

Crop Growing

Richard, Lynwen and David Anthony

Cae Pentre, Tythegston Farm, Bridgend



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Background

In 1997 Richard and Lynwen Anthony rented 111 acres at Tythegston Farm, Bridgend and following many other additions, they now manage approximately 2300 acres, all within a 10 mile radius of Tythegston Farm. The main enterprise is arable with 450 acres of maize, 1300 acres of combinable crops which include winter wheat, oil seed rape and spring wheat. Richard and Lynwen also manage 100 acres of lapwing habitat which helped them gain the prestigious RSPB Lapwing Award for Wales in 2005. Approximately 550 acres is grassland which helps to supply their haylage business and feed their sheep flock.

How we started crop growing

In order to spread the financial risk of the arable business the Anthony's ventured into a contract crop growing enterprise. This enabled them to utilise their machinery, not only for their own crops but also the crops grown on contract. Payment for the crop was received in instalments, after any

expenditure or operations carried out and not when the crops were harvested thus providing them with a steady cash flow.

Richard explains how it all came about:

"A local dairy farmer approached us, through an adviser, as he was looking to increase cow numbers and secure feed locally, whilst other dairy farmers were looking to incorporate alternative feeds into their rations."

The above gave the Anthony's the confidence to look at other break crops such as maize and forage rye for their arable enterprise where their machinery and expertise could be utilised to provide an alternative income source.

Current situation

After six years they currently supply five dairy farms and a beef unit with maize silage. The Anthony's prefer two types of agreement as Richard explains: "We have different ways in which we receive payments and the farmers also receive their crops in various ways. Some of the farms get the crops delivered to their clamps at harvest time and once in the clamp management is their responsibility and we receive the final payment at that time."

With this method the variable costs of the crop are paid as the crop is grown. This helps with the cash flow of the enterprise. Throughout the growing season communication with the customers is maintained. Key decisions, such as variety choice and crop maturity at harvest, are discussed. Some assess how the crops are progressing and check the dry matter content pre-harvest. This gives them an idea of the quality of the crop and allows them to formulate rations for the livestock.



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Richard and Lynwen's son, David added:

"Our main goal is to produce the crop to the best of our ability. We aim to provide a high quality crop, to help give maximum benefits to our customers livestock systems."

Lynwen comments on the other working agreement:

"The other method is that we store the crop in our own clamp and the farmer receives the crop when they need it, then we get paid on delivery. The fee is higher as our cash flow is restricted with this method."

One issue that has become apparent is clamp management. She added:

"We have to make sure that we are careful with our clamp management to ensure that we produce the best product for our farmers. We can't afford any wastage and the farmer wants quality every time, which is understandable because their inputs are reflected in their outputs. For example, the feed they put in is reflected in the quantity and quality of their milk."

Crop growing complements the arable enterprise. Current plans are for it to continue and possibly expand.

Richard explained:

"First and foremost the crops we grow for the farmer have to be profitable and compete with the arable gross margins. We are very satisfied with the relationship we have with our customers, as everyone understands the risks and efforts involved in successful crop growing. Working with other farmers is an enjoyable part of what we do, and it also helps spread the cost of the machinery helping to keep the business efficient."



Future aims include:

- Expanding the business when opportunities arise.
- Identifying alternative crops that will contribute positively to the business performance.
- Ensuring that the business evolves whilst ensuring succession for the business.

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