

Brighter prospect for barley growers

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THE GLEANER

HARVEST IS largely but a memory once again, but before plans for next year are finalised it is worth looking at the malting barley situation both here in the UK and around the world.

A USDA report last month indicated a brighter outlook for 2015/16 global barley output than had been forecast earlier in the season. From a predicted year-on-year decline, forecasts changed to a 4% increase, compared with 2014/15 due to better than expected results, particularly from Europe, Russia and Ukraine.

France and Germany are the largest contributors to EU28 barley output and harvest results for both countries have been favourable. Harvest pressure and good yields across the EU and Black Sea regions have put pressure on prices.

Canada has had cold and dry weather which has raised concerns about their yield potential, which looks like being down by 5% from last year and could be the lowest Canadian barley production year in almost 50 years.

The threat of EL Nino has not affected the Australian barley output prospects, as its barley production is now estimated 8% higher than last year.

Domestically, the UK winter barley harvest result this year estimates the average yield at 7.2-7.4 t/ha, which is 11-14% higher than the 10 year average of 6.5t/ha.

A downturn in global demand for beer has resulted in a lower consumption forecast for barley in 2015/16. In addition the economic situation in China has sparked uncertainty about demand for global barley as China is

a key export destination for malting barley.

While last year saw a decline in demand for barley from the UK malting and distilling sectors, it is expected that consumption will increase in 2015/16, contributing to an overall rise for EU malting and distilling demand.

Here in Scotland in 2015, a fall in area and difficult growing conditions point to the lowest Scottish spring barley crop since 2010. A lower spring barley area in Scotland is being put down to the three crop rule under the CAP but England's spring barley area has increased.

Scotland experienced wetter than average conditions this summer but the south-east of the country escaped the worst of the wet conditions. Apart from the summer, the month of May was particularly bad for Scotland in terms of high rainfall.

July was by far the problem month for Scotland in 2015, with many central and northern areas getting more than double the 1981-2010 average rainfall. In August, in northern parts, rainfall continued its trend from July and as a result reports of skinning were evident, again mostly in the north but some processors have altered the pass rate of skinned grains to allow more barley to make the grade.

Even with the poor weather and reduced quality tonnage UK barley stocks held by UK merchants, ports and co-ops were 47% higher in June, 2015, than in June, 2014, which means even with more rejected barley than at first expected it is likely that there is a large carry-over of spring malting barley.

If we turn to the Scottish wheat area, the year-on-year reduction is not as much as

spring barley as the bulk of the wheat crop is in the south-east which has not been exposed to the same extreme weather as spring barley in the north.

Turning back to 2014/15, export figures are now coming forward for last year's harvest crop. With full season wheat exports totalling 1.9m tonnes, this equated to 12% of production, the lowest for a nett exporting season in records going back to 1992/93.

During the season, wheat imports continued to flow into the UK, meaning that it took until January for the UK to become a cumulative nett exporter, despite the high

availability of wheat in the domestic market.

In contrast to wheat, the UK barley export campaign exceeded expectations, with 1.5m tonnes exported during 2014/15 – the highest volume in 15 years.

Maize imports totalled 1.9m tonnes in 2014/15 and was the second highest volume of imports after the previous 2013/14 record season.

At 316,000 tonnes, UK rapeseed exports equated to 13% of total production in 2014/15, unchanged from a year earlier and at 77,000 tonnes, 2014/15 represented the highest year for oats exports since 2008/09.

A cab with a view!



DUMFRIES AND Galloway Vintage club picked a great spot for their ploughing match at Chapelhill, Glencaple – it was ploughing with a view and untroubled by weather