

# Fledgling soya growers pleased with first harvest

By *Farmers Weekly* reporter

First-time soya grower Ally Hunter Blair is pleased with the harvest of his crop, and will be doubling his area grown next year.

His yield at 2t/ha was a little below an anticipated 2.5t/ha on his Herefordshire farm, but the crop passed easily through his combine when cut in mid-September.

"I think the crop looked good, and I'm not too concerned because the animal feed market isn't picky about the way it looks," said Mr Hunter Blair.

He grew two varieties Siverka and Vilshanka at his Weir End

Farm near Ross-on-Wye, with the former variety performing best and producing most of the 10.3t harvested from his 5ha.

Mr Hunter Blair was inspired to grow soya on a visit to Uruguay to see genetically modified soya being grown and then decided to investigate growing his own.

"The climate isn't too dissimilar here, and I saw a market opening when Waitrose announced it was eradicating GM soya-fed milk, meat and eggs from its supply chain," he said.

He will be doubling the area of soya he grows to 10ha next year.

Another new soya grower, Martin Smith in Essex, is also



Soya could be a useful spring-sown break crop for growers hit by blackgrass

pleased with the harvest of his crop, which again yielded about 2t/ha across 9ha of his Burnham Wick Farm, south east of Chelmsford.

He chose the variety Siverto for his farm, and although it produced a patchy crop due to sitting water, he was generally happy.

"I'm not sure on the quality yet but it went through the combine very well and I'm pleased with the results. I'll be growing a further 12ha next year," he said.

Some 120 growers have tried out

soya this year in the UK, growing about 3,000ha of the crop, as a low-input, spring-sown breakcrop, which can help in the battle against blackgrass.

David McNaughton, director of Soya UK, expects the area of the crop to grow to between 6,000ha and 8,000ha in 2018. "To say there is a good market is an understatement. With 3m tonnes of soya being imported into the UK every year, there is a huge amount of scope for UK farmers," he said.



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