

2026 edition

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GrainCo
seed special

The North of England & Scotland's leading farmer-owned grain and seed marketing business

Thank you for your continued support

Welcome to the 2026 edition of the GrainCo Seed Special



Tom Carmichael, Northumberland Sales Representative, GrainCo

Harvest 2025 in the North East of England would be described as a welcomed success for most of our farmers.

Unlike other parts of the country, for once, our area benefitted from a prolonged, dry spring and hot summer resulting in one of the earliest harvests in living memory. In general, we got rain at the right time, and the combines never stopped once they started. Moisture levels were low and bushel weights were high. It is always

a nice feeling when loading the wagon takes less buckets of the loader.

As is always the case, not everyone had such a good time. Second wheats struggled across the board; straw was on the short side and the grass suffered greatly from lack of rain.

The potential for harvest 2026 is looking good as well, with farmers enjoying a preferential Autumn drilling campaign. Crops were able to be drilled early and into good seed beds. They seem to have survived the wet start to the year, and now fertiliser has been applied in most cases things are motoring on. It is a long time until harvest, and it always seems risky to be too positive before everything is in the shed but as it stands, let's be hopeful.

It is the first day of April, and the wheat market is a little bit better than it has been of late. With the revelation that Ensus is firing back up for a month or two due to the need for CO₂, most people with wheat still in store have taken advantage, with old crop levels rising by £8-10/t in some places.

Of course, on the back of this is the fact that the fertiliser and fuel markets have increased dramatically. As a rough guide, ammonium nitrate has increased by £100/t and granular urea by £150-200/t. Kerosene and diesel prices have doubled if not a little more, and with supply also a concern for some, no one seems better off.

With there being a lack of enthusiasm in forward selling for the upcoming harvest due to the stagnant market, we have seen a good uptake in farmers committing tonnage into our pools for the 26-27 season. Results, so far, for the previous campaign have been positive and has contributed towards both

new and existing customers choosing to allocate more of their projected tonnages into this form of marketing which we are very thankful for.

Now is the time to consider the upcoming Autumn drilling campaign, and variety selection is an increasingly important factor across all crops as farmers rightly look to save on costs due to both lack of effective chemistry available, and the price of those that can be applied.

As has been said before, the recommended list is a very useful tool to use when comparing different options. Data shows how well the older, more proven varieties are performing in latest trials and whether their scores have been adjusted due to new strains of virus – yellow rust being an example in the spring of last year. We are also able to see new varieties now available, and what improvements they can offer.

However, the number of varieties alone are vast, especially in terms of the wheats. So, Peter Collins and the GrainCo seed team carefully select a reduced number of varieties suitable across the North of England and throughout Scotland. Yield scores are taken into consideration, but emphasis is put on disease profile, standing ability and quality as well. Options are available across all groups, whether a farmer is looking for a group 2 or a group 4 hard wheat, or whether they would be looking for an early or late driller.

Once again, we thank you for your continued support with the evident challenges that continue to present themselves across our industry, and we hope you enjoy our latest edition of the GrainCo Seed Special.

Sparkler, the highest yielding soft wheat in the UK



Kurt Scarboro, UK Agricultural Crop Manager, Elsom Seeds

Following hot on the heels of Elsoms wheat success story Bamford, Sparkler is the latest addition to Elsoms stable of high performing wheat varieties.

An exciting new Group 4 soft variety, it is fully recommended on the 2026-27 AHDB list. With excellent disease resistance, a prostrate growth habit allowing high tiller production and multiple end markets, **Sparkler** is a variety growers should consider for Autumn 2026.

The variety is a **LG Skyscraper** x **Graham** cross and has inherited desirable characteristics from both its parent varieties. **LG Skyscraper** particularly known for its distilling capabilities and high yield. **Graham** a popular variety with a strong following in the West, known for its consistency and disease resistance.

Not only is it the highest yielding soft wheat on the list, but **Sparkler** is also in the top five for yield across the Recommended List as a whole.

Across two very different seasons in 2024 & 2025 **Sparkler** has proven to be a consistent high performer. It has also demonstrated its flexibility as a variety, yielding exceptionally well across all regions, rotational positions

and soil types. **Sparkler** has also shown itself to be a good performer in the later drilled slot which, combined with its high Fusarium resistance, make it an excellent option following maize.

Sparkler comes on to the Recommended List with excellent levels of disease resistance including a 7.2 rating for Septoria tritici and 7 for yellow rust.

According to the AHDB Septoria tritici remains “the most important and damaging foliar disease of wheat in the UK” and following last season’s challenges we know that yellow rust has the potential to cycle very quickly causing a lot of damage once established in a crop.

A combination of good resistance to both these diseases allows a flexible approach for growers when it comes to fungicide choice, timing and sequencing alongside other varieties on the farm. However as with a lot of popular varieties, growers will need to keep an eye on brown rust in warmer temperatures later in the growing season.

Sparkler is best suited to the traditional mid-September drilling slot with a relatively prostrate growth habit over winter and doesn’t race off too fast in the spring. Over winter the variety tends to sit back allowing it to produce an impressive number of tillers which it then retains through the season. In **Elsoms** own wheat growth & development trials we have observed that **Sparkler** has consistently produced high numbers of tillers and this coupled with moderately tall straw leads to good straw production come harvest.

Well suited to the distilling industry, **Sparkler** offers growers a level of flexibility when it comes to end markets. Very competitive in the “barn-filler”



GrainCo’s Seed Manager, Peter Collins (left) and seed grower, Peter Chapman pictured in a crop of **Sparkler**, Middlesbrough, April 2026.

feed slot, with the option to achieve a soft wheat premium which makes it particularly attractive when compared to some of the hard feeds.

In conclusion this very high yielding variety which has excellent levels of disease resistance and multiple end markets mean its sure to be a popular choice for the coming autumn season.

AHDB
RECOMMENDED

Outshines the best.

Sparkler crackles with real potential, delivering greater profitability with lower risk.

It sparkles in Group 4 as the UK’s highest yielding soft, paired with a market-leading *Septoria tritici* resistance.

Reigniting end-market flexibility, it meets distilling, feed and UKS export specs, widening access to premium contracts. Sparkler promises brighter returns.

Sparkler
WINTER WHEAT
Ask your seed merchant about availability.

elsoms SEEDS | Unlocking the power of plants

Autumn 2026 GrainCo Key Winter Wheat Variety Comparison Chart

	Group 2			Group 3 Soft		Group 4 Soft			Group 4 Hard			
	KWS ARNIE	KWS EXTASE	KWS PALLADIUM	BAMFORD	RGT HEXTON	SPARKLER	LG BEOUWOLF	LG CHALLENGER	LG DEFIANCE	KWS DAWSUM	KWS SCOPE	
Parentage	Extase x Zyatt	Boiseau x Sorehio	Trinity x Zyatt	Moulton x EWL 129	Graham x RGT Universe	Graham x Sparkler	Costello x Gleam	RGT Gravity x LG Skyscraper	Gleam x KWS Extase	Costello x Kerrin	Informer x KWS Linetic	
2025 Market Share %	4.8	6	4.4	14	2.1	NEW	9.5	NEW	NEW	8.3	5.3	
UK Yield %	104	102	100	105	103	106	104	107	109	102	105	
East	104	102	100	104	103	106	104	107	108	102	106	
West	105	102	101	106	102	107	103	107	110	101	107	
North	103	102	101	107	109	108	107	109	109	105	105	
Untreated Yield %	87	90	87	89	82	87	83	93	95	86	84	
Spt Wt	78.5	79.1	77.3	78.5	76.4	76.7	78.3	78.6	77	79.6	78.6	
Ripening (days +/- Skyfall)	-1	-1	-1	0	2	1	2	1	1	1	1	
Straw Length without PGR (cm)	89	93	85	90	89	92	90	94	97	85	90	
Straw Length with PGR (cm)	80	85	78	81	79	80	79	83	87	76	78	
Resistance to Lodging without Pgr (1-9)	8	7	8	7	7	7	8	7	7	8	8	
Resist. to Lodging with PGR (1-9)	8	7	8	7	7	6	7	7	5	7	8	
Lodging without PGR%	1	2	1	2	2	2	1	2	3	1	1	
Lodging with PGR%	1	2	1	3	3	7	2	3	10	3	1	
Mildew	6	6	7	6	5	5	5	7	7	7	6	
Yellow Rust	7	7	6	6	8	7	4	7	8	5	4	
Brown Rust	6	7	6	6	4	4	5	5	5	7	5	
Septoria Tritici	6.8	6.5	7	6.4	6.6	7.2	6.4	6.1	6.3	6.2	6.6	
Eyepot	5	4	5	6	5	4	6	5	5	5	4	
OWBM	No	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	
First Wheat	104	102	100	105	103	106	105	107	109	102	106	
Second Wheat	104	101	100	105	106	107	104	110	110	103	105	
Light Land	103	102	100	106	106	106	104	108	108	105	104	
Heavy Land	104	102	100	104	103	105	104	106	109	102	105	
Annual Treated Yield (% Control)												
2022	104	102	100	106	104	n/a	105	n/a	n/a	103	105	
2023	105	102	100	106	105	106	106	109	109	103	107	
2024	106	103	105	107	107	109	103	108	111	101	108	
2025	103	101	100	105	103	107	105	107	108	104	104	

Data from the AHDB Recommended List except where otherwise stated. Full database available at www.ahdb.co.uk

PIERCEBRIDGE PLANT

HVS CERTIFIED SEED AVAILABILITY LIST AUTUMN 2026

WINTER WHEAT *Newly Recommended for 2026

GROUP 2	KWS ARNIE, KWS EXTASE, KWS PALLADIUM
GROUP 3 SOFT	BAMFORD
GROUP 4 HARD	KWS DAWSUM, KWS SCOPE, LG BEOWULF *LG CHALLENGER, *LG DEFIANCE
GROUP 4 SOFT	RGT HEXTON *SPARKLER

WINTER BARLEY

TWO-ROW FEED	KITTY, KWS TARDIS, LG CARAVELLE
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Please order your Barley seed requirements in good time before we switch to wheat production.

BASE SEED DRESSINGS (applied as standard)

WHEAT	REDIGO PRO
BARLEY	RANCONA I-MIX

ADDITIONAL SEED DRESSINGS	KICK OFF, MANGANESE, LATITUDE VIBRANCE DUO
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In addition we are pleased to also offer the following from our network of suppliers.

HYBRID BARLEY	SY KINGSBARN, BARNABUS, QUANTOCK
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WINTER OATS	CROMWELL, DALGUISE
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WINTER OILSEED RAPE

CONVENTIONAL	PINNACLE
HYBRID	ADAPT, AVENGER, DOMPTEUR, ARMADA, AURELIA
CLUB ROOT RESIS.	SCORPION

CLEARFIELD	MATRIX
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DIRECT ORDER LINES:

Seed Office, Tyne Dock

Kate Grix: 0191 428 7700

Piercebridge Plant

Peter Collins: 01325 728905

To place your order or for further help and advice please speak to your regular GrainCo contact, alternatively please contact the seed office direct.

Continuing to invest in the business

Piercebridge

- Upgrade to both the intake and outloading facilities.
- New grain store roof.
- New weighbridge offices.
- New Pro Foss 2 Infratec Wholegrain Analyzer.



Tyne Dock

We have the muscle to move the volume!

- Two new large capacity loading shovels – Case 1121G and a Develon D480.



Meldon Store

- Two new Cimbria Dryer Fans.



Fleet News We buy it...We move it!

- Two new Renault T High 520 Trucks have been added to the GrainCo fleet with a further two coming in June. All of which will mean the GrainCo fleet has nothing older than a '23 plate.



Ahh the weather, isn't it something!



Nick Sanderson, Agronomist, Tyne Grain

I sit here on the 14th of May having had numerous farmers telling me there has been a frost on higher ground and after being caught in numerous hail showers in the past 48hrs too.

Funnily enough though, April was a particularly dry month and, according to the Met Office Deep Dive, one degree warmer than average across the UK. I am thankful for the rainfall, with most getting a good ladle full to some getting just enough, it has certainly helped ease worries for the spring crops and grassland, as well as helping to wash in applications of fertiliser.

After last year's YR15 gene mutation in various wheat varieties grown across the

Northeast, every farmer and agronomist was on high alert for Yellow Rust. But this year with timely T0 applications, which included a heavy dose of Tebuconazole, and a robust T1, (I predominately used a Fenpicoxamid co-pack mix, who doesn't love a co-pack by the way), you would be wondering what all the fuss was about.

However, with Winter Wheat crops looking in very good condition and T2 quickly upon us it is not the time to forget how quickly Yellow Rust can cycle, which, depending on conditions, can be as little as 10 days. T2 is generally more directed towards protectant fungicides but varieties such as **Champion, KWS Scope, LG Beowulf**, plus many others, should be monitored for new infections of Rust.

The weather is potentially going to change from cool wet weather to twenty plus degrees next week, possibly creating a humid breeding ground for disease to thrive just below the canopy, this means, as ever, agronomists need to earn their keep in making a vital decision at T2. Miravis or not Miravis? Costs, prices, pressure, potential...

Like Winter Wheat, Oilseed Rape, Winter Barley, Winter Oats and Beans all look pretty good on the hold. Fingers crossed I've not just jinxed it. Some petals have started to drop on the OSR and I am looking forward to seeing the end results for a lot of these tremendous crops, I will be keeping a close eye on the levels of Cabbage Seed Weevil though as this leaves an opening for Pod Midge damage.

Most Winter Barley crops look brilliant, with **LG Caravelle** seeming to have tillered out more so than most. There are the odd spots of BYDV, however, with only managing to get one pass post-emergence on in the Autumn, it is difficult to get total control, this would require multiple passes and I can't see that happening in late October in Northumberland.

Next season is already shaping up to be interesting, we are supposedly expecting a "Super El Nino", which for us in the UK generally means hotter summers but colder and drier winters, although there are some suggestions that storms may be more severe and numerous. Ahh the weather, isn't it something!

Ensus Update

Disruptions to European fertiliser production – combined with difficult market conditions – have significantly reduced the reliability of CO2 imports, and rising gas prices driven by the Iran conflict, plus unplanned maintenance at several European CO2 producing sites, mean that the UK's market for CO2 was risked at being undersupplied

The plant stopped production back in Autumn 2025 and looked unlikely to reopen again until the UK Government announced a package of £100 million in March to have the site on standby in the wake of the conflict in the Middle East.

Whilst the agreement between the Government and **Ensus** was to be on standby should it be required - within a week **GrainCo** were delivering wheat into the plant. Up until then the wheat market had traded within a small range from harvest with a genuine lack of demand. The reopening of **Ensus** on Teesside has helped breath some life into the last quarter of the current marketing year.

Ensus is due to only be operational until June with the need to bolster the UK's supply of CO2 which is critical for the UK's Nuclear, packaged meat, fresh foods and healthcare.

In previous years **Ensus** have been using predominantly maize as opposed to

wheat due to it being cheaper, more available and the quality of ethanol better due to maize's higher starch content. Their current split is more wheat based at circa 75% and 25% Maize.

There is no confirmation that **Ensus** will be running for new crop but we believe that there will be continued Government support to keep the plant ready.



The joint highest yielding variety for the North and you can drill it early!



Edward Stanford, UK Cereal and Oilseeds Manager, RAGT UK

RGT Hexton is a Group 4 soft winter wheat which entered the AHDB Recommended list in 2024/25. While this means the variety is relatively new, the data shows consistently good performance, especially in the North where it has either been the highest yielding variety or joint highest yielding variety for the past 2 years.

A clear bonus to RGT Hexton is the excellent results seen when grown as a second wheat: in 2024 RGT Hexton was the highest yielding second wheat, and in 2025 remained a very strong performer in the second wheat position.

From an agronomic point of view, the variety comes with many strengths, including AHDB ratings of 8 for Yellow Rust and 6.6 for Septoria Tritici resistance. The genetics for the Yellow Rust resistance comes from a diverse background and has held up well in recent shifts seen in resistance to Yellow Rust.

Farmers can grow RGT Hexton with confidence.

The growth habit of this variety is relatively slow. The variety covers the ground well and produces a typical

number of tillers for the conditions grown in. When it comes to the spring, the variety has good ground cover but is not typically the first variety to start moving. All these factors mean that the variety is well suited to being sown early. The ability to sow early without the risk of excessive autumn / early spring growth means once again added peace of mind for the grower. Time of harvest is slightly later than Skyfall at +2, so RGT Hexton should be managed accordingly.

With official ratings of 7 (+PGR) and 7 (-PGR), RGT Hexton stands well, which is one more factor than makes this winter wheat suited to early sowing. The variety has an official straw height figure of 89.3cm without PGR, so not one of the tallest varieties but also not excessively short. This along with the good standing rating means RGT Hexton can be trusted for good straw characteristics.

The specific weight is just under 77kg/HL the variety has a strong Hagberg (247) – not so important for a feed wheat, but a good measure of grain resilience. In addition, the variety carries resistance to Wheat Orange Blossom Midge, giving RGT Hexton another asset when it comes to overall crop management.

Overall RGT Hexton is a robust high yielding soft wheat that can give growers added peace of mind and the opportunity to achieve some soft wheat premiums to boot without any yield penalties.

RGT Hexton is marketed under the BIPO royalty collection scheme, sign up today to get access to this variety and future upcoming varieties at no additional cost for certified seed.

Invoicing by your supplier will be made in the usual manner.



RGT Hexton, May 2026. Farmer comment: Tell you what it's a really good looking early driller. I have it side by side with some other wheats and it's less leggy and tillers really well. It's also far cleaner, I'm impressed.
– James Clark, Haddington, nr Edinburgh.



ABOUT US

WHAT IS BIPO?
BiPO is a royalty collection office that represents breeders within the UK. Just like BSPB but with a different approach. Like Netflix & Sky!

WHAT IS RAC?
Royalty area collection (RAC) is an agreement between the breeder & farmer that wants to use a particular variety. The grower agrees to pay a royalty set by the breeder.

WHAT IS OUR GOAL?
To promote breeding activity in the UK to ensure our farmers are as competitive as they can be within a challenging environment.

HOW DO I GET AN RAC NUMBER?






- 1 GO TO BIPO.ORG.UK**
Navigate to the "RAC Grower Agreement" tab on the website
- 2 CREATE RAC AGREEMENT**
Enter your **business & farm** details that will create a RAC Number unique to your holdings. You only need to sign an agreement once.
- 3 RETRIEVE YOUR RAC NUMBER**
Once confirmed, your unique RAC number will be **emailed to you**. You are then covered to grow **all RAC varieties under this number**.
- 4 PAYING ROYALTIES**
For varieties on the new BIPO collection such as RGT Hexton: **Certified Seed**- Royalty included within invoice from seed merchant
FSS- Royalty invoiced directly by BIPO on the ha declared by grower

Find out more information at www.biPO.org.uk



RGT HEXTON

WHEAT THAT WILL MAKE YOU HAPPY!

-  Soft feed winter wheat
-  A top performer as a second wheat
-  Very good yield across the UK
-  Consistent disease scores in adverse conditions
-  Suitable for early drilling

Learn more: ragt.uk/rgt-hexton



think
SOLUTIONS
think RAGT

Limagrain wheat varieties offer a robustness of performance over difficult seasons



Ron Granger, Arable Technical Manager, Limagrain

The season of 2025 was certainly a season to forget in many ways, with a problematic autumn drilling campaign in 2024 resulting in late drilled, poorly established crops, followed by one of the warmest, wettest winters on record and then one of the driest summers on record, with drought across most of the UK.

To be fair, the North of the UK fared better than the South as a consequence of an earlier drilling regime and the benefit of more rainfall and cooler temperatures, which secured better yield potential.

On top of this, we had a new race of yellow rust which unfortunately affected many of the varieties on the AHDB RL, but specifically varieties relying on Yr15 resistance. Fortunately, yellow rust did not become an issue on farm due to early intervention from growers to control the disease, with breeders and the AHDB pointing out that crops should be monitored and early eradication of the disease implemented through early T0 fungicide inputs if yellow rust was found.

What a difference we have for the 2026 season.

The autumn season dictated earlier drilling into relatively good seedbeds, and again we have had a mild, wet winter which has allowed for continuous rooting, high tillering, and big biomass crops with strong yield potential going into the spring.

Unfortunately, yellow rust will be a concern, as many of the varieties that succumbed to the new race of yellow rust still make up the majority of the commercial crop planted this season. However, the reality is that these varieties still have agronomic merit for on-farm positioning and performance, and this should not be overlooked when considering varieties for the 2026 autumn drilling campaign.

What we have learnt from the last two seasons for the control of either rust or septoria is that crops should be cleaned up at the earlier growth stages with appropriate fungicide chemistry sets and then followed by good, robust fungicide programmes to ensure disease is kept to a minimum for delivering high yield potential.

LG Beowulf was the second biggest selling variety last season and offers a very robust and consistent yield performance across many situations for on-farm placement, including first or second wheat, across soil types and drill dates.

Yellow Rust will require monitoring and treating appropriately, but it is stiff-strawed and does have good mildew and septoria resistance combined with OWBM resistance. The variety has a big specific weight with a

high Hagberg, grain quality attributes of importance in testing seasons.

In addition to **LG Beowulf Limagrain** have two exciting new hard feed wheats to offer growers both of which have been added to the new AHDB Recommended List 2026–27.

LG Defiance
(Pedigree – KWS Extase x Gleam)

LG Defiance is a very high-yielding variety showing excellent consistency of performance across regions and difficult seasons. This is supported by the fact the variety has the highest untreated yield of all the varieties on the AHDB RL 2026–27.

In addition, the variety has shown very good performance in the second/continuous wheat situation and has performed equally well on either lighter or heavier soil types.

LG Defiance is a taller-strawed variety and a good PGR programme would be advisable. From in-house PGR trials, the variety responds very well to PGR programmes, with either a well-timed split or single-hit programme delivering shorter, stiffer straw, reduced lodging risk with no yield compromise.

The variety has an excellent all round disease resistance profile, offering Mildew 7 / Yellow Rust 8 / Septoria 6.3 / Fusarium (7), combined with good grain characteristics of a high Hagberg and specific weight, complete with OWBM resistance.

LG Defiance is similar to one of its parents **KWS Extase** in that it should be considered for the normal drilling

date, i.e. 3rd week September and onwards. The variety has performed very well in the later drilling dates of November and onwards and should give growers confidence if the autumn season dictates a later drilling season.

LG Defiance offers many of the desirable attribute's growers will be looking for regarding high yield performance, backed up by a high untreated yield and its flexibility for drilling date and the majority of on-farm positioning.

LG Challenger

(Pedigree – (Gravity x SY Insitor) x LG Skyscraper)

LG Challenger offers a different option to **LG Defiance** in that this variety has the better agronomic characteristics and has shown very good performance in the earlier drilling situation.

The variety offers high yield potential across difficult seasons and regions and again is backed up by a high untreated

yield, showing robustness around yield potential from a good disease resistance profile of Mildew 7 / Yellow Rust 7 / Septoria 6.1 / Fusarium (7), and it also has OWBM resistance.

The variety is taller-strawed and has good straw strength, with similar plant growth to one of its parents, **SY Insitor**, showing slower spring growth with high tillering, attributes considered important for the earlier drilling opportunity.

LG Challenger has also shown good performance as a second/continuous wheat and has demonstrated good yield potential across differing soil types. Interestingly, the variety would appear to show a preference for lighter to medium loam soil types, a characteristic of **SY Insitor**.

If you are looking for a variety with excellent grain quality, then **LG Challenger** offers one of the best packages with a very high Hagberg and specific weight.

The new feed wheat varieties from Limagrain are a welcome addition to the hard feed wheat category and offer growers both consistency of high yield backed up by high untreated yields, with a high level of performance across the differing sectors for on-farm positioning to achieve maximum margin and an associated reduced carbon footprint.



GrainCo's Seed Manager, Peter Collins pictured in a crop of **LG Defiance**, Boroughbridge, April 2026.

RECOMMENDED AHDB

“ **LG Defiance** holds up well, is clean and fills the shed.”
Lisa Bush, Lincolnshire

**DEFY THE ODDS
DELIVER THE
YIELD**

LG

LG DEFIANCE WINTER WHEAT

Consistency across regions and seasons
Joint highest yielding second wheat
Excellent yellow rust and OWBM resistance

SCAN ME

Limagrain Field Seeds

RECOMMENDED AHDB

“ A quality variety - **LG Challenger** delivered great yield & agronomics in a difficult year.. the full package!”
Ben Sharp, Lincolnshire

**LESS RISK
MORE REWARD**

**LG Challenger
Advert**

LG

LG CHALLENGER WINTER WHEAT

Delivers on grain quality, yield & agronomics
Highest yielding early driller
Stand out performance in the East, West & North

SCAN ME

Limagrain Field Seeds

Four decades of partnership: Humberside Farmers and GrainCo strengthen seed production legacy



David Richardson, Farm Manager, Humberside Farmers Ltd

David Richardson, Farm Manager for Humberside Farmers Ltd at Newbald Lodge near Hull, oversees a thriving enterprise rooted in Yorkshire's chalky Wolds. Privately owned by Mr. R Bramhill and managed by Velcourt Ltd since 2004, the business crops around 3350 acres of productive farmland as well as renewables and property lets which form the income stream.

The partnership between Humberside Farmers and GrainCo spans more than forty years, beginning with Farmway – the precursor to GrainCo – and continues to flourish today. Since joining in 2021, David has maintained the strong relationship

built by his predecessor, ensuring continuity in seed production and crop quality.

The farm's rotation includes winter wheat, winter barley, spring barley, oilseed rape, spring beans and vining peas grown for the Birds Eye factory in Hull. Land is also let for potato production.

Subject to the prevailing weather conditions, David aims to start drilling his oilseed rape on or around the 1st week of August and his cereals from mid-September onwards.

Typical yields for seed production range between 4–5tonnes per acre for winter wheat and 3.75–4.25 tonnes per acre

for winter barley, primarily first and second cereal rotations.

Wheat varieties such as **LG Beowulf** and **LG Defiance**, barley varieties including **Tardis** and **Caravelle**, form the backbone of the seed portfolio. With 805 acres dedicated to seed wheat and 500 acres to seed barley.

2026 cropping for GrainCo includes 81ac of **Tardis**, 71ac of **Caravelle** for barley seed, plus 74ac of **LG Beowulf** and 64ac of **LG Defiance** for wheat seed.

The farm's on-floor storage facilities enable efficient conditioning and merchant-ready supply, an important factor with the majority being needed for Durham and Northumberland.

Marketing of produce is largely done in house with an allocation handed to **Velcourt Marketing Services**.

The farm adopts SFI and Mid-Tier Stewardship schemes that work alongside the main cropping enterprise as well as companion cropping in oil seed rape and a small area of legume fallow.

Precision farming is high on the agenda with all fields being mapped and and zone tested for variable rate (VR) seed and P&K applications. Satellite images are used for VR nitrogen applications in liquid and granular formats.

The farm employs a further three fulltime staff and an extra three for the peak harvest periods.

Four full time tractors manage the bulk of the farm's day to day work with an additional two being hired in at harvest.

CASE IH are the tractors of choice ranging from 240hp up to a 645hp **Quadtrac** which is used for the main cultivation's tasks.

A combination of min-till and plough-based system has been adopted with all the barley straw being baled by a local merchant and 50% of the wheat straw baled also.

Drilling is carried out with the **Vaderstad Rapid** drills and oil seed rape established with a **Grange Machinery Toolbar** and **Vadersatd** drill in one pass.

Recent machinery upgrades include a **Horsch** 36 metre trailed sprayer and a **Class Lexion** 8800 40-foot combine.

As mentioned earlier, renewables play an important part in the farm's income stream with six two-megawatt turbines supplying the national grid. Furthermore, the farm has one 80-kilowatt turbine and 170 kilowatts of solar panels generating much of the farms required electricity, with once again any surplus being exported to the national grid.

In addition to the already impressive facilities the farm has just completed a major upgrade by adding an additional grain store and driers at nearby **Sober Hill Farm** which will give them some

much needed additional storage and flexibility at harvest.

David is both **BASIS** and **FACTS** qualified managing all the farm's agronomy recommendations and sources all the farms required inputs through **Velcourt**.

Married with three children, David is a Yorkshire lad born just down the road in Beverley who is very much aware of the challenges our Durham and Northumberland farmers face having started his career working for **Sentry Farms** at Great Lumley nr Durham.

He has developed a good relationship with **Grainco's** Seeds Manager Peter Collins who working with David not only selects the varieties to be drilled but personally inspects his seed crops and samples the grain before arranging uplift ensuring he only deals with one person at a particularly busy time of the year.

When he can find the time to get away from the farm, David's hobbies include watching Formula One racing and like so many of us enjoys walking which allows him some time to recharge his batteries.

Looking ahead with world events as they currently are farming will continue to face many challenges but remains



Always a pleasure inspecting David's seed crops.

quietly confident that they will be able to continue to adapt and move forward.

We are very grateful to both Mr Bramhill and David for playing such a large part in the success and longevity of the seed plant for as we have all learned especially in agriculture the importance of strong relationships.

We wish them both well and the farm every success in the future.



New grain store and driers, Sober Hill Farm.



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KWS Arnie – what a variety



Lewis Dean, Northern Regional Cereal Manager, KWS

The flexibility of modern Group 2 varieties is increasingly appealing to UK growers with KWS Arnie continuing to make waves with its combination of yield, quality and agronomic strength.

According to Lewis Dean KWS's Northern Sales Manager the variety could be the next big step forward for growers seeking consistent, reliable wheat with excellent returns.

"Farmers are always looking for wheat varieties that strike a balance between high yields, disease resistance, and milling quality. **KWS Arnie** delivers on all fronts," he says.

"In the latest 2026/27 RL, the variety is the highest yield Group 2 sitting 2% higher in yield than **KWS Extase**, with the kind of disease resistance and agronomic consistency that growers need in today's market."

KWS Arnie has shown remarkable resilience in varying growing conditions, a very welcome feature for UK farmers dealing with increasingly unpredictable weather patterns.

"The variety's ability to deliver a yield 104% of control across different seasons and growing conditions, has made it a truly reliable choice for wheat growers.

"It's disease resistance package, including 7s for both yellow rust and septoria, significantly reduces the need for agronomic interventions, making it an environmentally friendly choice as well."

The versatility of **KWS Arnie** is another key factor that has drawn attention, he explains.

"While its yield is certainly impressive, it's its dual-purpose nature that gives it real appeal for many growers.

"**KWS Arnie** is a fantastic all-rounder. It performs strongly as a feed wheat but also stands out as a potential milling wheat, thanks to its excellent milling spec.

"With a Hagberg Falling Number (HFN) of 296, specific weight of 78.8kg/hl, and a milling specification protein content of 12.1%, It delivers high yield potential with the added bonus of being able to tap into the milling wheat market when the opportunity arises."

KWS Arnie has also shown itself to be particularly suited as the second wheat in a rotation, a position where Group 2 varieties often thrive. In fact, **KWS Arnie** achieves the same 104% of controls in both first and second slots.

Lewis also points out that the variety's performance has been highly consistent.

"Over multiple years, **KWS Arnie** has shown real stability. This is particularly important in a market where growers are facing increasing pressure to maximise profitability.

"The ability to consistently produce high yields across different weather

conditions is a critical advantage for any wheat grower.

"As farmers seek more reliable and higher-performing options, varieties like **KWS Arnie** are leading the charge. It has all the characteristics that today's wheat grower needs, high yield, excellent disease resistance, and the ability to perform well across a range of market conditions."

According to GrainCo's Seed Manager Peter Collins, **KWS Arnie** is looking particularly strong in the field this season.

"Once again it's looking really nice and clean unlike many other varieties at this stage of the season," he points out.

"It's looking exactly as it was in 2024, when the variety first caught my eye in what was a wet septoria year and it was outstanding last year, which as we know was a bad rust season. This just outlines its consistency.

"It has also come second for yield two years in a row against many top yielders at our 0.5 acre plots continuous wheat site at Boroughbridge, it's a really super variety that will appeal to many growers.

"Interestingly enough, the top four varieties last season at our site were all **KWS** varieties with **KWS Scope** just pipping **KWS Arnie** to the top spot."



KWS Arnie Seed Crop, Tadcaster, May 2026.

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What's not to love about Kitty in our region?



George Goodwin, Managing Director, Senova

It's not surprising that Senova's two-row feed winter barley variety Kitty has found favour with growers in the north, where there's already demand for seed for this autumn.

As well as being the highest yielding two-row feed winter barley in the region on the AHDB Recommended List, with a yield of 106, **Kitty** has several other outstanding attributes that growers value.

It has the highest grain specific weight of 73.0kg/hl of the entire winter barley line-up, together with exceptionally stiff straw (twin 8's) and the best resistance on the RL to brackling.

That combination gives it the standing power that many barley varieties fail to achieve and the on-farm feeding potential that suits mixed farms, as livestock enterprises continue to perform well despite the economic pressures.

Recommended in 2025, **Kitty** is now the third biggest winter barley variety in terms of seed sales and could command as much as 10% of the market this autumn. The variety has proved that it can stand up to whatever the season brings, having performed well in different growing conditions.

According to George Goodwin, managing director of **Senova**, **Kitty's** appeal goes even further than the headline figures on yield and quality, as it also offers a very good disease resistance package, including a 7 rating for Rhynchosporium.

"The other feature that prompts a great deal of interest is that it has dual strain resistance to soil-borne Barley Yellow Mosaic Virus (BaYMV)."

That means **Kitty** has both the rym4 and the rym5 resistance genes, giving it protection from both strain 1 and strain 2 of the virus. The second strain is now able to overcome the rym4 gene – found in most winter barley varieties – which is why having both genes makes a variety more robust.

"Soil-borne viruses are a problem in certain parts of the country and in some rotations, as there's no chemical control for BaYMV," explains George. "The long-term challenge is persistence, as resting spores can survive for decades."

In the field, the virus shows up as irregular patches of paler, stunted crop. While crops can grow away from the worst symptoms as temperatures rise, damage to yield and quality may already have been done.

Infection occurs during autumn establishment, especially when there's a cool, wet spell around drilling, with the symptoms becoming obvious later as the virus moves through the plant.

As the vector persists, variety choice is the solution, he continues. "There are just three winter barleys that offer this dual strain resistance – as well as **Kitty**, it can be found in **Darcie** and **Valerie**."

Having diverse genetics in the **Senova** varieties is a benefit, believes George.

"The pace of variety change in winter barley is quite slow – where varieties are going to be 'slow burners' and remain on the market for a while, it's important that they don't break down to disease or have compromises."

He adds that **Kitty** has a moderate to fast speed of development, giving it a growth habit suitable for early drilling.

"It can be drilled in the first week of September and we've seen 5–7% higher yields from earlier sowing. That's also relevant where it's being grown further north and the windows are tight."

As oilseed rape is expected to come back into rotations this autumn, the place for winter barley looks more secure, ends George. "It's a good entry for oilseed rape and helps to spread workloads."

"In **Kitty**, you have yield, quality and new genetic traits, so any concerns about lodging and disease can be forgotten."



Kitty
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6 Tips for barley grain & straw yield

1. Start with the right variety

Tiller number is set by genetics, so variety choice defines your yield potential. High tillering varieties, such as **KWS Tardis** or **LG Caravelle**, will build biomass and ear number early – the key drivers of yield. Just as importantly, they give you a buffer if tillers are lost due to over winter or early spring stress, so that you've still got the numbers to maintain output.

2. Prioritise drilling conditions over date

The sowing window might be mid-September through to late October, but conditions come first every time. Winter barley needs to get away quickly to maximise autumn tillering, so it has to go into a warm, moist, well-structured seedbed. If establishment is slow or compromised, you're immediately on the back foot, and it's very difficult to make up for it. This can also include using the correct seed treatment to aid establishment.

3. Optimise seed rate

Work back from a target of 800/1000 ears per meter, adjusting for soil type, drilling date and seedbed conditions. In good late September/ early October slots, you're typically at 275–320 seeds/m². As you move into mid-October and beyond, that needs to lift to 320–375 seeds/m², to account for reduced autumn growth and less forgiving conditions. But bear in mind that these dates are a guide for Lincolnshire, so adjust accordingly to your location.

4. Use PGRs to support rooting and structure

PGRs aren't just about shortening straw. Used properly, they help build a more robust root system and improve crop structure. Early trinexapac-ethyl applications can improve anchorage and nutrient uptake, which ultimately supports tiller survival. As always, timing is everything.

5. Get nutrition right

Producing tillers is one thing, keeping them is another. Early spring nutrition is key, with both macro and micronutrients driving rooting, canopy development and overall plant health. If the crop is short of nutrition at this stage, you'll start losing tillers and yield potential very quickly - grain sites are set earlier in the season for barley than wheat, so barley should be priority in the spring.

6. Keep weeds out of the way

Weeds take out tillers, and early competition will cap crop potential, particularly where establishment isn't perfect. Control needs to be effective but not at the expense of the crop, so IPM first and use appropriate tank mixes. In black-grass situations, strong tillering varieties will compete well and can close the gap on hybrids.



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Oil Seed Rape – How do we get the most from this crop?



Liam Wilkinson, Head of Technical,
Limagrain UK

There has certainly been a different feeling around oilseed rape this year.

Having been involved with the crop for over a decade, it has been refreshing to talk about OSR in a positive light again. The questions have shifted away from “how do I get this to establish?” towards “how do we get the most out of this crop?”

Travelling across the country, a lot of the crops I have seen have generally looked well, with strong rooting and, at the time of writing, crops approaching full flower. While there have been some reports of cabbage stem flea beetle in crops, they have been few and far between compared with previous seasons. With current pricing where it is, OSR is firmly back in the conversation as one of the most profitable crops on farm.

But one swallow does not make a summer. Before there is a rush back into OSR, it is important to understand why the crop has done so well this year, so we can keep it healthy and profitable moving forward.

As is so often the case with OSR, it comes back to establishment. Conditions at drilling were near perfect, with warmth and moisture in the seed bed. Average wheat and barley yields were

also down last year, which in many cases meant higher levels of residual nitrogen were left in the soil, all contributing to the strong start the crop got off to.

In terms of cabbage stem flea beetle, numbers were generally lower than in previous seasons and the active period appeared to be shorter. Early drilled crops with moisture were often able to grow away from pressure, whereas crops that struggled tended to be later drilled, particularly further north where soil temperature and moisture were more limiting. That, combined with what feels like a UK shortage of pigeons, has certainly helped.

Another factor bringing OSR back into the conversation is the increasing grassweed pressure many growers are facing in cereal heavy rotations. Resistant Italian ryegrass and bromes continue to be major challenges, and oilseed rape remains one of the few break crops that gives genuine chemical options to tackle them. Access to actives such as propyzamide, alongside clethodim where appropriate, provides an important opportunity to reduce burden in the rotation and take pressure off cereal herbicide programmes. In many cases, the rotational benefit alone is enough to justify the crop before yield is even considered.

Looking ahead, we have now had two relatively kind seasons, and it is important that complacency does not creep back in when growing OSR.

Variety choice remains critical. As breeders, we have gone to great lengths to de-risk the crop as much as possible. Traits such as TuYV resistance and pod shatter resistance help secure final yield, and importantly they do so without a yield penalty. These are the sort of built in protections that can make a real difference by the time the combine rolls.

Then there are the marginal gains. Work carried out through campaigns such as OSR Reboot has shown that while there is no single silver bullet for flea beetle, a number of smaller actions can stack up in the grower’s favour. Cultivating previous OSR stubbles to around 30mm has shown a marked reduction in the number of beetles emerging from the soil, and while more work is still needed, it is a relatively low cost intervention when set against the potential return from the crop. Where possible, increasing the distance between this year’s crop and previous OSR fields can help reduce migration pressure.

Seed bed quality also remains crucial. A fine tilth and good seed to soil contact are essential, with double rolling where possible to preserve moisture. This season has also highlighted the benefit of having nitrogen in the seed bed. Where residual N was available, crops clearly benefited, and placing fertiliser in the seed-bed allows the relatively low 30kg N/ha permitted to be concentrated where the plant can access it most effectively.

Perhaps the final point is to ignore the calendar to a degree. Conditions at establishment matter far more than simply chasing a drilling date. Given the right moisture, temperature and a suitable variety, OSR can establish rapidly and robustly.

Good OSR is never an accident. It comes from stacking the odds in your favour: from variety choice and rotation planning through to seed bed preparation and drilling conditions. This year has reminded growers just how valuable the crop can be when it gets away well, both from a profitability and rotational perspective. The key now is making sure that success is repeatable, rather than simply remembered as a good year.

Oil Seed Rape - Varietal Choices

The majority of our oilseed rape seed will be over wintered for sowing this coming Autumn 2026, with delivery onto farm from late July into early August for those looking to drill particularly early.

Below is a selection of the varieties we will have available; however, we can source just about any variety on the market so do please get in touch with your local representative/seed office for any specific requirements.

PI Pinnacle – Conventional

A reliable, robust and high yielding variety that is born and bred in the UK.

DSV Dompteur – Hybrid (NEW)

Highest yielding variety on the current RL, particularly in the North. Loaded with traits, stiff and exceptional LLS/

Phoma scores makes this the one to beat in its first year.

LG Adapt – Hybrid

Most popular hybrid as of last year. High yielding with highest oil content available on the RL today.

LG Armada – Hybrid

Proven performer that ticks all the boxes with the highest untreated yield score on the list.

LG Avenger – Hybrid

Only variety on the RL with cabbage stem flea beetle resilience, very good autumn and spring vigour.

LG Aurelia – Hybrid

Farmers favourite that has performed well across all regions for several years and is still proving popular with growers to this day.

LG Scorpion – Club Root Hybrid

High yielding club root variety with strong autumn and spring vigour. Includes pod shatter resistance which a lot of others in this category do not have.

DSV Matrix – Clearfield Hybrid

Consistent and dependable option on the Clearfield front offering a good disease package along with strong autumn vigour.

COMPANION CROPS

Growing a companion crop with OSR has proven to be popular over the past few seasons, and we can offer our **Brigade** mix which includes Fenugreek, Buckwheat and Berseem Clover. This effectively acts as a risk management tool – helping establishment succeed more consistently while reducing cabbage stem flea beetle pressure and improving soil health.

LG

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Limagrain Field Seeds

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Front cover photo courtesy of Nichola Burkinshaw

The GrainCo logo features the word "GrainCo" in a white, sans-serif font. Above the letter "i" in "Grain" is a stylized golden wheat stalk with three grains. The background of the logo is a dark blue, textured pattern of wheat stalks.

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Every care is taken in the preparation of this booklet, however it should only be used as a guide and GrainCo cannot accept any responsibility for any losses incurred as a consequence of this information.

Data from the AHDB Recommended List except where otherwise stated: Full database available at www.ahdb.co.uk