Key principles of spring barley management this season

This year the growing season for spring barley has been greatly reduced, with many crops only recently drilled and so when established these crops will rattle through their growth stages. A recent BASF event with experts from both the UK and Ireland gave growers insight into making informed agronomic decisions during this tough growing season.

Barley is a delicate crop which, because it is sink limited, benefits from detailed management from the outset. As the end of April approaches seeding rates become more important, as the ability of the crop to tiller is reduced. David Leahy Business Development Manager , BASF said, “Growers drilling now should consider increasing their seed rates, aiming for 1000 shoots/m2. Barley always responds very well to early crop nutrition and some malting barley growers are placing the full compliment of nitrogen in the seedbed with the compound fertiliser, avoiding the risks involved with top dressed nitrogen should dry conditions materialise.”

Dr Steven Kildea, Research Officer, Teagasc said, “Growers need to understand their variety as programmes should largely be tailored to what risk is built into the variety or what potential there is from a resistance perspective, whilst also taking into account the sowing date and place in the rotation. This year, some spring barley crops may be going into an ‘unplanned ‘slot in the rotation because of weather conditions and barley after barley will be a higher risk.

It is crucial that growers understand the disease risks, what is driving disease in the crop and where this disease will have an impact.Some will be late season and some will need to be thought about immediately. An integrated approach to disease control is key.

In Ireland we apply a two spray fungicide programme for spring barley, the first application controls primary diseases which risk compromising yield, Rhynchosporium, Net blotch and Rusts. Even when chasing a specific disease, say Net blotch, it isn’t good practice to use a product that only targets net blotch because that leaves us very exposed from a Ramularia or Rhynchosporium perspective.

The T2 spray Is where we target Ramularia, there may well be other diseases to target too, related to the resistance of the variety. Its about trying to mix and match to cover the risks that are there. Work carried out by the EuroBarley group, a Consortium of independent researchers showed Revysol was consistently the most effective active ingredient on Ramularia. If it is wet early in the season, through stem extension and into flowering, then certainly expect ramularia, which our trials have shown, can result in 2.2 t/ha yield loss. Low ramularia pressure years tend to be drier, however, as yet we don’t have the full information on this disease.”

David added, “Applying Revystar XE, (Revysol + Xemium) delivers robust disease control. Xemium brings the highest level of efficacy on Rhynchosporium and is also proven to improve straw quality and reduce brackling, often an issue with high yielding crops.”

Lodging in spring barley has become more common in recent years, driven mainly by the increased yield and the moderate to low lodging resistance score of 7 or less, which is found in two thirds of UK Recommended List varieties.

Dr Pete Berry, Head of Crop Physiology ADAS, said, “On balance, the later sowing of spring barley brings a lower risk of lodging this year. The rain has reduced soil residual nitrogen levels and some crops are going to be established in less than perfect seed beds, reducing the plant population, both of which push the lodging risk down. Crops that are established now, however, will be going into warmer soils, perhaps with increased seed rates and often a greater proportion of nitrogen applied to the seedbed, increasing lodging risk, especially if they have a low lodging resistance score.Growers need to monitor crops closely, it will be very challenging to split applications of mixed actives, the most effective way to use PGRs, as the spring barley crop will race through the growth stages.”

David said,“BASF have collaborated with Teagasc, ADAS, SRUC and NIAB to create a new Barley Agronomy Guide which will act as a reference tool for this, and future seasons. We have covered everything, from variety, establishment, nutrition, disease management and lodging.”

Download the guide at [Barley Crop Management (basf.co.uk)](https://www.agricentre.basf.co.uk/en/Crop-Solutions/Cereals/Barley/Winter-Barley/Barley-crop-management.html)

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711 words

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