



# ‘We don’t need another tax thrust upon us’



## POINT OF VIEW

**A**s farmers, we can sometimes have short-term memories and forget why something was instigated or came about in the first place. For the Voluntary Initiative (VI), the programme was set up in 2001 with the aim of avoiding a pesticide tax through promoting responsible use of plant protection products.

This is important – anti-pesticide organisations continue to campaign whereas this government’s approach on taxing agriculture has come under heavy criticism. So, it’s timely to remember why we should be promoting best practice.

I make no apologies for stating the VI – and the reason why it’s here – sometimes feels forgotten about within industry. Yet we all agree, we don’t need another tax thrust upon us.

However, I believe it speaks volumes of the VI and the organisations behind

it that they recently appointed myself, a farmer, to lead the group. I’m not from a corporate background – I’m someone who gets their hands dirty on a daily basis, in fact, spraying is one of my preferred jobs on the farm.

I’m also acutely aware that the world is run by people who turn up. Simply put, we have to turn up and support the VI and its mission rather than look to everyone else to sort our problems.

So the VI has been successful to date in holding off a pesticide tax, but we can’t be complacent. You only have to look at the upcoming fertiliser tax for 2027 – something which isn’t being talked about much due to the inheritance tax distraction. Other taxes could be proposed, so those of us leading the industry have to be aware of what’s happening in the wider world and politics.

Most growers are doing a great job and IPM is firmly embedded into their psyche whether they realise or not. But I see IPM as a means of

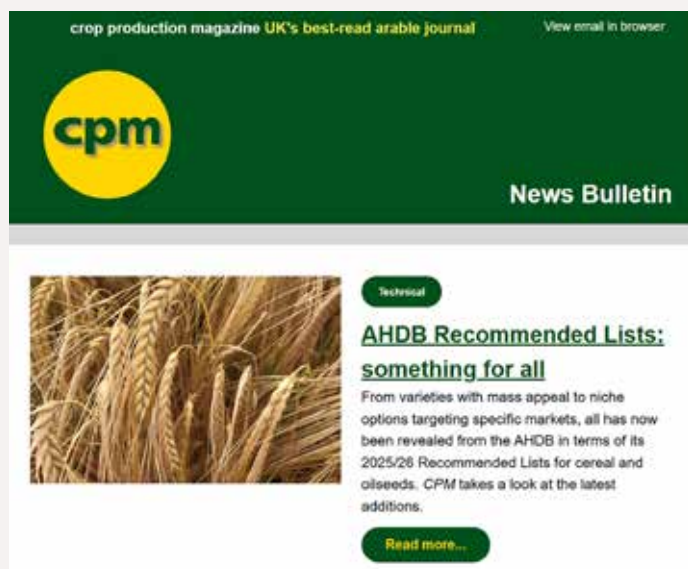
defending margins through best practice – protecting the bottom line of a farm business while enhancing the environment.

And although we’re all doing a great job, there’s always scope to try just a little more. IPM plans are coming to the fore and being recognised by government; they’re not just a box-ticking exercise.

They’re a means of recording and proactively managing what you’re doing and being recognised for that hard work. Spending time to produce a valuable IPM management tool and to follow and promote best practice in the responsible use of pesticides, seems a small price to pay to avoid the risk of another tax.

### By David Bell

*A mixed farmer from East Fife, David is the recently appointed chair of the Voluntary Initiative (VI) as well as being an AHDB Cereals & Oilseeds Sector Council member.*



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