

TILLAGE

September 2023

Crops Forum 2023

Edited by
Ciaran Collins,
Tillage Specialist

Date: Friday September 8, 2023
Time: 2.00pm-5.30pm
Venue: Killashee Hotel, Naas, Co. Kildare.
Eircode: W91 DC98

This year's Crops Forum will address pressing issues for the tillage industry. Topics for discussion will include environment constraints, land access, and income on tillage farms. The Crops Forum will also address the recent Marginal Abatement Cost Curve (MACC) 2023, agronomic advice for autumn 2023, and conclude with an in-depth discussion on measures to drive the tillage industry forward with a panel of industry experts. Farmer contributions to help drive the tillage industry forward are especially welcome.

This is a free event for everyone to attend. Topics for the sessions are as follows.

Session 1: The season ahead and where integrated pest management forms part of everyday decisions.

Session 2: Climate change goals – where does tillage farming fit in?

Session 3: Tillage forum – mapping out a path for the tillage industry for the next five years.

Speakers include representatives from industry stakeholders including the Irish Farmers' Association (IFA), Irish Grain Growers (IGG), Irish Farm Accounts Co-operative (IFAC), Farm Tractor & Machinery Trade Association (FTMTA), and Teagasc.

Planning for harvest 2024

The stark contrast between the relatively low-input high-output harvest of 2022 and the high-input reduced-output one in 2023 emphasises the vulnerability of tillage farmer income. Reducing risk is critical for 2024. Growing crops for high-value markets and those that suit the soil type on farm makes sense, but one of the key ways to reduce risk on tillage farms is to have a spread of crops. Make cropping decisions based on long-term yield averages rather than reacting to the previous harvest.

Ireland had a derogation from crop diversification (two/three crop rule) in 2023 but we can expect that it will be in force for 2024.

Crop rotation is a new element for tillage farmers. This measure requires that holdings with an arable area equal to or greater than 10ha must implement a crop rotation that requires at least two different crops to be sown at parcel level over a four-year cycle. 2023 is the first year of the reference period (2023-2026) for crop rotation requirements; therefore, there must be at least two different crops within an arable parcel over the period 2023-2026 inclusive. An alternative to crop rotation and crop diversification involving catch/cover crops exists, but best to talk to your advisor to see if this alternative is suitable for your farm.

Autumn planting

It is always tempting to avail of good weather in September to plant winter cereals but early planting carries risks. Planting winter wheat and barley early (in mid to late September – later further south) generally ensures good seedbeds and favourable temperatures during germination, leading to higher establishment rates. However, there is an increased threat from take-all, foliar diseases, lodging, grass weeds and aphids (barley yellow dwarf virus (BYDV)).

BYDV

Early sown crops are at the highest risk from BYDV (**Figure 1**) and yield reductions of 3.7t/ha have been recorded in Teagasc winter barley experiments. Risk increases when early sowing is combined with a

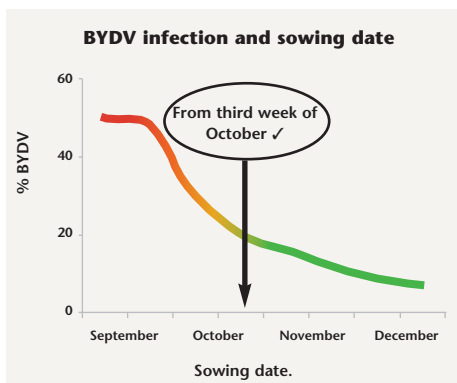


FIGURE 1: BYDV risk increases with early sowing – Tom Kennedy, Teagasc national tillage conference 2014.

coastal location and a mild autumn/winter, as the aphid migration period and overwintering risk both increase.

Grass weeds

Avoiding the key germination period is a key integrated pest management (IPM) technique. The key germination period for sterile brome and blackgrass is September and tapers off as sowing moves into October.

Winter barley should be avoided, as there are no reliable chemical control options.

Planting cereals in October significantly reduces the risk of BYDV over September planting.

Tillage Signpost event

Date: September 14, 2023

Time: 10.30am-12.30pm

Venue: Don Somers, Knockrathkyle, Glenbrien, Co. Wexford, Y21 NY16

Topics covered:

- farm profile and performance;
- soil health and water quality;

- organic manures and straw incorporation;
- cover crops;
- precision nutrient management planning; and,
- technologies for precision nutrient application.



Soil sampling

Under the new Nitrates Directive, all tillage farmers are required to take soil tests. In the absence of an up-to-date soil test result, phosphorus (P) is assumed to be index 4 (no P allowance). Now is the ideal time to identify fields on the farm that require fresh soil samples. Ensure soil samples are taken correctly and take one every 4ha or 5ha where soil type and cropping of lands were similar during the previous five years. This will provide the basis for lime, P, potassium (K) and magnesium (Mg) applications for the next four to five years.

Lime

Soil test results will provide recommended rates of lime to correct soil pH to the optimum pH 6.5 for a cereal crop rotation. Where crops such as oilseeds, beans or beet are part of the rotation, target pH 6.8. Aim to apply lime over the

coming weeks and months to correct soil pH for either winter or spring crops.

Lime is a soil conditioner and delivers many benefits at least cost, from soil pH correction to improving soil structure. For winter crops, where possible, apply lime to ploughed/pressed soils. Optimising soil pH will provide the right conditions for the establishment of winter cereals and ensure such nutrients as P and K are readily available for rapid establishment. Contact your local advisor today to take soil samples over the coming weeks and request an S4 soil test for tillage soils (pH, lime requirement (LR), P, K, Mg, manganese (Mn), copper (Cu) and zinc (Zn)).

Cereal crop P and K requirements

Winter cereals have a demand for P and K, which ensures that crops are well established in terms of rooting and tiller development entering

the winter period. Index 3 soils will have a good supply of P and K for crop establishment; therefore, omit P and K applications until spring. For index 1 or 2 soils apply nutrients as shown in **Table 1**. A fertiliser product such as 0-10-20 or 0-7-30 will supply the correct balance of P and K at this stage. Apply at sowing and incorporate into the seedbed. Complete fertiliser P

applications by October 31.

Where organic manures are available they should be considered as a source of P and K for winter cereals. For example farmyard manure (FYM)/cattle slurry/mushroom compost are all suitable organic manures as they are low in nitrogen (N) and will supply good levels of organic matter.

Table 1: Autumn P and K requirements for winter cereals (build-up).

| Soil Index | P (kg/ha) | K (kg/ha) | Suggest fertiliser product and rate (kg/ha) |
|------------|-----------|-----------|---|
| 1 | 20 | 30 | 200kg 0-10-20 |
| 2 | 10 | 15 | 100kg 0-10-20 |

HEALTH & SAFETY

Deadline for National Farm Safety Measure: September 29



If you need new power take-off (PTO) shaft covers or ATV helmets, don't miss out on funding from the Department of Agriculture, Food and the Marine (DAFM) to cover 60% of the eligible cost. The measure will cover up to two quad bike/ATV helmets and four PTO shaft covers. The grant aid is subject to a maximum eligible cost of €100 per PTO shaft cover and €150 per quad bike helmet. Only ATV/quad helmets and PTO covers that meet the scheme specifications are eligible. An expression of interest must be lodged online before purchase at agfood.ie. Applications can be made until September 29. To learn more contact your local Teagasc office.

Positive health and well-being

Positive health and well-being is vital for ongoing satisfaction with life. Mental Health Ireland (MHI) advocates the following five-step approach to help you feel good and function well: connect with the people around you; be active, take exercise; take notice, be aware of the world around you and what you are feeling; keep learning, do something new; and, give, volunteer or join a community group. If you find it difficult to maintain positive wellbeing, seek help. Further information can be found on the MHI website at: <https://www.mentalhealthireland.ie/>.