



“ We have some of the top researchers, scientists and farmers coming together. ”

## A sustainable agenda

With a jam-packed schedule planned over the two days, CPM takes a look at some key themes of the seminar programme ahead of this year's Cereals Event.

By Charlotte Cunningham

Rarely a day goes by when topics like climate change, sustainable agriculture and agricultural policy aren't brought up in conversation.

And exploring these themes in detail — along with many others — is the Cereals Event seminar programme.

Instead of dashing manically between theatres to catch the next speaker, this year the event is ensuring that expert knowledge is even more accessible by condensing the traditional four theatres into two to deliver a bumper programme.

Seminars will be split between the Cereals AHDB Theatre and the New Era Theatre.

In the AHDB theatre, day one will be based on the theme 'tomorrow's solutions for today's challenges', while day two will focus on soil

health — including a session with Defra's Janet Hughes to discuss environmental policy.

Over in the New Era Theatre, markets diversification and innovation will be the topic of conversation.

With these topics in mind and taking into consideration the many factors involved in sustainable agriculture, this year's Cereals Event will also be putting on a special selection of seminars to explore how farmers can strengthen all the different pillars of sustainability, as well as promoting industry collaboration, positive mental health and open communication.

### Sustainable business

From financial and mental strength to healthy soils and environment, running a sustainable farm business draws together many different elements, all of which will be discussed in the Sustainable Solutions seminars, in association with the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs. "We have some of the top researchers, scientists and farmers coming together to discuss hot topics like regenerative farming, climate change and business resilience," says Allie McEntyre, event director.

Collaborative farming could be one answer, with a session on 31 June bringing together three businesses that are working in different ways to combine their strengths. "Collaborative

farming brings many benefits to farming businesses; we all know the saying that two minds are better than one," says Holly Beckett, Focused Farmers, who is chairing the session.

"Collaborative farming can come in many forms and it's important that all parties are singing from the same hymn sheet and are clear about the aims, objectives and overall vision of what they are trying to achieve together.

"When that is clear, people coming together to achieve their goals increases ideas, motivation, ▶



A number of Sustainable Solutions seminars are being held at Cereals 2021, in association with the National Federation of Young Farmers' Clubs



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## The line-up

- Below, CPM has picked-out some of the most thought-provoking seminars from across the two days. The full seminar programme can be found online.  
All details subject to change - correct at the time of going to print.

<b>A Climate of Change</b>	30 June 10:00-10:50	Cereals AHDB Theatre	This session will explore how farming businesses prevent and manage the impacts of climate change – as well as creating resilient and sustainable landscapes for food and wildlife.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Minette Batters, NFU</li> <li>Claire Bend, Agrii;</li> <li>Lincs grower, Thomas Gent</li> </ul>
<b>Monitor Farm Debate: Farming towards net zero</b>	30 June 12:00-12:50	Cereals AHDB Theatre	The AHDB Monitor Farm debate will this year tackle the route to achieving net-zero by 2040, just nine years away.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Harry Henderson, AHDB</li> </ul>
<b>Synergistic solutions</b>	30 June 15:00-15:50	Cereals AHDB Theatre	A mixed farming system offers additional benefits and income streams – and for many businesses it provides an overall net benefit that surpasses the sum of the two parts. This session explores the value that agroforestry, livestock and bioenergy can bring to arable businesses.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Helen Chessire, Woodland Trust</li> <li>Gareth Williams, Caplor Energy</li> <li>George Hosier, Wexcombe Farm, Wilts</li> </ul>
<b>Insight on Agricultural Policy and Environmental Schemes</b>	1 July 10:00-10:50	Cereals AHDB Theatre	This session will explore the details surrounding new legislation and environmental schemes across the UK.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Paul Temple, AHDB</li> <li>Janet Hughes, Defra</li> <li>Sarah Baker, AHDB</li> <li>Louis Fell, farmer and consultant</li> </ul>
<b>AgriTech Centre Innovations</b>	30 June 10:15-11:15	New Era Theatre	This session brings together the three AgriTech Centres serving the arable sector. CHAP, Agrimetrix and AgriEPI provide an update on some of the new technologies, services and advice emerging from their research and partnerships.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Dr Shamal Mohammed, AGRI-EPI Centre</li> <li>Alex McCormack, CHAP</li> <li>Anna Woodley, Agrimetrix</li> </ul>
<b>New Incomes Streams</b>	30 June 11:30-13:00	New Era Theatre	Farming businesses are responding to new consumer demands and turning their resources and commodity crops into value-added enterprises in order to spread risks and build greater financial resilience and sustainability. This session explores different diversification avenues.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Sebastian Graff-Baker, Andersons Midland</li> <li>David and Kathryn Cross, Barnards Farm</li> <li>Kim Walton, Trek Campers</li> <li>Oscar Harding, Duchess Farms</li> </ul>
<b>A Farm-aceutical Future</b>	30 June 15:15-16:15a	New Era Theatre	Farming is a human health solution, not only through nutrition but also in direct medical benefits. This session will look at how researchers are tailoring plant metabolism to deliver healthier oils in oilseed rape, while lavender, mint and hemp are just some of the potential new crops delivering natural health and pharmaceutical answers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Johnathan Napier, Rothamstead Research</li> <li>Edward Burman, Hemp Wholefoods</li> </ul>
<b>The Plant Protein Potential</b>	1 July 14:00-15:00	New Era Theatre	There's a strong pull for the UK to grow more protein plants. They could play a big role in delivering better soil health, less fertiliser usage and fewer pesticides - as well as satisfy a growing consumer demand for plant protein and reduce reliance on imported soya. Research, market insights and practical experience are at the heart of this session on the value of legumes, which currently occupy only 4% of the UK's cropping.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Roger Vickers, PGRO,</li> <li>James Maguire, KWS</li> <li>Sanu Arora, John Innes Centre,</li> <li>Richard Wainwright, North Yorks farmer</li> </ul>

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► productivity and resources and at a minimum, doubles the driving force required to achieve more than one can alone.”

Climate change is an increasing challenge for arable producers, with extreme weather resulting in either too much or too little water, and one seminar on 1 July will examine how best to manage this.

### Drainage investment

Nuffield scholar, Rob Burtonshaw, will explain the productivity and environmental benefits of investing in drainage, helping to reduce run off and increase soil resilience. This not only leads to greater crop productivity, it mitigates risks of soils and pesticides entering watercourses. “Drainage is a long-term investment, I would expect a scheme to still be performing at least 20 years after installation, and on the right soil a great deal longer than that.”

It can also bring benefits to the bottom line, he adds. “Income is improved by increased yield and quality; there is also better crop uptake of soil mineral nitrogen which reduces inputs.” But maintaining drainage is important. “Cleaning ditches and clearing outfalls is a simple and cheap way of improving the efficiency of the drainage system.”

Working towards net zero is undoubtedly a pillar of sustainability and something which young farmers have embraced — hear from those making a difference in the climate change challenge session at 4pm on 1 July.



*Rob Burtonshaw will explain the productivity and environmental benefits of investing in drainage.*

Last year the National Federation of Young Farmers’ Clubs, NFU and Championing the Farmed Environment (CFE) — supported by Defra — launched a competition for young farmers to record a short video sharing their ideas and actions for achieving net zero by 2040.

Winner of the over 18s category was Elliot Cole, a mixed farmer from Devon. He uses litter from his 120,000 chickens in the farm’s biogas plant to generate electricity and woodchip from sustainable local forests to heat the sheds.

“In return we get natural fertiliser to grow the barley we feed the bulls; this has cut our artificial fertiliser use by 99% which has shown many benefits for soil health, as more carbon can be kept in the soil and less nitrous oxide released.” ■



*Rob Burtonshaw will discuss how cleaning ditches and clearing outfalls is a simple and cheap way of improving the efficiency of the drainage system.*

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