

News release

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Trials show flying start for OSR with micro fertiliser

Targeted applications of microgranular fertiliser, placed with the seed when sowing oilseed rape, are showing excellent results in the first UK farm trials.

Farmers from Leicestershire to Somerset are trialling the microgranular fertiliser Umoplast Super ZN on OSR sown at different dates and in a variety of soil types. Results over all the sites show significant benefits in terms of increased plant size and weight and especially in root development.

Umoplast Super ZN is based on an ammonium N:P ratio of 1:5, analysis 11N:50P:0K plus 1 zinc. Fine, uniform granules can be used effectively at low rates and are formulated for application with the seed, providing an optimum early supply of nutrients without the risk of phototoxic effects.

The product has proved popular for use with other crops, including maize, but in the UK it had not been possible to apply it accurately with OSR seed. That problem was resolved with Techneat's Microcast unit, which utilises an electronic rate control system originally developed for the company's Terracast rape seeders.

On all three of the sites sown in August/September, the roots and leaves of treated plants were significantly larger and heavier when sampled at growth stage 7-9 than on conventionally fertilised plots, with tap root length increasing dramatically in some fields.

This advantage continued into the Spring, with samples showing approximately double the growth rate in both root and leaf, compared with conventionally fertilised controls.

“Increased growth, compared with the control plots, has been recorded on all soil types and for all varieties. The additional growth in the autumn varied from 30% to

over 100%, measured by weight on washed, random samples. Visually the plants looked stronger and even farmers that are not actually taking part in the trials say they can see a real difference. Coming out of the winter and before stem extension, root growth was over 70% greater in all trial areas and leaf growth was over 80% greater than in untreated areas” states James Ward of Umostart producer Sipcam.

Varieties used in the trials include Vision, Valdo, Krypton, Oracle, Castille, Cabernet and Eiffel.

Case studies

The tiny fertiliser pellets are normally applied with the seed behind a subsoiler. At Manor Farm, Doddington in the Cambridgeshire fens, the Mair family have adapted a Cousins V-Form straight leg subsoiler with a Guttler roll to take an Opico Variocast seeder and the Techneat fertiliser unit. Fixed tines have been added to create a ‘bow wave’ in stubble ahead of the legs and a spring tine harrow is fitted behind the seed outlets.

Around 60 ha of OSR is normally grown at Manor Farm and this year 30 ha of the hybrid Excalibur was sown on 30 August using the new system. There was little rain in September but this cultivation method helps to retain moisture on their medium soil type, Rob Mair suggests.

“Under the direction of our Procam agronomist, Ian Jackson, we planted 40 seeds/m² and aimed for 10kg/ha of Umostart, with 21 inch rows. In September we had around 5 mm of rain and there was just enough moisture to get the crop started. We would usually apply over 80 kg ha of N 33% in the autumn but on this field we have not used any bagged nitrogen, although we have used Yara’s foliar micronutrient product Crop Lift as usual.”

Rob is delighted with the result so far.

“The tap roots are around twice as long as those on neighbouring fields with a good root mass overall, even though the field is not deficient in P. The plants were

vigorous and ready to maximize their growth potential in the Spring. So far we are very impressed.”

In Leicester farm contractor Michael Moore has also added the microcast unit to his seven-leg Sumo subsoiler.

Michael said:

“We planted around 280 ha of OSR and have a 10 ha trial plot with Umoplast. I like a row spacing of 600 mm to give the plant plenty of room to tiller, although we provide other methods of establishment if required.

“We have seen a physical difference in establishment on the treated plot, which is a heavy clay site. Our actual trial results show an increase of 110% in leaf and 33% in the roots in the autumn and 86% and 71% respectively in the Spring. Harvest will be the acid test but at this stage it looks very good.”

Further information on the trials is available at www.sipcamuk.co.uk



Above: Rob Mair

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