

● A look at new 'greener' spraying kit for 2015

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Old crop dulls the market

THUS FAR in May we have had rainfall on seven out of 10 days of the month amounting to 36mm and more rain is forecast for the next few days.

Spring land work is now more or less complete and some good warm growing weather would do growing crops a lot of good. We seem to have had never ending winds this spring and cold air with it, which has not been pleasant when working outside.

We now have only eight weeks until the end of the old crop marketing season and the weight of large stocks is continuing to pull down grain prices.

Furthermore, with positive early forecasts for the 2015/16 wheat crop also providing downward price pressure, the question remains as to when, or even if the downward price trend could be overturned. Global markets have moved lower on the back of favourable weather for the growing crop in the Northern Hemisphere and lack of demand for old crop.

THE GLEANER

So the news is not good. July, 2015, old crop feed wheat futures fell again last week by £2.90 to £110.10 and November, 2015, new crop feed wheat futures fell by £1.10 to £119.05. However, November, 2016, futures were up 35p to £128.05.

Demand for old crop continues to fall and it now looks unlikely that the EU will hit its export tonnage this season. Wheat exports from the EU has hit 28m tonnes, compared to 25.2m tonnes last year, while maize imports have reached 8m tonnes, compared to 12.3m tonnes last season.

The US winter wheat crop is rated as 43% 'good to excellent', compared to 31% last year at this time but topsoil moisture levels continue to decline. Maize planting in the US is now 55% complete, compared to 28% last year and an average of 38%.

EU exports have not been

helped by the Russian agricultural ministry dropping its export tax from €35 per tonne down to a minimum €1 tariff and the actual amount of tax will be based on the prevailing market conditions from May 15. This will allow supplies of Russian grain to hit the old crop market and confirm to the market that there will be little restrictions for new crop.

The 2015 US winter wheat crop is estimated at 40.4m tonnes, compared to 37.5m tonnes in 2015 and US fund managers extended their record short positions in Chicago wheat futures to 14.5, tonnes, which is up from 13.2m tonnes last week.

These record short positions are caused by poor yield forecasts in Kansas due to recent rainfall that came too late to benefit many crops and is a reminder to the market that the 2015 crop has just started to grow. It is a long way

from harvest and weather can still influence prices greatly.

Our wheat market has ground to a halt, with few boats being filled and the carry over surplus continues to grow.

Sterling rallied significantly on the news of the Tories winning a majority in the UK election – but this just priced UK exports further out of the market.

Although UK wheat futures have fallen sharply in the past week, the rising euro has cushioned prices somewhat. Using the exchange rate at its April 22 peak of £1=€1.40 and, all else being equal, Paris wheat and maize would have closed approximately £4 lower than they did recently in sterling terms and currently £1 equates to €1.373.

Old crop barley prices have also fallen this past week as the export programme are at an end and, due to low wheat prices, barley is not

wanted for animal feed either. EU exports of barley for the season has hit 7.8m tonnes, compared to 5.3, tonnes last year at this time.

Old crop malting barley demand is almost finished, with most maltsters' intakes full until the new crop appears. Recent rain in the UK eased concerns of dry conditions affecting both yield and quality.

Oilseed rape futures were up £6 last week and provided a good opportunity for farmers to sell some stock but the stronger pound following the election result saw value drop again.

The GB weekly average potato price for free buy and contract trade increased by £1.98 to £137.49, which last year at this time was £158.31. The GB free buy price was up £6.33 to £98.95, which last year was £137.88.

More than 100,000 ha of potatoes have now been planted and is nearing completion – in the South of England light volumes have been lifted, with Lady Chrystl and Arrow reported with yields of 7.5-12.0t/ha.

Cleaner, greener spraying units

MANUFACTURERS are gearing up for a busy spraying year with some high potential crops out there needing to be protected through to harvest – but also, newcomers must be able to demonstrate cost savings to owners given the current low price of grain and oilseeds.

The clue to one such new bit of kit is in its name. The latest high-spec' 4400-litre capacity trailed sprayer from John Deere has that all-important 'i' designation – with that letter standing for 'intelligent'.

The R944i model which JD will be taking to the forthcoming Cereals event in June, is matched with its new M-series mid-specification equivalent the mid-range M944(i). These have the same basic features as the larger M and R Series sprayers which carry up to 6200 litres, but their smaller tank size makes them ideal for reducing the compaction issue which is becoming a major industry concern.

New versions have a low profile tank design and low centre of gravity and the established axle steering system reduces wheeling damage. Powerful, high-capacity twin piston diaphragm sprayer pumps supply liquid at 560 litres/min for fast automatic filling and spraying – an optional centrifugal pump can do 700 litres/min.

Steel spray booms range from 24 to 30m (double-folding) and 24 to 40m (triple-folding). These have a central pendulum for boom levelling, anti-yaw suspension system, vertical and horizontal boom breakaway protection and durable pivot points.

Intelligent solution add-ons include the BoomTrac automatic boom height control system, pressure

recirculation and AutoDilute. The SolutionCommand automatic solution management system with AutoDilute lets the operator fill, agitate, spray and multi-cycle rinse the sprayer, disposing of residues at the push of a button on the tractor's GreenStar display.

The new M944(i) and R944i offer a wider range of tyre options than most trailed sprayers of this capacity. The full range of R900 and M900 sprayers will replace the previous 800 trailed models, which will stop production later in 2015.

See the mighty RoGator in action

CHALLENGER'S mighty RoGator self-propelled sprayer range has been significantly improved in its biggest overhaul since it was first launched almost five years ago.

A better quality wiring harnesses is backed up by the use of many stainless steel assembly parts – bolts, nuts, hydraulic couplers – with additional protective treatment.

The latest sprayers also use the latest Bosch Roxroth wheel motors, for improved traction and also higher in-field driving speeds – up to 30km/h now possible. Helping keep everything stable, though, is a re-designed centre frame and the wheel legs are now slimmer to reduce crop contact.

Aimed at large-scale growers and contractors, there are three models in the range – the 175hp 635C with a 3500-litre tank capacity; the 645C which is rated at 221hp, with either a 3500 or 4800-litre capacity; and the range topper, the 243hp 655C, which has three

tank options of 3500, 4800 or 6000-litre capacity.

AGCO says the RoGator is capable of spraying 600 litres/ha at 10km/h with a 36m boom and agitation active (even higher without the active). It claims to be the only manufacturer in the sector to offer a five-year, in-house warranty.

Horsch meets emission standards

HORSCH has updated its self-propelled sprayer with features to keep it ahead of the competition and meet strict new emissions standards.

A 285hp/210 KW Mercedes engine now powers the Leeb PT 280 sprayer, that's a 15hp power increase over the PT 270, which it replaces.

Motivation comes from a new 7.7 litre six-cylinder turbo engine which uses Mercedes' latest AdBlue technology to meet the Tier 4 requirements. This means the radiator is now mounted horizontally and the radiator fan is hydraulically driven and not dependent on engine speed.

■ Also meeting Tier 4 levels is Knight Farm Machinery and its 1800 series self-propelled sprayers, which also now come with better spec' cabs, with CAT4 filtrations offered as an option. A combination of exhaust gas recirculation, a diesel particulate filter and AdBlue technology is used to hit the targets.

Knight says it has also grouped all controls and valves together above a drip tray, making routine checking and maintenance quicker and easier. The 1800 series has spray tanks from 3500-4000 litres and booms up to 36m wide.



THE NEW trailed sprayer ranges from John Deere now have a smaller tank option – this is the R944i



BIG MACHINE for big acres – the Challenger RoGator