Tatjana who summed up her vision for her land and working with nature.

The personal and passionate nature of the stories shared resonated with many farmers; the strong connection of looking after the land, nature, and people that co-exist in it is more important than ever and highlighted the diverse journey we are all on to achieve this.

Suffolk Wildlife Trust will be planning more events for the 2023/24 season, which will be detailed on their website.

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A SPOTLIGHT ON FRAM MEMBERS IN THE NORTH

Fram Farmers has a strong membership in the north of the country, after merging with other like-minded buying groups over the years. Here, we update on activity in this area, and shine a spotlight on some of these members, who all happen to be past or present AHDB Monitor Farm hosts.

ROB CROSS AHDB MONITOR FARM HOST 2016-2019

Rob farms 860 acres in Warrington in partnership with his father John. He has been a member of Fram Farmers since 1994, following a coincidental meeting with Suffolk member Roy Steward while on holiday in Sandbanks, Dorset.

Rob was the thirteenth member from the north to join the cooperative, and purchases all fertiliser, ag chem, electricity, building materials, fuel and mobile contracts through the group, as well as some seed and machinery.

From 2016 – 2019, Rob was an AHDB Monitor Farm host. An all-arable business growing wheat, barley, oats and OSR on heavy land, Rob's time as a monitor farm host looked into a range of topics, including the effect of cultivation on soils, cover crops, drainage and farm buildings. Rob says the experience gave him a closer bond to local farmers and a lot of links to the wider industry.

"I learnt something at every meeting, which enabled me to review my whole outlook on agriculture, in some respects. It enabled me to see both sides of the coin more openly, rather than being dismissive to new ideas," he shares.

BILL WEBB AHDB MONITOR FARM HOST 2019-2023

Bill farms 417ha of light to medium-heavy land on the Mersey Estuary in partnership with his son Joseph, growing wheat, OSR, spring and winter barley and potatoes.

He has been a Fram Farmers member since 1994, after an agronomist from Suffolk was a guest speaker at a Cheshire Cereals Society event, which led to an organised visit to some Suffolk farms. Bill and five other farmers from the area then joined the cooperative, and nearly 30



Photo © AHDB

years later, Bill now purchases the majority of his farm inputs via the group, from ag chem and fuel, to electricity and building materials. Bill was also a director of Fram Farmers in the late nineties.

Manor Farm was a Monitor Farm from June 2019 – June 2023, a slightly longer period than usual, due to lockdown limitations.

Prior to becoming a monitor farmer, Bill was already experimenting with some direct drilling, as well as the use of cover crops and wildflower margins. These practices were identified as a foundation to build upon over the coming three years, where events looked at regen farming and a meeting which demonstrated the importance of paying attention to tyre pressures and soil compaction.

Bill reported good attendance numbers at the events held, and took great pleasure in hosting many familiar faces with a thirst for knowledge.



SIMON EDWARDS FUTURE AHDB MONITOR FARM HOST

Simon farms just over 900 acres alongside his wife Lisa and son Cameron in Merseyside, with one full-time employee Alan. The business holds a tenancy on a large estate owned by Leverhulme Cheshire Trust, growing wheat, winter barley, oats, OSR and spring beans, as well as potatoes for McCains, and grassland for hay.

The business has been a member of Fram Farmers since 1998, purchasing ag chem, fertiliser, fuels, electricity, phones, machinery, building materials and seed through the group.

Lisa and Simon are already heavily

involved in many local initiatives; Lisa was NFU Lancashire County Chair for a three-year spell until February 2023, as well as being the farmer representative for the north west on the Lowland Agricultural Peat Task Force.

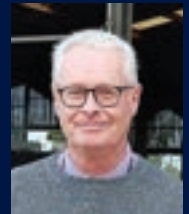
AHDB recently approached Simon to ask if he would be interested in being the next Monitor Farm host for the area, to which he agreed.

Becoming a monitor farmer brings the opportunity to steer the topics of discussion; farming just above sea level, 75% of the farm is low lying peatland, relying on the Environment Agency for pumping and maintenance. This brings potential opportunities for events focussing on wetter farming and alternative crops such as typha (bullrush) and exploring issues surrounding succession and integrating the next generation into the farm business.

Final details are being arranged, so farmers in the area can expect to hear about upcoming events from this Monitor Farm soon.

MEET ROGER POYNTON MEMBERSHIP DEVELOPMENT MANAGER (NORTH)

Roger joined Fram Farmers in Autumn 2022. Based in Staffordshire, Roger is very keen to ensure that members are



aware of his locality to the area. In the coming months, Fram Farmers is hosting and attending a number of events in the north, where Roger will be present to meet current and prospective members:

- Cheshire Ploughing Match - 27 September
- North West Regen Day with Agreena, Nantwich - 2 November
- The first Arrive and Drive event in the north, with Case IH, Cheshire Showground – 23 November

If you're in the north of the UK, and would like to know more about joining Fram Farmers, please get in touch with Roger: 07442 931 960 | roger.poynton@framfarmers.co.uk

HARVEST ROUND-UP

Downpours and damp weather have resulted in a disruptive harvest for some growers across the country, causing difficulties with timing and crop pests. We caught up with a selection of Fram Farmers members to share the highs and lows of their harvests this year.

NAME: RYAN MCCORMACK
LOCATION: SUFFOLK

Dennington Hall Farms is nestled in the East Suffolk countryside. We are family-run, farming 1,500ha of heavy land.

Combining started on the 12 July in a block of Tardis winter barley with a weighbridge yield of 10.7t/ha and 65kg/hl.

Due to a dry autumn, high flea beetle and stem weevil pressures, plus a few persistent pigeons, meant the OSR had been reduced to 50ha, with a yield of 2.45t/ha. With the soil moisture level high, we have drilled 100ha with a companion crop of fenugreek, berseem clover and buckwheat.

Wheat harvest started on 1 August in a block of second wheat Extase yielding 10.5t/ha. The yields have been variable with first and second wheats yielding 9.5-11.7t/ha.

From the yield analysis I have found that anything drilled pre-10 October and not treated for BYDV has suffered almost 2t reduction compared to treated.



NAME: TIM HUES
LOCATION: WILTSHIRE

Harvest started for us on 12 July with our winter barley varieties Kingsbarn and Bazzooka. Yields and quality were satisfactory with the Kingsbarn shading it yield wise.

Next up was the OSR, which proved to be disappointing. Duplo and Aurelia were crops that had looked well during the season, but the inquest is still ongoing for the yield culprit; suspects are flea beetle, the cold December, wet spring or the hot June. Probably a combination of all the above!

This year, our wheat varieties were Extase, Dawsum, Insitor and Graham. We were impressed with the Extase and Dawsum which gave pleasing yields and good samples, whereas the other two varieties were slightly disappointing. Time may have caught up with them and we will look to add two newer varieties to replace them in our plans for this coming autumn.

We farm a variety of soil types, and the wet March and April affected our heavy soils. Areas that sat wet during this period never fully recovered, and the hot June was the final blow!

As I write, we still have spring oats to cut which are later this year as they have experienced some secondary tillering.

This was the first harvest for us using a MacDon header and it was a good one to start on. This impressive piece of kit made the harvesting of some weather beaten crops a lot easier than it otherwise could have been.



NAME: ROB RAVEN
LOCATION: NORFOLK/SUFFOLK BORDER

Harvest 2023 is one most of us would like to put behind us and has led to some rather un-exciting yields.

The winter malting barley, Flagon and Otter, produced some average yields of 5.5t/ha, with most only just scraping through on quality.



The Planet spring barley was good quality, and produced some cracking yields on stronger land where it were early drilled. This year, spring malting barley achieved 8.2t/ha.

A couple of low disease years had made us a little complacent with wheat varieties, and in this wet year a good septoria rating and delayed drilling gave us much better yields of 8.4t/ha.

Gleam and Extase gave us the odd 10t/ha field, whereas Wolverine, which had yielded well in previous years, was a let-down. Overall, wheat yield will be below average with few results to get excited about.

Winter beans established better than ever but ended up thick and lush after a mild start to winter.

Some late hard frosts put them sternly back in their place. There were no pollinators to be seen, so many pods failed to set, then aphid attacks meant a lot of damage was done to the remaining pods. Yields were significantly below average at 1.47t/ha.

NAME: DAVID TAYLOR
LOCATION: SUSSEX

At P W Taylor & Partners, winter barley harvest began on the 6 July and yielded a pleasing 9t/ha, nearly all without the need for drying.

The OSR wasn't quite ready to follow, and what appeared to be a reasonably average crop ended up a disaster on the night of 15 July, which blew out most of the crop and left us with barely 2t/ha.

February drilled spring barley harvest began on the 18 July, with grain at 14% and yielding over 8t/ha with N between 1.2 and 1.5%. We cut around 50ha at the time, but everything went downhill from there with harvest finishing on the 18 August after a frustrating stop start between the relentless rain.

Protein on the wheat was low, so all the Extase and Crusoe is feed and nearly all needed drying, but we were fairly happy, with an average yield at a little over 9t/ha.



NAME: BILL BAKER
LOCATION: SUFFOLK

At R.J. Baker, harvest 2023 started with cutting the remainder of our OSR. Only 50% of the area that was originally drilled survived to face the combine, and with hindsight, it would have been better to not have drilled it in the first place, such were the dismal yields due to CSFB attack, frosts, and pigeons.

Tardis winter barley had another good year, averaging 10.03t/ha from 76ha grown. Planet spring barley averaged 6.93t/ha, slightly lower than our average but with exceptional quality. We still have 100ha to cut and 53ha of winter beans.

Averages to date are as follows: Zyatt, including second wheats, resulted in 10.24 t/ha with good spec weight and Hagberg, but low protein. Extase 10.07 t/ha, soft Skyscraper 10.34t/ha and hards including Gleam, Dawsum, Champion and Cranium averaging between 10.2 and 11t/ha, with Skyscraper being the top performer to date.



NAME: RICHARD YATES
LOCATION: LEICESTERSHIRE

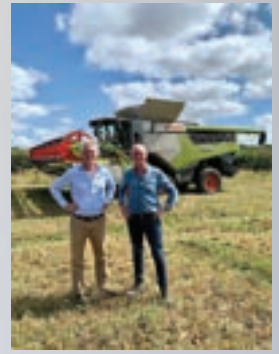
At Belvoir Castle, this year's harvest has proved to be a one I'm glad to see the back of! It kicked off for us on the 6 July, cutting Bazooka winter barley. We cut most of the winter barley dry and yields around the 8.5t/ha mark. The rape followed with yields proving to be a mixed bag with Matrix yielding lowest at 3.1t/ha and Antigua averaging 4.14t/ha.

We commenced wheat harvest on the 28 July with some KWS Parkin and finished on the 23 August with some late drilled Cranium following sugar beet. Yields were far more attractive over the weighbridge, with a significant amount harvested 'wet'. Once adjusted back to dry weight yields ranged from 9.65t/ha for the Parkin to 10.83t/ha for the Dawsum.

Gleam despite its ever-growing unpopularity with agronomists, performed well and yielded just shy of 10t/ha. There may be another season left for the old faithful after all.

NAME: JOHN PAWSEY
LOCATION: SUFFOLK

With no early crops like oilseed rape or winter barley, it seems our organic harvest comes in a mad rush, with everything ready all at the beginning of August. Being an organic farm, our input costs are fairly low, and our yields reflect that.



This year, we started with Isabel spring sown milling oats and Westminster and Laureate malting barley. Both crop yields were poor with spring milling oats achieving 3.51t/ha, and spring malting barley 3.05t/ha.

The thin spring crops have produced some of our best under-sown leys ever.

Winter crops have been varied but have performed better than their spring counterparts. Winter wheat is grown as a blend, and this year, we have had an even mix of Extase, Siskin, Mayflower and Illustrious achieving 4.23t/ha.

Winter beans are grown as a bi-crop with wheat to spread the risk of the beans falling to chocolate spot. This year, our bean yield was 3.25t/ha.

NAME: ANDREW MADDEVER
LOCATION: SUFFOLK

We kicked off harvest with our Tardis winter barley. The resulting yield was 9.7t/ha, followed by SY Kingsbarn, and Bolton which unfortunately disappointed in every field.

The first winter wheat cut was some Graham that was direct drilled into oat stubble in September 2022. The first 55ha yielded a respectable 9t/ha.

Following this, we moved onto Gleam and Extase which have been the standout varieties and held onto their bushel weights well, remaining around 77kg on the last fields cut. Champion disappointed with the bushel weight, scraping in at 72kg, consequently delivering just over 8.5t/ha.

Spring barley was all Planet, and although cut at moistures ranged from 15-19%, it was all cut before we witnessed any brackling achieving 6.9t/ha.

Isabel spring oats were cut at higher moistures, although we avoided any losses from the panicles prior to combining, the end result was 7.1t/ha after drying.

We were lucky to harvest our marrowfat peas before they went flat making the final yield 2.8t/ha.

The hot weather in June meant winter beans were poor. Maximum yield was 4.2t/ha on one small field, but the majority has been around 3t/ha.





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MAIZE SEED TREATMENTS: SUPPLIER INSIGHT

Fram Farmers members will be aware that licences for all three maize seed treatments used in the UK are due to expire on 1 January 2024 due to new regulations following Brexit. We spoke to a few Fram Farmers suppliers for further insight.

“Seed dressing manufacturers have been trying to add ingredients to the UK pesticide register since the changes following Brexit, which can take years, as there’s a lot of data required,” explains Neil Groom, manager at Grainseed in Eye, Suffolk.



It became clear in spring 2023 that they wouldn’t be registered in time, so applications for emergency ‘fast-track’ authorisation to use three existing maize seed dressings have been submitted to the Chemicals Regulation Division (CRD) of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE). Neil has played a key role in compiling the

applications, which are being supported by the Maize Growers Association among others.

“The applications were made in mid-July, and have been acknowledged, but require additional information from manufacturers to arrive at a decision. It is a 12-16 week process so we should find out in the next few months,” he adds.

Currently, seed with those treatments can be imported until 31 December, but lawfully, growers will not be able to plant seeds next year unless there is a change in the law.

“The industry has been working with Defra throughout 2023 to find a solution, and Defra officials have promised that a

solution will be found before the deadline. Until then, Defra Minister Mark Spencer has told us to carry on as usual,” Neil says.



Charlie Dolphin, UK business manager for MAS Seeds and Brightmaize, has also been part of the appeal group. His advice to growers is not to worry.

“We are pushing for a solution as soon as possible so the industry can plan effectively,” Charlie says.

“Most of the seed in this country comes from France, and will need to be dressed very soon in preparation for the 2024 season, so companies need to know what they’re working with for a UK market.”

“We are hoping to have an indication, if not a full decision, by the end of September, but we are fairly certain Korit, which has been an effective treatment for years now, will be authorised,” he reveals.

“If not, there are a few replacement products emerging that have also applied for emergency authorisation, which will be of similar efficacy as Korit.”

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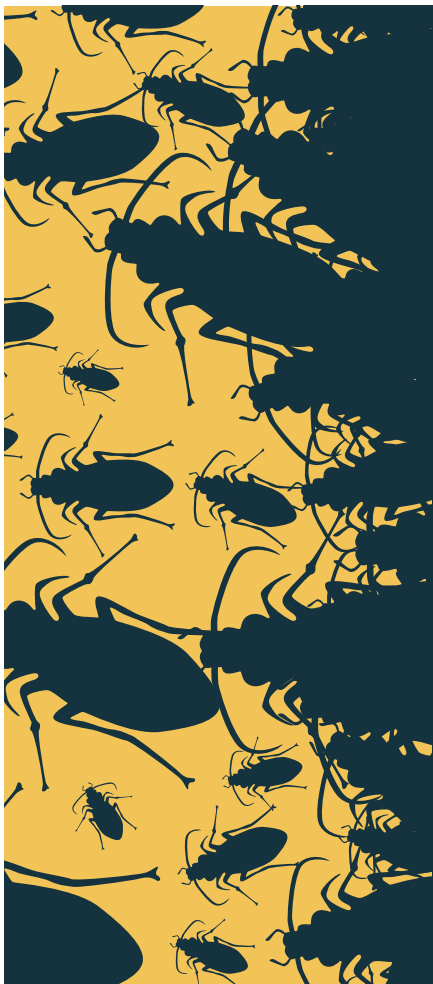
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NEXTGEN VISIT TO G'S FRESH



In June, the Fram Farmers NextGen group took a trip to Ely in Cambridgeshire to visit the Shropshire family and their fully integrated fresh produce business, G's.

The day started with a presentation from John Shropshire, who offered insight into the business' history and current global operations - growing 14,000 ha of salad and vegetable cropping on the Cambridgeshire Fens, G's supplies celery, baby leaf and lettuce to major UK, European and North American retailers.

The business manages the entire process from seed to shelf, from growing, through to quality checking, packaging and consumer marketing. The group was able to experience part of this journey on their tour, visiting the baby leaf and celery packing factory. G's holds roughly 80% of the UK's market share for celery, and the group was interested to learn that only 50% of UK households buy celery 7.5 times per year.

NextGen then ventured out into the field where the teams of pickers gave them an insight into how certain crops are harvested, and how freshness is maintained right through to being packaged, labelled and sent to the supplier.

The group then received a talk from G's biodiversity manager on how the business is integrating environmental practices, alongside introducing wetland areas onto the farm, to attract wildlife such as lapwings and kingfishers. Next, Charles and Henry Shropshire provided the opportunity for the group to discuss their own farming experiences and ask more questions about the business the Shropshire family has developed.

The afternoon focused on combinable crops and offered a chance to see how

G's fits wheat and barley alongside the salad rotations. The day was rounded off by watching celery seedlings being planted, and a chance to go onboard an iceberg harvesting rig to observe the picking and packing process.

On behalf of the Fram NextGen group and its members, Fram Farmers would like to extend its gratitude to the G's Fresh business, the Shropshire family and all involved in organising the trip.



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FITNESS AND WELLBEING CENTRE DIVERSIFICATION FOR FRAM MEMBER



Photo © EADT

For Will and Sarah Edwards, their professional careers provided inspiration for a farm diversification with a difference. We visited the couple, who shared how Fram Farmers helped bring the project to life.

The Edwards family farms around 1,000 acres in Suffolk, 300 of which is owned, through a mixture of tenancies, contracts and agreements with neighbouring farmers. Growing OSR, winter wheat, winter barley, winter beans and some spring barley, they have been Fram Farmers members since 1980.

Will is the fourth generation on the farm, which also includes a turkey breeding business started by Will's grandad, Geoffrey, around 50 years ago. The unit contains 8,000+ birds, employing 9 staff, breeding turkeys for Bernard Matthews.

Both Will and Sarah come from agricultural roots, and Will, who has two brothers who both pursued careers outside of agriculture, returned to the farm 11 years ago when his dad, Trevor, reached 65. He now works alongside his dad, also employing one staff member to support

the arable operation, plus two harvest staff.

Looking to diversify the business, Be Well Barn has been a consideration of husband and wife team Will and Sarah for some time. Both are trained physiotherapists, and Sarah has recently qualified as a pilates instructor.

With the onset of Covid, and the return of the 'escape to the countryside' mindset, this escalated their decision, and they started planning the idea properly in autumn 2020.



This is the second diversification for the farming business – in 2000, Will's parents, Trevor and Anita converted a grade II listed barn into a private-hire swimming pool just down the road. This opened in 2001, and has provided Will and Sarah an insight into the leisure and tourism market, allowing for research ahead of taking the next steps.

Will and Sarah were able to survey whether there was enough demand for a fitness centre like the one they dreamed of creating. They wanted to offer something different from the standard gym model, and flexibility for customers to pick and

choose to fit their lifestyle.

Working with property and business consultants Brown&Co, who delivered the planning, and Tom McKechnie of Gorniak & McKechnie of Eye, who designed the eco-conscious buildings, the 8.5ha site, which was a wheat crop only two years ago, is now a popular rural fitness centre. "We wanted to offer something that was sympathetic to our surroundings," explains Will.

"We set out to develop it in a sustainable way, and in five years, we will be aiming for a carbon neutral target with the installation of ground mounted solar panels on the site. Therefore, we needed to ensure that those we worked with could envisage the project in the same way as us."

Will was made aware of LEADER funding, an EU funded Rural Development Programme available to local businesses, communities and farmers, by Brown&Co at the time. Will completed the paperwork himself and was successful in achieving partial funding for the project, which he says "wouldn't have been possible without it, from a financial point of view."



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BUILDING MATERIALS

Planning permission was sought in November 2021, receiving the go-ahead from local planners without too much difficulty. Will managed the project himself, along with the challenges that came with it; shortly after they broke ground in February 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine, sending material costs up by 30% in some instances.

Already making good use of their Fram Farmers membership, the farm business sources fertiliser, seed, ag chem, fuel and utilities through the cooperative, also marketing crops via the group and attending grain meetings.

An existing relationship with the Fram Farmers building materials team, developed through years of purchasing materials for farm buildings and repairs to poultry sheds, meant Will was aware there were savings to be made through the cooperative.

Various building materials, including sandstone, rock wool insulation, internal C24 timbers, decking and Breedon gravel, were sourced through Fram Farmers with



Photo © EADT



the support of building materials buyer Nick Millar.

“Nick was really helpful, providing recommendations on where to source aggregates and other materials,” says Will.

“We were focussed on sourcing sustainable materials and products where possible, like the thermal solar panels to provide hot water for the showers in the changing rooms and pods, so supplier recommendations were very useful.”

Overall, Will calculates that they made savings of between 5% and 15% on building materials purchased through the group, with the ease of monthly billing and paperwork on the Fram Farmers account reducing the administrative burden.

Alongside architects, contractors included NBC Design, Manage & Construct Ltd and The Suffolk Building Company, with the project taking a total of 15 months to complete.

OPEN FOR BUSINESS

Be Well Barn in Redlingfield, near Eye, officially opened on 29 May 2023. The countryside fitness and wellbeing centre, complete with cafés, balcony area and private-hire gym and sauna pods, houses a two-storey fitness studio. The cafés on both floors, run by The Suffolk Jungle Room, include terrace areas for visitors to enjoy a post workout coffee or snack.

The premises is also fully licenced, with Thursday evenings reserved for members,

and Friday evenings open to the public. Sharing boards are on offer overlooking a beetle bank and wild flower meadow, backing onto a recently harvested OSR field.

Fitness manager Christy Self has been involved in bringing the wellness and fitness class timetables to life, with something on offer for every age and ability, at a range of times to suite varying lifestyles. Classes include pilates, tai chi, earth dance, yoga, beyond birth conditioning, body blast, barn spin, step aerobics and barn strength, with membership and pay-as-go options both available.

The training spaces can also be used for events, and Will and Sarah have plans to host a number of health-related seminars. Membership is growing, as are casual pay-as-you-goers, and the private-hire fitness and spa pods are proving popular for those who want an exclusive escape to the tranquil Suffolk countryside.



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Brook Farm in Great Oakley is home to Citrus and Fig collections and the first commercial UK Olive groves. A host for tree fruit innovation trials and a fruit & veg farm for many years, the farm has collaborated with Will Sibley, experienced grafter, nurseryman and Master Fruiterer, sourcing unique and carefully chosen trees from across the UK and Europe. Lifelong relationships and partnerships working with the very best nurseries producing high quality, certified stock to high plant health standards. Varieties are bred for flavour and chosen to suit the UK climate.

Our business, Terrace Fruits, offers an extensive range of traditional fruit and nut trees, as well as Vines, Olives, Figs or Citrus. Trees can be supplied all year round as pot grown trees, or as bare root trees for winter planting. As growers ourselves, we are familiar with the challenges of establishing trees, whether you are looking for one or two, a small collection or an extensive orchard. In fact, we can provide a full turnkey solution if that's what you need.

Like many farms, we have always taken care of our natural environment and we're home to one of the first EWCO woodlands in the UK. The planting of this woodland introduced us to farm woodland planting and we also now offer a full service for interested landowners,

supplying and planting trees along with installing deer fencing and managing grant applications.

Our former vegetable cold stores and fogging systems are now full of trees in the winter and our site is PEACH/POD registered with APHA. We take tree health extremely seriously and take great care in holding and preparing trees for planting to ensure good establishment, whether a small hedging project or large woodland.

You might have read more recently about Biodiversity Net Gain; an opportunity for landowners to be paid to improve biodiversity to compensate for losses on development sites. What you may not know is that a traditional orchard can be eligible to create units for sale. So if you



were thinking about an orchard or nut grove, now is a good time because the BNG income would more than pay for the orchard! We have developed our own BNG sites and can advise on how to take advantage of this opportunity.

With our tree knowledge alongside our horticultural and agricultural experience, we can support you from drawing board to harvest.

For more information about woodland, hedging and BNG visit

www.naturebasedfarming.com

or for fruit & nut trees visit

www.terracefruits.com

We are here to help and advise so feel free to call us and speak to Pete or Will to find out more.

FRAM FARMERS PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

In addition to the core inputs purchasing activities, Fram Farmers also provides a wide range of professional services, with exclusive suppliers' terms, to ensure that members benefit from the best pricing as part of their membership.

FINANCE

Fram Farmers Finance helps farming businesses overcome the inevitable capital demands and spikes in cash-flow, also helping members avoid suppliers that may lock them into restrictive schemes.

Our members can improve their cash-flow position with:

- Input Loans: funds can be used for agricultural input purchases made through your Fram Farmers account, which are then itemised on your monthly statement.
- Asset Finance: in conjunction with Flexi-Funding, we partner with a FCA authorised credit broker and Hitcahi Capital Business Finance, providing finance for a wide variety of agricultural assets and agricultural machinery.

INSURANCE

Fram Farmers can provide specialist, affordable, insurance solutions tailored to your business. To ensure all our members receive the right level of cover, we conduct free on-site visits, giving you peace of mind.

We offer bespoke insurance protection and risk management advice tailored specifically to the agricultural sector:

- Farm combined, home and property owners
- Vehicles and machinery
- Directors and officers liability cover
- Engineering inspection
- Hail cover
- Livestock disease, including Bovine TB and Avian Influenza

GRANT FUNDING CONSULTANCY

Fram Farmers members have access to a team of expert grant advisors with extensive knowledge and experience of DEFRA development grants, making members aware of any relevant grants through regular Grant Bulletins.

The team can also carry out applications on behalf of members, and is on-hand to provide advice for members applying for grants themselves, also helping source equipment, machinery and building materials for projects linked to grant applications.

PLANNING

Fram Farmers has partnered with a number of planning consultants with a proven track record of working on agricultural projects, providing all of the services you would expect:

- Planning applications and appeals
- Land promotion
- Impact assessments
- Heritage and conservation
- Land surveys
- Highways and transport
- Flood risk, drainage, trees and landscaping
- Utilities and renewables development

CARBON FARMING/TRADING

By adopting a set of regenerative practices, we're able to turn soil into natural carbon sinks, pulling carbon from the atmosphere and storing it in the soils, but the transition to regenerative agriculture practices has its costs. Fram Farmers has partnered with a company that offers one of the few financial reward schemes in the world to incentivise farmers on their sustainable carbon farming journey.

Fram Farmers has held a number of 'Carbon Farming Days' for members across the country where members have heard from regenerative agriculture experts, and also from farmers who have already taken steps to improve the way they farm their land and are benefitting from the creation of carbon credits.

IT SUPPORT

As well as providing a wide range of mobile, fixed line and broadband services, Fram Farmers' principal telecommunications supplier can support members with IT services.

With technology constantly developing, more day-to-day agricultural practices rely on some sort of IT system, and any period of downtime can have a significant effect on the business' ability to function.

Services include:

- Managed IT Services, consultancy and cyber security
- Hardware, software and licence procurement
- Data and connectivity

R&D TAX CREDITS - NEW

A wide range of on-farm practices qualify for R&D Tax Credits, allowing businesses to reduce their corporate tax bill or receive a tax refund based on their R&D expenditure. Many businesses are focussing resources on agricultural activity for which funds could be claimed back, including:

Arable

- Developing novel management protocols for new varieties to improve yields and disease resistance
- Investigating innovative hydroponic, aeroponic or vertical growth systems
- Improving ground quality or reducing environmental impact
- Modification of fertilisers to improve the absorption of minerals and nutrients
- Improvements to harvesting methods and storage conditions
- Innovative use of technology to improve precision and accuracy

Livestock

- Improving animal health and welfare, reducing mortality
- Feed trials, including trials to delay maturation/increase the FCR (feed conversion ratio)
- Reducing antibiotic usage and investigating alternative ways to reduce the risk/rate of disease
- Selective breeding to improve genetic traits
- Improving sustainability and decreasing environmental impact
- Developing new management protocols for non-standard breeds
- Improving water quality
- Developing new feed formulations and feeding regimes to enhance milk production, fertility and health, or improve sustainability
- Decreasing environmental impact and improving sustainability

If you are interested in finding out more about any of the professional services on offer, please contact the business services team:
01728 727725 |
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DID YOU KNOW?

Fram Farmers has discount terms on most major car brands; the cooperative recently ordered a new Audi A4 Avant for a member, achieving a 27% discount through its agreement with Audi UK, saving just over £9000.

Of the 120 vehicles Fram Farmers has sourced in the past year on behalf of members, only six were cars! It is worth asking ... contact the General Farm Inputs (Machinery) team for more information: machinery@framfarmers.co.uk 01728 727719



TIAH INVITES FRAM MEMBERS TO TRY OUT NEW ONLINE LEARNING

The Institute for Agriculture and Horticulture (TIAH) has opened a new online service to help farmers and growers build and record their development and professionalism, and has reached out to Fram Farmers to share this with members.

TIAH is inviting those working in farming and growing to try out the test version of the service for free and is asking for feedback, so that the service can be improved and refined ahead of the launch

of TIAH membership early next year.

As well as signposting to training providers and highlighting careers, the online service also includes four essential skills modules that cover basic training:

- Health and Safety
- Biosecurity
- Animal health and welfare
- Coaching

The first three modules provide a sound induction to new starters on-farm, while the fourth module has been developed for

supervisors and those managing staff. Try the new service for free at TIAH.org or for further information contact Tess@tiah.org.



DON'T FORGET...

Fram Farmers has teamed up with the nationally recognised training and qualifications awarding body, Lantra to provide members with access to training courses and qualification assessments at exclusive membership rates.



Lantra has over 350 recognised training providers throughout the UK & Ireland, and can provide the details of both regional and national training sites where Lantra's HSE-approved training and qualifications for land-based industries can be achieved at Agri Training.

Courses included in the Lantra product suite include the safe use and application of pesticides, tractor driving, chainsaws, and health and safety on farms to name just a few.

Lantra has been able to achieve discounted rates for training courses when Fram members book directly through the following training providers:

- One Ash Training** – Cheshire/north west (able to deliver nationally)
- EasTec Training** – East Anglia/Suffolk (able to deliver nationally)
- Newlands Training** – Dorset/south west (able to deliver nationally)

Please quote your membership code when booking to ensure payment goes onto your Fram Farmers account.

For further information on access to training or to receive information of providers in other areas of the UK, please contact Lantra's Head of Industry Partnerships David Fisher: david.fisher@lantra.co.uk.

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