

£50,000 Margin Increase

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Michael Stolley (left) with Agronomist Neil Moxon.

Gross margins at Wilstrop Grange Farm in Yorkshire are on track to increase by £50,000 since the adoption of ProCam technical advice supported by the 4cast agronomy system.

From a figure of £113,000 in 2001 to last year's gross margin of £141,000, budgeted figures for this year are £163,000 as a result of the more cost-effective use of inputs and optimisation of yields provided by the system.

“It's been a real eye opener,” says Michael Stolley who has run the 500 acre arable unit at Kirk Hammerton near York for over 20 years. The farm has been one of many that have helped develop the 4cast system prior to its national launch at Cereals 2004.

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“In terms of benchmarking, it's also showed us that some of the best production units are based in the North with margins to rival the best of them!”

The impact of 4cast has been felt across many areas including seed rates, fertiliser regimes and cropping plans as well as insecticide, fungicide and herbicide policies. The farm's new rotational plan is a good example of the system in action.

“We've sat down with our ProCam agronomist Neil Moxon, and been able to look at individual crop profitability over the

last 10 years and this prompted us to ask serious questions about beans in the rotation. We were then able to analyse our own costs and margins and as a result have now dropped beans from the rotation.

“Cropping for this year is now 240 acres of Winter Wheat and 250 acres of OSR and we will use a simple 1:1 rotation in the future because that is what 4cast shows is the most consistently profitable combination.”

The system also facilitates Michael's use of variable rate fertiliser application through soil testing and mapping which can then be used to apply the most economic levels of P + K across the farm.

“In this day and age, the quality of technical advice you can access is the difference between making money and going under. ProCam 4cast is now an essential part of our management.”

A key feature of the 4 cast system is that it can work out production costs down to pennies and predict the effects of management decisions on margins with surprising accuracy says ProCam agronomist Neil Moxon.

“Michael and I can work out costs across all management areas and then compare these with the best producers in the UK to further fine-tune the decisions we make. Over the last two years, the predictions of outcome have been within 5% of the actuals we achieve.”

Michael's farm has actually staged several farm meetings to spread the word about cost management and other key issues to local arable producers.

At the heart of the 4cast system is the collation of information from arable units all over the country, the processing of this to draw out the best management options and then the communication of this to all ProCam users.

“We've organised a lot of meetings and covered a lot of subjects including cost management stewardship schemes and varietal choice. The next meeting in autumn will feature a national review of harvest and a look at modulation – we're expecting about 50 - 60 local farmers.