

## SUSTAINABILITY ON FARMS IN UK

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My wife, Christine, and I run our family farm in Norfolk, England. We both have a background in farming.

I am the third generation with my Grandfather purchasing the first farm 450 acres in 1932. I joined the family farming Company 42 years ago at the age of 18. Since then we have expanded to approximately 1400 acres and we are now preparing to bring our sons, aged 25 and 21, into the business. I travelled across Europe and Asia to Australia before returning to college to gain a Farm Management Diploma. I won a Nuffield Scholarship to study in Australia in 1988. I am a NFU member, having been Chairman locally. We were involved in the SCIMAC GM pilot trial and then the full trials with sugar beet back in 1998 and have been actively involved in Biotech promotion, not only in the UK but Europe as well, and attended the TATT Round Table and World Food Prize event in 2007.

The farm covers 1400 acres on 4 sites and includes a small suckler herd which graze meadows adjoining the River Wissey. We have a full time staff of 2 with extra help at harvest and drilling. Our cropping includes:

| <b>Crop</b>              | <b>Approximate Acres</b> |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| Herbage Seed             | 550                      |
| Winter wheat for seed    | 200                      |
| Spelt Wheat              | 50                       |
| Winter wheat –commercial | 200                      |
| Winter barley for seed   | 130                      |
| Winter Oilseed Rape      | 200                      |
| Grazing                  | 70                       |

We process herbage seed to certification on the farm for the Companies we grow for and for ourselves as R W Hill (Farms) Ltd is also registered as a Merchant, selling organic grass seed to the wholesale trade. The cereal seed concentrates on multiplication of earlier generation as much as possible so requires a prior 2 year break crop.

### Comment Summary

We have no biotech crops in the UK. However we do have Biotech maize in several European countries, notably Spain and Portugal. In my opinion Europe has had an environmental agenda where food production is seen as less important. Green politics has punched above its weight, often holding the balance of power in Brussels and so able to forward its agenda in trade off discussion with the main parties.

The BSE debacle reduced public trust in science with amateur and scaremongering opinion having greater impact than scientific discussion. The NGO's are very strong, making it difficult to influence public opinion in the direction of science and new ideas. Organisations such as Greenpeace and Friends of the Earth have had a field day with GM – what better

Invited speaker

## ABSTRACT: 476

issue would have focused and fired membership of these multinational businesses, especially when the fear factor had already developed in the national psyche? The tabloid press followed, taking advantage of 'Frankenstein food' and siding with vicious debate to fuel circulation upwards. It is now a long haul to return trust in science to its rightful position, but we are encouraged by small signs of steady progress and scientists are speaking out in a way they did not when the debate first was raging in Europe but there is a long way to go. Decisions are often not based on science but perception founded on political dogma or the popular sway of the moment. There is much to do in Europe to change opposing entrenched sides, especially in Brussels and secondly to achieve and focus attention on a ground swell of common sense in the general population.

# IX World Soybean Conference

Sustainability

A UK Farmer's view

David Hill

21<sup>st</sup> Feb 2013

# Sustainability

## A UK Farmer's view

Profit

Rotation

Soil Care

Inputs

Climate

Carbon Footprint

Future

# Sustainability

## A UK Farmer's view

**‘Man has many problems but a hungry man has just one’**

John Halick (USDA)