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PRESS NEWS

DISEASE AND PEST CONTROL COSTS RISE

Crop Producers spent on average over £25/ha more on sprays last year than in 2003 as climate, disease threat and growing fungicide resistance conspired against crops throughout the UK.

But despite this pressure, the top UK arable producers spent nearly 30% less on spray costs than the bottom quarter growers and achieved yields over 1.3 tonnes/ha higher, the latest figures from ProCam's 4cast predictive agronomy system show.

"Despite the bad year, the top 25% of producers saved nearly £6/tonne on spray costs compared with the bottom 25% with the top producers spending £14.98/tonne of production on sprays and the bottom quartile spending £20.79/tonne, ProCam technical director Dr. David Ellerton explains.

"This compares with top producers spending £12.78/tonne on sprays last year and the bottom quartile spending £18.89/tonne."

Overall, top producers spent £140.87/ha on sprays last year compared with the bottom quarter spending £168.29/ha.

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The main area of increase was in herbicides as growers struggled to control Brome due to the favourable wet and warm growing conditions encountered last year. Fungicide usage stayed roughly the same with the top producers using 15% less than the average despite achieving significantly higher yields.

“The top producers are more efficient because they pay more attention to timing, use more appropriate products and don’t try and stretch spray intervals. They use more agronomic advice and have a greater awareness of the requirements of each variety.”

4cast figures show that 90% of the top producers adopt a close spray strategy with intervals of less than 30 days. They also spray earlier with an appropriate reduction in costs and benefit to yield – up to 20% in the case of some fungicides.

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Notes to Editors

This information was presented for the first time at the National ProCam Spring Conference at Tattersalls, Newmarket on Wednesday 9th February 2005.

Digital pictures from the conference are available from liz@proterra.co.uk

4cast is ProCam’s predictive agronomy system, utilising field results taken from one million acres of arable land, walked by ProCam’s agronomists throughout the UK.