

- Watch out for OSR 'yellows' ● Seedbed the key for oilseed rape

# Prices prove steadier as harvest rolls on

**IT'S AMAZING** what a few dry days together can achieve and, for some, the grain and oilseed harvest is largely complete with just beans and tatties hanging about yet to do.

Yield and quality have been good in most areas and another good week would see most of the harvest done. Further north in Scotland, where there has been more rain, there is still some way to go yet.

Mostly, straw has been baled in good condition and there is a lot of it about and this has allowed fields to be cleared and get prepared for next year's crop. Livestock farmers should benefit from the bountiful supply of straw and it will be cheaper too.

And, while arable farmers are bemoaning low prices – some winter barley was making under £100 per tonne – this will also encourage beef finishers to stick with buying store cattle and maybe even more of them too.

The LIFFE feed wheat futures have traded in a very narrow band at around £121 and currently are down 35p on the week to £122.25, which is an improvement on the downward spiral of June and July prices. All

## THE GLEANER

LIFFE feed wheat futures were down last week and November, 2015, were down £2.45 to £135.55.

Prices have seemingly levelled off with reduced farmer selling due to the low wheat prices, which will not be helped by the UK wheat yields for this year at around 8.2-8.5 tonnes per ha, compared to 7.7 t/ha in 2013. This would produce a 16m tonnes wheat crop compared to 11.9m tonnes in 2013.

There are some wheat exports taking place out of the UK, but business has been slow to date due to the fact that France is producing a larger than usual tonnage of poor quality wheat at less money, making the UK uncompetitive.

Ukraine and Russia also have a larger than average proportion of their crops down-graded to feed and prices will not be helped by a large EU maize crop, which will be looking for a home as well.

The French maize crop has been rated 85% 'good to very good' which compares to 54% last year at this time and the US maize crop is rated 72% 'good to excellent'

compared to the five-year average of 56%. EU maize yields are forecast to be almost 12% up on last year and 11% over the previous 5-year average.

However one factor to take into account is that 15%, or 600,000 tonnes of wheat, are expected to be lost from two regions in the Ukraine due to the ongoing violence and Canada is projecting a drop of 26% in its wheat production, down to 27.7m tonnes – but that's still its third biggest crop in the last 10 years and could leave it as possibly the fourth biggest global wheat exporter.

With the Russian harvest approximately 50% complete, wheat yields have gone up from 2.93t/ha in 2013 to 3.5t/ha but it still intends to buy 5m tonnes of grain to re-build state reserves. Drought in China is forecast to reduce its maize crop by somewhere between 3-20m tonnes and it is difficult to get a more precise figure.

With the barley harvest more or less complete in England and getting well through in Scotland, reports continue to tell the same story of excellent

quality and few failures of malting barley making the grade. Rainfall in the North of Scotland, however, may have affected crops still to be harvested for yield and quality.

The malting market remains quiet with maltsters using up last year's carryover stocks and taking delivery of pre-harvest contracts. Once the remaining barley is cut in Scotland and the quality is known then maltsters will know the quantity of available barley suitable for malting.

There is some export trade for feed barley and the ex farm UK weekly price has risen by £1.40 to £100.60 compared to feed wheat which has dropped by £1 to £110.10.

Oilseed rape delivered Erith is up £2 on the week to £254 as strong demand for US soyabeans provided some short term support to prices. This saw Chicago prices up \$23 on the previous week.

In the US, soybean pod counts have shown to be 17% above the three-year average and growing in near ideal soil conditions.

This means US oilseed production could exceed the USDA recent estimate of 103m tonnes, which is 13m tonnes above last year's production.

European rapeseed imports are likely to drop from 3.8m tonnes to 2.3m tonnes year on year partly due to an improved revision in French and Czechoslovakian crop size, which will mean the continent will be more self sufficient in rapeseed.

The MATIF futures rose this week due to large oil request for biodiesel and, with nearby demand strong, there is little incentive for farmers to hold on to their rapeseed tonnages especially when the quality of the 2014 UK rapeseed crop is proving better in terms of oil and lower admix and average yields are above the previous 10-year average figures.

UK bean yields had been affected by high temperatures earlier in the summer but quality looks good so far, but more bruchid problems are expected than last year. Human consumption premiums are still holding up at around £20 per tonne over feed beans.

## Genetically engineered fruit flies could save crops

ALLOWING genetically engineered fruit flies to be released to the wild, could prove to be a cheap, effective and environmentally friendly way of pest control – according to scientists at the University of East Anglia and Oxford Insect Technologies (Oxitec).

Its research reveals how genetically engineered male flies could be used to save crops by making them semi-sterile and only able to breed male offspring.

The Mediterranean fruit fly is a serious agricultural pest which causes damage to crops. It is currently controlled by a combination of insecticides, baited traps, biological control and releasing sterilised insects to produce non-viable matings, known as the sterile insect technique (SIT).

Lead researcher, Dr Philip Leftwich, from UEA's school of biological sciences and Oxitec, said: "The Mediterranean fruit fly infests more than 300 types of cultivated and wild fruits, vegetables and nuts. It is a real pest to agriculture. Of all of the current techniques used to control these flies, SIT is considered the most environmentally friendly as it uses sterile males to