

**Committee Name:** Regional Sugar Beet Forum

**Meeting Date:** 13<sup>th</sup> October 2016

**Circulation:** East Midlands Sugar Forum

**Location:**

**Chairman:** Geoff Hotchkin

**Secretary:** Andrew Wilson

**Tel:**

**Ref:**

**Present:** Geoff Hotchkin (chairman), Mark Ireland, Ian Willox, Andrew Baxter, Tim Beaver, James Grant, John Miller, Ian Stancer, John Ward, and Nick Wells.

**By Invitation:** Nick Morris British Sugar Agriculture Manager

**In Attendance:** Bethan Williams – NFU Assistant Sugar Adviser

**Apologies:** Donald Hulme, Paul White, Valerie Stanton, Julian Powell, Roger Oates, David Branton.

The chairman welcomed Nick Morris, British Sugar Agriculture Manager to the meeting. The minutes of the meeting held on 5<sup>th</sup> May were approved and signed as a correct record of proceedings.

### Presentation Mr Nick Morris, British Sugar Agriculture Manager.

Nick Morris gave a presentation to the group providing an overview of the crop in the ground and where we were expecting yields and sugar levels to be during the current campaign. Germination was mixed due to lower temperatures in April and higher than average rainfall in March and June. The wet seed beds impacted germination however the rain in June stunted growth. Drilling dates were later than normal, 7<sup>th</sup> April being the average drilling date which is a great deal later than 2015 where the average drilling date was 25<sup>th</sup> March, making 2016 the latest date since 2001.

Mr Morris advised members to be cautious with the prospect for crops this year. Newark factory was already seeing root weights below the 5 year average but sugar percentage was above the 5 year average during the first 5 week of the campaign but has since fallen below the 5 year average.

Newark factory has continued with capital investment, juice tank 5 has been completed on time and the plant has benefitted from £6million worth of investment. Other areas of investment have included a new steam boiler which will make the factory compliant with 2020 regulations.

Newark campaign has started with an average slice of 9'450 however the factory is not going for record throughput, as they have a smaller crop they are trying to extract as much sugar as possible from the beet. The factory is producing 8-900mt per day of crystal sugar. As yet there have been no diversions to Wissington.

The Newark factory is trialling longer opening hours, 4am to 12am. They are receiving 25 lorries after 8pm and have 5 new operators. The intake has received 200,000 man hours of maintenance in the closed period.

Q. Sunday was voluntary until it was enforced, will the new hours soon be enforced?

A. Cannot guarantee as the hours are a trial to see if it improves efficiency.

Q. Are the late deliveries predominantly in the Haulage Scheme?

A. Mixture of the two at present, no pattern emerging.

### **Price update**

Following the fall in the value of the pound UK beet slipped below the EU minimum beet price and has therefore increased to £21.62 to bring it back in line.

Transport is now working on the actual cost of the best route, not the shortest legal route.

For 2017 contracts, 45% of the contracted tonnage has gone into the 3 year deal which at the time of the meeting would pay out at £26 per mt, with the 1 year deal paying out at £23.50 per mt. This is due to the uplift in World Sugar Price indexes.

Mark Ireland raised the point that we have seen year after year of yield increase in beet but sugars have dipped, has yield increase been at the detriment of sugar content, Could this be due to time spent in the clamp?

The group agreed that this should be raised with BBRO at the forthcoming meeting in December.

James Grant raised the question of beet top size not been mentioned on the RL list which does have an impact on the crop, do we need leaf cover to protect the crown – especially later in the campaign? Varieties only stay on the list for 2-3 years and the grower gets very little time to get to know them.

The group agreed that this should be raised with BBRO at the forthcoming meeting in December.

### **Report of National Sugar Board, – Nick Wells**

Nick reported on the national board meeting stating that the sugar levy on small drinks could see loopholes appear where small drinks producers could import drinks to by-pass the law. The SIP programme was once again oversubscribed and a full group of younger growers were now in place to help support the industry in the future. The haulage working group is looking at a field based scheme as opposed to beet pads, however they did not want a two tier haulage scheme as Maus loading did not work for all. The Haulage team have now got BS to pay on the real mileage, not just the most direct route. The sugar Board debated the NFU position on Brexit and was waiting for further details before looking at sugar policy. The board have no plans for a levy increase if beet gets back up to 100,000 ha which is looking increasingly likely. Seed working groups were looking at developments in yield with 4% increases expected with new developments. The sugar board is making sure beet seed is going beyond the rules when it comes to neonicotinoids and is keeping positive about the future of the chemical.

### **AOB**

There has been reports of flushes of leaf miner, some of these have been localised with 3 flushes. BBRO are doing a preliminary assessment at Hibaldstow to assess effect on varieties and results from spray programmes.

The Group agreed to move the next meeting to 15<sup>th</sup> December and to Invite Paul Kenward & Colm Mckay to speak with the group. The venue was changed to Boston West Golf Club.