

ESTABLISHED 1809

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Crop Report 2022

From our early crop walks the winter barleys and cereals looked very good ; they were well established before the dry conditions, the grain had filled out, the ears were quite long, straw was of reasonable length, it was reasonably dense, and the expectation was for low nitrogen. The spring barley looked to be more variable ; some fields had shorter straw, the plants hadn't tillered as much, it was a less dense crop, and the grain size seemed to be small – every indication was for more variable nitrogen levels.

The 2022 harvest started early in England (and mainland Europe) due to the very hot weather in July and dry conditions over the previous few months. As expected, the winter crops yielded well and the winter barleys were of excellent quality. We therefore bought enough to cover coloured malt sales (crystal malts and roasted malts), moving the barley promptly off farm and into stores in order to secure the best samples. All the contracted winter varieties (Maris Otter, Pearl and Halcyon) were low nitrogen and will make very good new crop pale ale malts.

The spring barleys were also harvested early, and in general have been of better quality than expected. Although yields have been down, the grain size has been good and the earlier samples were surprisingly low nitrogen. I suspect farmers applied slightly less nitrogen due to the exorbitant cost of fertiliser. We noticed more variability in the spring crop and some of the later samples were of higher nitrogen. We prefer to make our coloured malts from winter barleys and therefore do not need to chase large volumes of spring barley. We have cherry-picked the best low nitrogen samples, together with the contracted Golden Promise, with which to make quality pale ale and distilling malts.

The UK crop was generally better than that seen in mainland Europe, which was more affected by the very high temperatures and drought conditions. Similar global weather patterns, together with the ongoing war in Ukraine, has kept cereal prices much higher than last year. The limited supply and high global demand, cost of fertilisers, and over-inflated energy costs are all likely to keep global cereal prices at high levels for the foreseeable future.

In summary ; the UK heritage varieties have all performed well and we have some excellent quality barley with which to make malt next year. We are specialist maltsters making a full range of different malts (pale ale, distilling, crystal, and roasted) for the brewing, distilling and food industries. We are confident that the quality of our raw materials purchased from the 2022 crop will enable us to continue making premium malts for sale in 2023, and that all our customers can be re-assured of our commitment to supplying them with the very best malts available.

B Hickman, Production Director

December 2022