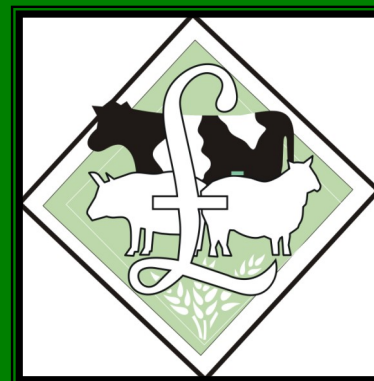


August 2011

The FARM CONSULTANCY Group

## FCG Business Briefing

Issue 22



Welcome to our eighth issue of 2011. This month we have a massive 19 quality, informative and challenging tips from our eighteen nationwide consultants. Hopefully some of these will give you the confidence to change an aspect of your business to help achieve your business goals. As usual contact the contributor for more detail or your local office. Also check out our updated website at [www.fcgagric.com](http://www.fcgagric.com). There are further news articles and tips here, updated regularly. **For feedback or comments contact Gerard Finnan at [gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com](mailto:gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com).**

### Opportunity For A Soil MOT? - Ian Browne (Stafford)

This may prove to be a drier and early harvest for many people. As such this presents a perfect opportunity to do some effective sub soiling, to help improve drainage and break up soil pans. On certain soils, it may also present a chance to do some mole draining and will allow jetting of some drains to help remove silt. These tasks will help to rectify some of the impeded drainage that many farms have experienced over the last few winters.



Obviously the impact will not be noticed now, but it could have a significant effect on the land next spring and when turn out for early grazing can be achieved. As part of this operation, cleaning ditches out and cutting vegetation on the banks will help improve flows. At the same time do take care relating to your cross compliance and any ELS scheme rules that may apply. **Contact Ian at [ianbrowne@fcgagric.com](mailto:ianbrowne@fcgagric.com) for more information.**

### Free Barns in Return for Solar PV - Ed Gosling (Andover)



I have recently come across a company called 'Solar Barn' which offers farmers a free barn with a solar integrated roof (i.e. the roof is made up entirely out of solar panels). In return, the company will claim the Feed in Tariff payments on the energy produced by the roof. One of these barns could be perfect for farmers looking for the following:

- A roof for a slurry store, silage clamp or feed yard to help satisfy NVZ slurry storage requirements.
- A storage barn for straw bales, machinery or fertiliser.
- Solar Barn are looking for sites that are flat and level, have a south east to south west orientation, have no shadow from the south and have a 3 phase grid connection within 150m.

The barns are specifically designed to hold a 50 kWh solar PV installation. They therefore require a minimum area of 336m<sup>2</sup>. As well as the 'free barn' option, businesses can also buy a Solar Barn themselves and claim the FITs and save on their energy costs. This is significantly cheaper than building a similar barn and retrofitting solar panels.

**For more information contact Ed at [edgosling@fcgagric.com](mailto:edgosling@fcgagric.com).**

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### P and K Fertiliser Recommendations for Grazed Grass - Huw Thomas (Carmarthen)

RB209 fertiliser recommendations for grazed grass are N 250Kg/Ha; P 20Kg/Ha; K 0Kg/Ha. RB209 clearly states that any additional P and K applications above the recommendations should only be applied following soil analysis. Some clients operating an intensive dairy grazing system, utilising extended grazing periods, have argued that there is an increased requirement for P and K. For more detail click on this link:

<http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805-PandKFertiliserRecommendationsforGrazedGrass.htm>

The Farm Consultancy Group

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### Leadership & Management Advisory Service - Gerard Finnan (Sherborne)

Match funding of up to £1000 per qualifying business is available to owner managers of expanding businesses. To provide strategic advice to develop leadership and management skills for their businesses, through one to one coaching, peer to peer learning and training courses. This grant is available to farming businesses with one or more employees.

Contact Business Link at <http://www.businesslink.gov.uk/bdotg/action/detailitemId=1087491620&type=ONEOFFPAGE> or Gerard Finnan at [gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com](mailto:gerardfinnan@fcgagric.com) or your local FCG office for more details on how FCG can help develop your business with the assistance of some Government funding.



### Dual Use of Land, Check Your Agreements - William Waterfield (Andover)



The RPA is getting serious about the 1100 farmers whom they classify as Dual Use, and delays to SPS payments are a real possibility. This has come about because the EU Commission is concerned that in England, two separate legal bodies can claim for two separate schemes, on the same field parcel (e.g. SPS and ELS). The EU require that agreements (written or unwritten) make it clear what actually occurs "on the ground" to enable the criteria for both schemes to be met.

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The RPA is writing to all farmers who they believe are claiming Single Payments on land, whilst another party is claiming environmental payments on the same parcel of land. There will almost certainly be a greater risk of delayed 2011 SPS payments for those that the RPA believe do not have clear agreements with the other party. If you are one of these Dual Use farmers and need help in replying to the letter, please **contact William at [wwaterfield@fcgagric.com](mailto:wwaterfield@fcgagric.com)** or your FCG office to discuss the issues, and how to respond to the RPA's letter.

### Planning Permission - Charles Holt (Lincoln)

How much land do you own? I have just visited (mid July) a client for whom we helped obtain permission for a temporary dwelling on 3 owned acres (plus rented land) back in 2005. He got the temporary permission extended, and now wants to obtain permanent permission for a house. The planners have indicated they are likely to accept his case.

He now rents an extra 200 acres on a variety of lets, FBTs and licences, nearly all short term and informal. But essentially, he has turned a 3 acre plot of bare land into a farmstead over about 12 years. Despite recessions and banking crises, he has turned £10,000 into around £350,000 in that time. Now that is what you call adding value.

Contact Charles at [charlesholt@fcgagric.com](mailto:charlesholt@fcgagric.com) if you have a planning issue or proposal.



### Autumn Grassland Management - James Shenton (Sherborne)

August and early September is the time to turn surplus grass into silage. Mid September onwards is too late, as the quality of grass will be suspect e.g. rust, too leafy to make bales, too much moisture etc. If you have too much grass, which has had some fertiliser and looks healthy, why not storage feed it back to dry cows and youngstock later in autumn to extend the grazing season? This will mean housing later, reduced straw bills and less labour.



In November, a total grass cover of 3500kgs of dry matter/ha will keep 25 spring born calves for 2 weeks on 1 ha of grassland with no concentrates! Contract reared at a cost of £1/head/day would cost £350 over the same period. What will return you £350/ha for three months in the autumn with 30 minutes labour per day and some fencing materials?

Contact James at [jamesshenton@fcgagric.com](mailto:jamesshenton@fcgagric.com) for more information.



**Dairy Cake Quality - Tom Tolputt (Looe)**

During the previous years with high commodity prices and volatile markets, there has been a great deal of price pressure on the ingredients used in compound feeds. This has led to some compound feeds being formulated using lower priced and (by their very nature) lower quality ingredients. Virtually every compound feed I come across on the farm is quoted on the back as being "18% Protein and 13ME feeds" but whether the cow utilises this is another matter entirely. As a rough rule of thumb, the more feeds that you buy to put in a mixer wagon that come before the molasses in the mix, the better.



Some compound feed companies are offering winter prices on "fixed formulation" whereby a farmer can agree to buy a certain tonnage and then decide which ration suits the herd at a later date, the ingredient list is guaranteed for that feed period. Where a farm has plenty of forage reserves, it may be more cost effective to use less of a higher quality and higher protein formulation. But please discuss this with your FCG consultant before making any radical decisions or contact Tom at [tomtolputt@fcgagric.com](mailto:tomtolputt@fcgagric.com).

**Agricultural Wages Board - Rates for 2011/12 - James More (Louth)**

The new Agricultural Wages Order will take effect from the 1 October 2011. This may be the last Order to be set by the AWB as its abolition has been proposed. For this to happen an Act of Parliament is required. Provisions for this have been included in the "Public Bodies Act". At this stage, it is anticipated that the new regulations will take effect from the 1 October 2012, meaning there will be no new AWO for 2012. From this point farm worker wages will be down to individual farmers to agree; subject to National Minimum Wage Legislation.

The new farm worker rates from the 1 October 2011 are: -

	Worker Type	£/week	£/hour	£/hr Overtime	Increase on 2010
Grade 1	Initial	237.90	6.10	9.15	2.5%
Grade 2	Standard	264.03	6.77	10.16	2.9%
Grade 3	Lead	290.55	7.45	11.18	2.9%
Grade 4	Craft	311.61	7.99	11.99	2.9%
Grade 5	Supervisory	329.94	8.46	12.69	2.9%
Grade 6	Management	356.46	9.14	13.71	2.9%

Contact James at [jamesmore@fcgagric.com](mailto:jamesmore@fcgagric.com) or your local FCG office for more information.

**How Good Are Your People Skills? - Max Sealy (Chippenham)**

When appraising issues in farm businesses, very often the answers do not lie in sophisticated investment or gadgets to solve problems, but in simple basic stockmanship and attention to detail. As businesses grow and become more complicated, the ability of people to work on their own initiative as well as to work as part of a team becomes an increasingly important factor. Take some time out to sit down with those people you work with, whether it is employed staff or family members and assess how you work together. Find out what the various strengths and weaknesses of each person in the team are, and how these could be developed.

For example, what training is required to enable someone in the team to take on a role that is perhaps not being done well at the moment? Very often this will help them gain a deeper understanding of the importance of different aspects of the business, and be able to improve areas of critical performance. In doing so you should also try to get

staff to comment positively or negatively on how you are as an employer, whether you make clear instructions and the things they like and don't like about working for you. This can often be a refreshing process, whether done internally or with the use of an external consultant to facilitate. It is important that if you do this, that you also make some notes and draw up an action plan which is acted on and reviewed regularly.



Contact Max at [maxsealy@fcgagric.com](mailto:maxsealy@fcgagric.com) for more information or your local FCG office.



## Late Season Silage Cut Options - Max Sealy (Chippenham)

Often second, third and fourth cut silages can be very expensive to make. On our own farm we took a third cut in the last week of July. Due to very good grass growth on the grazing block, we were able to take 50 acres for silage. The silaging options would have been as follows:-

- Conventional precision chopped forage harvester £25-£30 per acre for a light cut with us doing our own clamp work. Total cost £1250-£1500.
- Bales at a yield of 4 tonnes to the acre, this would have been approximately 8 bales to the acre at £6 per bale amounting to £48 an acre. Total cost £2400.
- The chosen option was to use a forage wagon, which local contract farmers, A4 Farmers (FCG clients and discussion group members) provided at a cost of £110 per hour. We did 50 acres in at 5.5 hours at a total cost £605, with us doing the clampwork.

This is clearly a cost effective option and the long chopped forage should prove conducive to good rumen health. Of course, the decision to clamp rather than bale does depend on having clamp space. Don't forget that with Environment Agency approval, field silage clamps are still an option and represent a considerable saving in plastic and net wrap over baled silage. **For more information contact Max at [maxsealy@fcgagric.com](mailto:maxsealy@fcgagric.com).**

## Web Links to other articles include....

### Dry Spring, Cash Flow Drying Up? – Ian Browne (Stafford)

Reality is now hitting. Do you know what the outcome of your harvest will ....

Read more at <http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805DrySpringCashFlowDryingUp.htm>

### Incomers Still Looking to Invest in UK Dairying – Charles Holt (Lincoln)

Despite all the doom and gloom that we so often hear surrounding the future....

Read more at <http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805-IncomersStillLookingtoInvestinUKDairying.htm>

### Fertiliser Security – James More (Louth)

Ammonium Nitrate deliveries on to farm are tending to be earlier than normal this year....

Read more at <http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805-FertiliserSecurity.htm>

### Plan Ahead to Re-seed Grassland this Autumn – Gerard Finnan (Sherborne)

The ground may be hard and the small amounts of rainfall are making minimal ....

Read more at <http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805-PlanAheadtoReseedGrasslandthisAutumn.htm>

### To Buffer or Not to Buffer? – James Shenton (Sherborne)

Some of you will now be conducting post-mortems on your first cut ....

Read more at <http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805-ToBufferorNottoBuffer2.htm>

### Stale Seed Bed or Cover Crop – William Waterfield (Andover)

Organic arable farmers are used to having to create a stale seed bed after harvest...

Read more at <http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805-StaleSeedBedorCoverCrop.htm>

### New Single Page Passport – Phil Cooper (Gloucester)

The cattle passport changed on the 1<sup>st</sup> August to a single-page passport....

Read more at <http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805-NewSinglePagePassport.htm>

### Don't forget the Sulphur! - Huw Thomas (Carmarthen)

How important do you think mid season sulphur is?

Read more at <http://www.fcgagric.com/news/20110805-DontforgettheSulphur.htm>

## The Farm Consultancy Group

Distributed throughout England & Wales, FCG exists to help rural businesses prosper. Each of our ten offices can offer a variety of Farm Consultancy services, some general and some very specific. Whichever office you approach, you will find an enthusiastic and professional response to your enquiry. To visit our website please click on the link below.

[www.fcgagric.com](http://www.fcgagric.com)

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