

1974

Prices have remained high this year and yields of wheat have been very good. Barley yields, due largely to the poor performance of Proctor and Berac, have been below average and for this reason we shall not be growing any Proctor next year. This marks the end of a 21 year period during which Proctor was the mainstay of this and many other East Anglian farms. We have also decided to cut down on Berac which is being outclassed by some of the newer varieties. Instead we shall concentrate on Otter, Mazurka and Mink with the two new varieties being Maris Trojan and Aramir, a high yielding feed barley. As far as the wheat is concerned we shall be growing Maris Huntsman and the two new semi-dwarf varieties, Maris Hobbit and Maris Fundin.

Yields this year were:

Proctor 27 cwt. Berac 28.5 cwt. Freeman 45cwt Mink 39cwt

Otter 32 cwt. Mazurka 33 cwt Huntsman 55cwt

SUGAR BEET

The one black spot in the farm's performance. A dry spring caused poor germination of the plant and no germination of the weeds (hence the failure of the sprays). A very severe attack of virus yellows held back growth and, ~-as if this were not enough, we have had the wettest autumn on record. It is estimated that the yield will average less than 8 tons per acre compared to our normal of over 11 tons.

MUSTARD

Prices were reasonably good at £120 per cwt but yields were disappointing at under 8 cwt. per acre. Next year the price looks like being worse because of a surplus in the world so we shall not be growing so much.

HERBAGE SEED

Good prices (£23 per cwt) and some heroic work on the combines in difficult conditions resulted in a successful crop. The yield of clean dry seed was 6 cwt. per acre and we managed to avoid the drying problems we have had in previous years. Prices next year will be down and so we shall have to hope for increased yields to make up the difference

CROP DRIER

After all the uncertainties due to fuel costs rocketing by almost 200%, we can claim that the first year of operation was success. Not only did we manage to produce around 700 tons in 1000 hours, but the fodder shortage has meant that the price has been higher than anticipated. But next year it will probably fall to a more realistic (at least for the livestock farmers in the west) level of £50 per ton. We are aiming at 1000 tons in 1500 hours.

MAIZE

The wet autumn has meant that this crop cannot be counted as a success this year.

HAY AND SILAGE

A year in which hay costs 50% more than barley will never come again. Thus we were lucky to have lost only 25 acres of hay to the weather and to have stacked the rest of the crop properly. The silage in the tower seems to be excellent but that in the clamp was severely damaged by the wet weather over the Whitsun weekend. There is no doubt that in the future we shall have to take silage making more seriously. However, with an outside clamp it is impossible to eliminate the weather completely.

LIVESTOCK

The dairy can be proud of the fact that our mastitis problem seems to be under control for the first time in so many years, which is no small achievement. Calf rearing continues to be very satisfactory although there have been some problems with first calvings. For this reason an Angus bull has been bought which should produce easier calves. Milk yields still have room for improvement. One bright spot is the grassland management of the paddocks which has resulted in efficient use of available grazing even in a dry spring like this year.

The beef unit continues to expand rapidly and was fortunate to avoid selling animals during the period of very low prices this year. We shall, however, have to sell a lot of cattle next spring when the price will be, hopefully, higher.

MACHINERY

The following new equipment was purchased this year:- 1 Claas Apollo Mobile Crop Drier, 2 Taarup Forage Harvesters, 1 Colman forage box, 1 Fyson elevator, 1 Bentall rolling mill, 1 Parmiter post driver, 1 John Deere 6 furrow plough, 1 Massey Ferguson 5 furrow plough, 1 Massey Ferguson 1200 tractor, 1 Ford 8600 tractor, 1 Ford 3000 tractor and 2 Ford 5000 tractors due later this year.

WEATHER

We have broken three records so far this year. May was the driest on record and September and November were the wettest. The first five months saw 5 inches of rain and the last five months saw 17.5 inches. Up to the end of November we have had just over 25 inches this year compared with our normal for a year of just under 20 inches.

THE FUTURE

After two good years the outlook is not very encouraging unless corn prices continue to rise rapidly in step with other costs, and this does not seem likely. To give some idea of the problem, it now costs £25 per acre for sugar beet

fertiliser excluding the nitrogen. A new Ford 5000 costs £3,500. Thus we have to assume that next year will not be a comfortable one. However, for this reason we have been investing considerable sums to ensure that the farm is both well-equipped and has good buildings for the years ahead. Next year we shall be moving the Duxford and Foxton grainstores to Thriplow and will be erecting a large shed which will house the dried grass and most of the machinery. But there are many other needed improvements which can only be brought about if the farm continues to prosper.