

Last 2016 Crop Walk With Farm Agronomist

20 December 2016 by Mzuri

The colder weather has put the crops to bed, slowing their growth right down. Most of the chemistry has now been applied with the exception of the follow-on dose of Fox which will go on in January so I can enjoy a leisurely stroll round the fields without the daunting feeling that there's something I'd forgotten to do. A few days ago, we were paid the last visit of the year by our agronomist David who joined me to give the crops one final check over.

David is pleased with the winter wheat looking so green and healthy, with no sign of disease. The wide rows drilled with the Mzuri Pro-Til have filled out nicely. Last year, we grew JB Diego and Reflection varieties which presented us with a small bother of yellow rust. Switching to Evolution and Costello with better disease resistance has clearly had the desired effect, leaving the crop nice and clean. David calls it "using Nature's genetics" to our advantage. I call it a good saving on my agrochemical bill.

The rape too is looking really good. It's had all of its chemistry for this year with just the second dose of Fox and oil mix to follow in January. The first application has worked very well to kill charlock and volunteer beans and the follow-on treatment is bound to weed out any survivors that managed to dodge it the first-time round.

The cover crop is starting to break down and my agronomist is keen to start planning for 2017. Shall we follow it with some beans or more linseed? With healthy hedge rows and extra wide headlands, we more than tick the greening requirement and David seems to be as keen on linseed as I am. It's a different species to rape and beans and goes in quite late so we get better blackgrass control pre-drilling. What's more, there's good chemistry available for the "in crop" stages – we use Centurion Max on our farm which I couldn't fault at all when it comes to grass weedsuppression.

David is quick to praise our soil structure: he says it has a nice, mulchy feel and a good crumbliness to it which he likes to refer to as "the Mzuri difference". It feels less sticky to walk on and drains better. We achieve this through reducing soil disturbance and leaving chopped straw on the surface, which David is a huge advocate of, too. It's nothing revolutionary as far as I'm concerned – Mother Nature has done it for millions of years, allowing the worms to incorporate the goodness back into the soil. With his agronomist hat on, David is keen to remind that ploughing the straw in creates anaerobic conditions and starves the soil of nitrogen. "Incorporating" the residue naturally with the help of soil organisms, on the other hand, costs hardly anything with strip tillage, and it leaves our soil in a better condition than the plough. It's a change of mindset,

but once you get past the initial shock of a different appearance, you've got to love it!

Source: Mzuri Limited