

Meet the Isoflex[®] active Grower Group: Richard Ward

Richard Ward has been farm manager at Barton Farms in Gloucestershire for the past 29 years. The farm operates as a mixed enterprise, farming arable and red deer – supplying venison to Waitrose and M&S. The soil type is varied, including Warwickshire clay, Banbury iron stone and sand.

On the arable side of things, the rotation is based on a three-year cropping plan which includes winter wheat, winter barley and AB6 (enhanced overwintered stubble). On the very worst blackgrass land, fields are taken out of the rotation and put into GS4 (herbal legume pasture) for 5 years to help bring pressures down.

Most of the wheat is Extase, while Kingsbarn takes the majority share of the barley area. As a hybrid variety, Kingsbarn is a strategic choice as it brings additional weed control benefits due to its vigorous growth habit meaning it outcompetes blackgrass, explains Richard.

In this blog, we hear about Richard's current grassweed outlook and how he is tackling challenges, as well as what he is looking to get out of being a part of the Isoflex[®] active Grower Group.

What is your biggest grassweed problem?

Blackgrass is a major issue for us. It's a pernicious weed, it's very adaptable and it changes and mutates very quickly. It has always been an issue on farm. Even a small amount of resistance to any chemical will just cause it to explode.

We tried min-till a few years ago, but this just caused a major headache for us, and it took several years to get the blackgrass back under control. We had to go back to ploughing and we're now in the process of conversion to direct drilling. However, the blackgrass is such an issue here that we're not afraid to bring back the plough where needed to control it.

What is your standard programme for controlling ryegrass?

Control starts with deciding how we're going to prepare the ground. If it's a good year, we'll try to direct drill, but if there is a serious blackgrass situation then we'll plough. We also use glyphosate prior to drilling.

We then deploy a very robust pre-emergence programme. This is very important. We do have to be careful not to stack too many actives, however, as this can damage the crops.

The war on blackgrass is one we're never going to win – but we can win a few battles. So, any new products that come along and can help us do that, I'm very interested to get involved in trying.

Richard is trialling FMC's new Isoflex[®] active herbicide for the first time this year and is looking forward to seeing the results.

Read more about [Isoflex[®] actives Grower Group here](#).

Farm facts

- Location: Gloucestershire
 - Arable hectares: 200
 - Average wheat hectareage: 50
 - Soil type: Varied – Warwickshire clay, Banbury iron stone and sand
 - Crops in rotation: Winter wheat and winter barley
 - Grass weed issue: Blackgrass
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