

BBRO Advisory Bulletin No 2 - W/C 21st March 2016

Drilling progress

The still, grey weather of the past few weeks hasn't really helped soils to dry but pleasingly soil temperatures are up around the 9 degree mark in many places and drilling is well underway with good seedbeds reported on the lighter soils, while some stronger land has benefited from being moved to aid drying. Some fields remain too wet and while the temptation can be to make a seedbed with a power harrow, this can lead to clods and smearing beneath the tines if soil is too moist.

Where seedbeds are cloddy or seed coverage is not so good, fields will benefit from rolling to gain a better seed to soil contact and to protect seeds from mouse feeding which can soon decimate plant stands.

With some catchy weather forecast, it is also going to be important to get the first nitrogen application on as soon after drilling as possible with the balance planned at full emergence.

Weed control

Pre-cultivation glyphosate applications are good for removing larger over-wintered weeds which might otherwise survive cultivations alone.

Pre-emergence herbicides are a useful option to consider, particularly where spray capacity is tight and/or soils conditions mean fields could be difficult to travel on. Be aware that crop vigour can be adversely affected where there is poor soil tilth.

More details of herbicide options can be found in the BBRO Reference Book or online at www.uksugarbeet.co.uk.

Trials update

We started drilling our trials this week and we're hoping the forecast rain for Easter weekend doesn't materialise so that we can press on while conditions are good. Once again we have a full programme of field trials and demonstrations and we'll bring you more details of these as the season progresses.

Crop hygiene

We mentioned this in the last bulletin, but it warrants repeating here. With the mild winter which will have aided the survival of aphids (e.g the first carrot-willow aphid has been caught in a suction trap so some species are already taking to the air) and diseases on groundkeepers and cleaner loader spoil sites, it is crucial that any remaining beet material is sprayed off or buried to remove any source of disease or virus infection which would otherwise infect the new season crop.

Neonicotinoid update

Last week, the French National Assembly moved closer to banning the use of neonicotinoid insecticides when it narrowly passed a proposal for an outright ban on neonicotinoids as part of a draft biodiversity bill passing through its legislative processes. This bill is still a draft and is due to go back to the French Senate for further review before the Assembly takes a final vote on the matter, probably in Summer.

As things stand, this ban would come into effect in France in September 2018 and the French Farm's Minister, Stéphane Le Foll has said that France will call on the EU's executive to ensure these restrictions apply to the whole of the EU.

It is an interesting development in the ongoing debate over the continued use of neonicotinoids and we will continue to keep you posted as the debate continues.

***Caution:** this information is based on results of experiments and experience but cannot constitute a recommendation.*

BASIS Points

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