

GROWERS VIEW

STAYING WITH THE MALT



Ewan and David Swanston of JD Milne & Partners, have grown malting barley on their Aberdeenshire farm for many years. They've seen the advent of exciting new varieties promising higher yields and agronomic advantages. But they've also seen markets develop and drop away.

"We've always grown for the malting market, so that means we have to grow varieties that the malsters want. More recently we've grown Optic and then moved onto Concerto back in 2010, as this is the key variety that malsters are looking for. "Since then the area has crept up and by 2014, Concerto was the only variety across the 85ha of spring barley on the farm," explains Ewan.

Spring barley at Pert Farm, is grown in a traditional rotation of winter wheat, winter oilseed rape, EFA or set aside and land that is rented out for potatoes. Soils are medium loam to heavy clays, with all the fields in one block, with the most outlying field 1.5 miles from the main farm buildings.

"Concerto has performed well over the years producing some really pleasing yields, achieving 6.5t – 7.9t/ha in our best year in 2014. This year the season didn't favour spring barley," he reports.

Ewan Swanston believes in delaying spring barley drilling until the ground has warmed up in mid-March. "We've used variable drilling for the last two years and this seems to be giving us a really even establishment and is definitely helping yields."



Technical summary with latest data is also available on the variety page.



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