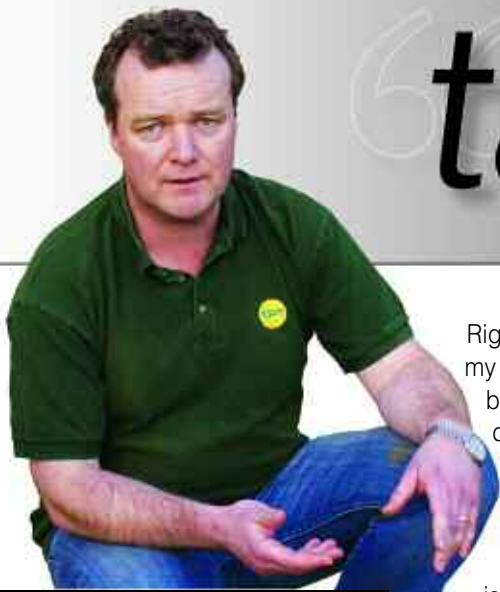


talkingtilth

a word from the editor



Is the decision too big?

We've agreed on a trial separation — 12 months, and we'll see how we feel. I'm putting on a show of being very calm and considered about it — objective even.

But I feel like it's a betrayal. After everything I've done, all the misguided faith I've placed and all the investment I've made — the expression 'let down' wouldn't begin to describe the aching emptiness.

I am, of course, talking about the oilseed rape harvest. It's not a heap in the barn — it's a trickle. It's an excuse for the crop I once called the best performer on the farm. Now I can't even bear to crunch the figures because it'll be just too depressing.

So big decisions need to be made, and this is when they arise — everything hinges on harvest, and your hopes for it. The wider the results swing from these expectations, the bigger the decisions.

Right now, I'm considering my rotation, and in my book, arable decisions don't get much bigger. I'm honestly not sure it's wise to shake at the very foundation and risk a collapse. Or is it only by doing so that I identify the weaknesses in my system and build a stronger future?

What I want is for someone to tell me what to do — how to deliver an unshakable 5t/ha yield, or the stunning break-crop alternative. I won't get that, but if I keep an open mind and search for information, what I will get are suggestions, snippets of experience and advice, some of which will just make perfect sense.

With that in mind, press on through this month's issue of *CPM*. There are no ready solutions in our coverage of blackgrass (see p10 and p14), but we explore how populations build, and how cropping may address it. The two articles on stewardship (p18 and 22) won't tell you what to do, but give an interesting update on how the industry has progressed with the issue.

In the third of our series on arable resilience we home in on soil and rotations (p24), there's analysis of what it means now rapeseed crushers are testing loads on intake for erucic acid levels (p30), and we've drawn the thoughts of a

group of #clubhectare growers on harvest so far and prospects for their wheat crop (p36).

Drills, or more specifically, their coulters, form the focus in the Machinery section (p42), with an On Farm Opinion from a Kent grower on his Cayena (p54). We also visit a Wilts grower who's moved to ultra-shallow cultivations in a bid to bridle blackgrass (p59).

The Roots section has highlights of a recent SPot farm event (p76), and perhaps we do have news of a ground-breaking wonder crop in Features (p64). Tech Talk unravels the health benefits of balanced nutrition (p68) and this month's On-farm innovator is Tom Sewell, for whom no-till is a step towards regenerative agriculture (p72).

I reckon you'll get to Last Word (p83), and if you're like me, you probably won't have found the silver bullet that will wipe blackgrass from your fields, or pour profits back into poor-performing crops. But I'm beginning to think a rotational change is not such a big decision after all — I can see I've plenty of options and a trial separation may be just what I need to help me consider them.

Tom Allen-Stevens has a 170ha arable farm in Oxon, and if this page is draped over your left thigh, please don't forget to wash your hands once you're done.
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Beyond the page

It's a job to know just where this particular copy of *CPM* has ended up — is it on the breakfast table, in the farm office or in the tractor cab to fill in time while you wait for the combine to unload? Or is it in the downstairs loo, with this page draped over your left thigh?

Well perhaps it's not even a paper copy at all. You can now get *CPM* on your PC, tablet and even smartphone — we've relaunched the website and we're loading all the articles from this issue, as well as much of the past content, on to the site. There's no subscription, just free and easy access to the best read specialist arable journal — never more than a click or swipe away from your fingertips.

What's more, each month there'll be an exclusive article that won't even see a paper page — this month, we've a special report on club root and how it may be on the rise in UK crops. For this and more, go to www.cpm-magazine.co.uk and sign up to the monthly e-newsletter. And rest assured that if you do, we won't fill your inbox with unsolicited PR puff and promotion posing as important news. It'll be once a month, it'll be direct access to arable analysis, crop highlights and interesting technical information, and it'll be worth reading.

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