

August mechanical weeding blog

Due to the wet weather during August, the crop seems to have taken a long time to ripen off fully for harvest. The mechanical weeding trial area has firstly been cut out with the standard farm combine and then the plots have been marked into 40 metre strips. The long plots for harvest were deemed necessary in order to try and account for some of the underlying soil variability. This has been exacerbated by an outdoor pig breeder unit which rotationally visits this field every four years.



Figure 1. An aerial photograph of Roundabouts field taken in 2012.

The pigs were on the above site once again in 2014/15 followed by wheat in harvest 2016. The second wheat in 2016/17 was used for this mechanical weeding trial.

The pigs are kept on a radial system within field. The track ways are kept in the same position whenever the pigs are on this site to avoid further compaction. The green areas indicate high leaf concentration and are often found where the arcs were positioned due to the residual fertility. The 40m length harvested was planned to account for the within field variability.



Figure 2. The farm combine setting up for the plot combine.

The recent wet weather has resulted in another flush of weeds, leaving a green base in the canopy. From a positive viewpoint, this can help protect the soil and prevents nitrate leaching as the actively growing canopy enables the capture of available nutrients. From a negative perspective, this makes it harder for the crop to fully dry out for harvest and can result in some weed seeds in the grain sample.



Figure 3. Grain sample from harvest.

The plot combine finally harvested the trial on 1st September. Yields can now be assessed and further grain quality tests conducted.



Figure 4. The 2 metre plot combine gives a yield output and samples can be taken in the cab.