

4cast Makes Every Acre Count

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With every acre critical to overall farm margin on Peter Langdin’s 260 acre arable enterprise, ProCam 4-cast play an essential role in helping him identify the most profitable crops to grow and maintaining the most cost-effective use of agronomic inputs.

Furthermore, with its situation in one of the driest areas of the country and in a sheltered basin at sea level, agronomic vigilance is essential as the farm is one of the earliest indicators of disease problems in the area. Soil types ranging from sand to clay also add to the crop management challenge.

Yet over the last 5 years the farm has consistently yielded between 3.5 – 4.0 tonnes/acre of Wheat and 3.0/tonnes/ha for OSR with 4cast margin data showing it to be in the top 25% for production efficiency in the Fieldcare South area.

“It’s an unusual environment here and it demands careful consideration of varieties and the spray programme we use,” explains Peter Langdin. “It’s a degree or two warmer than the surrounding area as we’re low down and have lots of shelter. If there’s a problem coming, we’ll get it first.”

2005 cropping is made up of 100 acres of Winter Wheat, 70 acres of OSR, 35 acres of barley and 10 acres of Linseed. ProCam’s 4 cast play a vital role on the farm - shaping the cropping plan for maximum margins and getting the highest value out of sprays.

“We’ve used Procam through Fieldcare South for the last seven years and agronomist David Philips has worked closely with us to identify which crops are producing the best returns both nationally and locally and build up

Barley is grown in the rotation to get the rape established well and the farm will probably look at growing more linseed as last year this produced a higher margin than the OSR, agronomist David Philip says.

“It’s a question of juggling the soil types that we have here with the climate and what is going to produce the highest margins,” he says. “We’ve even looked at growing Elephant Grass as fuel for the several power stations close by but so far we’ve stuck with more traditional crops.

“Agronomy wise, crops respond in a way that would suggest we’re much further south. Early in the season, we’ll get indications of Mildew or Septoria far earlier than anywhere else and then later on Yellow Rust will be earlier than the neighboring areas.

“Blackgrass and Ryegrass are the biggest weed problems so we’re going in pre-emergence for the Ryegrass and post-emergence for the Blackgrass but apart from that it’s a question of walking the crops every 10 days or so and responding to specific needs when they arise. Things develop very quickly here, so you have to be on your toes.”

David remains concerned about Orange Blossom Midge as 4cast data for last year shows the worst hit crops lost up to 10% of yield when left untreated.

“We put out traps last year and had to spray but it’s not something you do lightly, the impact on yield can really hit margins so you have to bear that in mind.”

“We’re 100% focused on producing 4 tonnes/ha of wheat and maintaining margins as high as possible so we’re constantly using 4-cast to evaluate the cost to benefit ratio of treatments.”

For Peter, the powerful combination of local field-based knowledge combined with the resources of the ProCam Group and the 4-cast system, means he is getting the best of both worlds when it comes to crop management.

“CAP reform and increasing pressure on margins from falling prices, means there is absolutely no room to make errors now,” he explains. “On a small farm this situation is absolutely critical.

“We are constantly looking at ways of maximising returns from our crops and focusing on what might be the most profitable options for the future. ProCam’s support in helping us plan for the future and improve efficiency of production on a day by day basis is an essential component of the management of this farm.”



Peter Langdin (left) with Agronomist David Philips.

our cropping plan from there.

“David’s made us focus on maximizing our acreage of first wheat and we try to put as much OSR in as the 4cast data consistently shows these are the most reliable generators of high margins.”