

Take your pick

Latest list reveals improved ME levels and starch yields

We showcase some of the new maize varieties launched just in time for the 2008 growing season. Read on and see if any could suit conditions on your unit – in terms of growing, harvesting, and, of course, feeding.

NIAB has recently published its 2008 forage maize descriptive list and this year sees a number of outstanding new performers that are increasing the yield potential of the crop.

Varieties like NK Bull and Expert are driving forward the overall yield potential of forage maize crops with the average yields of the best varieties close to 19t/ha. Varieties like Beethoven, ES Regain, Revolver and ES Picker are also showing clear yield improvements within their maturity class.

The result of these improvements is not just sheer bulk yield but excellent ME and starch yield per hectare with a number of varieties passing 200,000MJ/ha in energy yields and topping 6t/ha in starch yield. These levels of performance in the UK were unheard of five years ago.

The complete list forms part of NIAB's Livestock crops pocketbook, which costs £18, and can be ordered from the NIAB website at www.niab.com/shop/publications.

Best bet for success

Maize growers who still need to make decisions on what varieties to grow this year should be focusing on early maturing varieties as these are more likely to reach a successfully mature crop than late ones, particularly if the growing season is similar to last year's, says Advanta Seeds' Tim Richmond.

"The weather conditions last spring and summer left many crops short of bulk and with immature cobs at harvest. To stack the odds in favour of having high yields of a mature crop, with starch-rich cobs, growers should be looking at early maturing varieties," he says.

New onto the NIAB 2008 list this year are early maturing varieties: Acclaim, Beethoven and Beacon."

Acclaim is one of the earliest maturing varieties available with a maturity class 9 at less favourable sites and 10 at favourable sites. It also offers good yields of dry matter and starch and is ideal for growers in marginal areas.

Beethoven is a maturity class 7 and has the highest dry matter yield of all first choice varieties – 10% higher than the controls at less favourable sites and 7% above at favourable sites. Beethoven is also one of the highest starch yielders making it ideal for the production of quality silage.

Beacon is another high yielding new variety which ranks a maturity class 8 at favourable sites yielding 4% above the controls, and at less favourable sites ranks a MC7, with a DM yield 6% above controls.

Mr Richmond adds: "For growers confident that their site and location offer very favourable conditions for growing maize, another new variety is Expert which is a maturity class 6 on the favourable sites list, with DM yield 8% above the control."

High yielding varieties

Two high yielding varieties from the French breeder Caussade Semences have been added to the British Seed Houses maize range for 2008.

Huski CS features in the latest NIAB Fitcon data in the Early Less Favourable category, recording a yield of 106% of the average of the control varieties and is classified 7 for maturity. Huski CS has also performed well in its first year of NIAB/MGA grain maize trials, producing

a grain yield (adjusted to 15% moisture content) of 8.3t/ha, which was 106% of the average of the control varieties.

Gladi CS is listed in the Early Favourable category in the 2008 Fitcon data as a maturity class 5 variety with a yield of 109% of the average of control varieties. Gladi CS was also monitored in 2007 in the Kingshay trials, in which it recorded a dry matter yield index of 129% across all mainstream sites against an average of 110% of 12 other comparable varieties. This outstanding yield contributed significantly to an estimated crop value of £1,612/hectare, significantly above the £1,467 average of the other 12 varieties.

Rachael Porter

Beethoven has shown clear yield improvements within its maturity class

