

TILLAGE

October 2021

Autumn planting

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While many growers availed of the good conditions in late September to get drilling started, most crops will be drilled in the coming weeks. Attention to detail is likely to pay more dividends to growers this year than previously, as the costs of practically all inputs are on the increase. Variety choice, seed rate and sowing conditions are always important, but as costs increase, they become even more so.

Variety choice

In winter barley, we are fortunate to have quite a lot of choice between two-row, six-row and six-row hybrid varieties. All have their own advantages and disadvantages. When deciding on a variety, yield is often the deciding factor, but straw strength and the disease resistance profile can often add hidden costs that can be more important than the yield rating. Cassia, which is still a popular variety due to its grain quality, has slipped in recent years in terms of both yield and

disease profile when compared to the six-row or the newer two-row varieties, such as KWS Tardis or Valerie. KWS Joyau offers barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV) tolerance for those who are worried about aphid damage; this can be quite significant in some areas.

In wheat, unfortunately, variety choice is much narrower in that Costello and Graham will make-up 66% of the total seed available. This is primarily due to the poor performance of many of the newer varieties in their ability to resist septoria infection. Dr Steven Kildea addressed this issue at the Teagasc National Crops Forum last month (<https://youtu.be/wQfwJJeOgHk?t=971>). Astronomer, which is one of the varieties Steven was concerned about, makes up 14% of the available seed and will need careful monitoring, while all other varieties will be very limited in their availability.

In oats, Isabel and Husky will be 98% of the seed available, with a very limited amount of Barra still

available for certain markets.

Seed rates

In all crops, thousand grain weights (TGW) will be different this year than in 2020; therefore, seed rates should be adjusted accordingly. Seed assemblers now print the TGW on all lots and bags of seed and this should be consulted when calculating the seed rate for your crops. Soil conditions, percentage establishment and time of year should also be taken into account. Be aware that six-row hybrid barleys are sown at lower rates (200-240 seeds/m²) compared to other barley varieties. **Table 1** shows the seed rates at different TGWs for both wheat and barley.



Check the TGW before you start drilling.

Table 1: Seed rate at different thousand grain weights for wheat and barley.

Planting date	October week 1		October week 2		October week 3		October week 4	
	Barley	Wheat	Barley	Wheat	Barley	Wheat	Barley	Wheat
Target plants m²	280	250	290	260	300	270	310	280
Sowing seeds m²	350	313	387	347	400	360	443	400
Percentage establishment	80%		75%		75%		70%	
TGW	Seed rate (kg/ha)							
45	158	141	174	156	180	163	199	181
46	161	144	178	159	184	166	204	184
47	165	147	182	163	188	169	208	188
48	168	150	186	166	192	173	213	192
49	172	153	189	170	196	176	217	196
50	175	156	193	173	200	180	221	200
51	179	159	197	177	204	184	226	204
52	182	163	201	180	208	187	230	208
53	186	166	205	184	212	191	235	212
54	189	169	209	187	216	194	239	216
55	193	172	213	191	220	198	244	220

To convert kg/ha to stone/ac – multiply kg/ha by 0.064.

Autumn weed control

More and more growers are opting to use pre-emergence herbicides for their autumn weed control strategies. Apart from being more effective against weeds such as cleavers, chickweed and grass weeds, they also help to make follow-up control of difficult to control weeds such as bromes, blackgrass, etc., easier as these weeds tend to be weaker following the pre-emergence application. Products such as pendimethalin (various), prosulfocarb (Defy/Roxy), flufenacet (Firebird/Navigate, etc.) give best results when applied early, especially where annual meadow grass is a problem, while chlorotoluron (Tower) can be used early post emergence. Add in diflufenican (Stride/Diflanil/Sempre, etc.) to improve the control of charlock, chickweed and



Many growers are opting for pre-emergence weed control.

speedwells. Firebird Met is new this year and will help to control groundsel, as well as many other broadleaf and grass weeds. Zypar will improve control of fumitory, poppy and volunteer beans. Many of the active ingredients will appear in mixes, so choose products that will control as many of your weeds as possible. While most mixes will control a range of broadleaved weeds, some problem weeds like groundsel, fumitory, etc., may need a spring 'tidy-up' application.

Oilseed rape

Seed sale figures suggest that there has been an increase in the area of oilseed rape planted this year, with much of it planted early and in ideal conditions. Diseases such as light leaf spot (LLS) and phoma leaf spot are likely to be more problematic this year than in 2020.

Phoma will be more visible on the leaf, whereas it will take time for the spores of LLS to become visible. Follow the threshold guidelines for the control of phoma (10% of plants affected).

This fungicide timing also needs to

be effective against both phoma and LLS. The choice of fungicide will often come down to whether the crop needs a growth regulator effect or not. Backward or thin crops will not need a growth regulator, so an application of a half-rate

prothioconazole (Proline) should be adequate. For early-sown crops where a regulator is probably needed, options include metconazole-based products (Juventus or Magnello), or tebuconazole-based products (Prosaro, Jade, Pontoon) – again at half rates.



Phoma leaf spot.

Fertiliser and grain price

There has been plenty of talk in recent weeks about the price of fertiliser, which has in some cases increased by over 50% from last spring. While there are still options to forward purchase, it is difficult to know if there is value to be had this year. That said, with bumper yields and prices in the harvest just passed, many farmers could be facing into a significant tax liability, so perhaps when this is factored in, it may well be worth looking at buying some fertiliser for 2022.

It may also be well worth your while looking at forward grain prices and seeing what is available. History tells us that generally after a year with very high grain prices, we often see prices drop dramatically. It is also worth noting that while some of the prices being quoted for harvest 2022 are lower than what was available a few months ago,



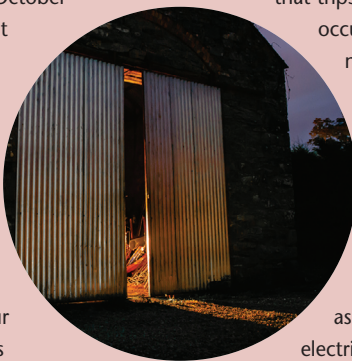
Some fertiliser prices have increased by 50%.

2021 was unusual in that prices kept rising coming up to harvest. When you consider what prices were available in early summer, some of what has been quoted recently doesn't look as bad.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Check lighting and electrical switches

The clocks go back on Sunday, October 31, which brings shorter daylight time. In advance of this check your farmyard lighting. Bulbs may need replacing and fluorescent covers may need cleaning to maximise light output. To prevent trips and falls, make sure that all walkways are well lit and free of trip hazards. Also, safely test your electrical residual current devices (RCDs) on switchboards. An RCD is an electrical safety trip switch



Consult ESB Networks Booklet: 'Farm Well Farm Safely'

that trips rapidly if an electrical leakage occurs. RCDs are mechanical and need to be test tripped regularly to ensure they are working. This is done by ensuring that there are no electrical devices operating and physically tripping the switch. For safety, ensure in particular that all handheld electrical devices, such as power washers and workshop electrical tools, are correctly wired and protected by a correctly operating RCD (30mA).

