

BYC newsletter – May 2019

Hello BYC participants,

After what feels like a slow start to the season for many, recent rain and warm weather has led to rapid growth with some growers even finding their crops meeting between the rows. The milder weather earlier this year allowed timely drilling. The crops in this year's BYC have an average drilling date of the 26th March, which is the same day as 2017's BYC, but much earlier than last year's average drilling date of the 18th April. Yet, with only limited soil moisture, many of these crops had struggled to get going. With the recent weather, the more advanced BYC crops have now reached the 8-10 leaf stage, whilst the majority are at the 6-leaf stage. This rapid growth is particularly welcome considering the increased resilience to aphids seen in sugar beet at the 12-leaf stage and beyond.



Sugar beet from one of the BYC fields



The same sugar beet two weeks' later after some rain and warmth



Crops are termed as established at the 6-leaf stage, and established plant population is key in determining yield, so this is the time to undertake population counts. Count out the number of plants in 20 m of a row for 50 cm row spacing or 22 m of a row for 45 cm row spacing. Multiply the number of plants by 1,000 to give the plant population in '000/ha. 100,000 plants/ha is the target.

Across agricultural systems worldwide, soil management is being increasingly recognised as vital for resilient crops. In previous BYCs, we have suggested a potential link between the use of organic manures and higher yields. This year, nearly two thirds of the fields have used an organic manure. Using cover crops is a related soil-improvement tool and an increasing number of sugar beet growers are using these. In this year's BYC, we have over a third of participants using a cover crop. At BBRO, we are investigating the value of these cover crops for sugar beet, and we're always looking to hear about your experiences so that we can provide growers with greater information.

Two of the most important factors influencing yield is your plant population and how quickly your crop canopy develops. Germains should have visited your BYC field to take images of the canopy and provide accurate plant counts.

As crop canopies are expanding quickly and will have grown since Germains' visits, we'd like you to send in pictures of your canopies this week. For those yet to reply, we'd also like to know the approximate date of crop emergence as this is used in our crop model to predict your yield potential.

With the ban on neonicotinoid seed treatments, the risk of crop damage from pests and diseases has increased. BBRO are working hard to provide support to growers, particularly with regards to helping to limit the incidence of viruses spread by aphids. We are monitoring aphid numbers through our yellow water pan network (go on our website to see: <https://bbro.co.uk/on-farm/aphid-survey-map/>).

We are interested in knowing what our BYC growers are doing to limit the risks of aphid-borne viruses:

- **Are you checking for aphids in your crops?**
- **Have you reached threshold yet?** (Remember, up to the 12-leaf stage the threshold for spraying is one green wingless aphid per four plants. Up to the 16-leaf stage it is one green wingless aphid per plant.)
- **What sprays are you using?**

Knowing this will help us to improve our advice to growers.

You will have been contacted by Alison at fieldmargin, who is offering you the opportunity to use the fieldmargin app to record progress with your field. The app also allows us to make available to you the data that we are collecting for your field and provides notifications to let you know when to collect data. We'd like you to sign up, but it isn't a mandatory requirement. You can return the data that we request via the fieldmargin app or by email.

We're looking forward to hearing back from you.

Kind regards,

The BYC Team