

CASE STUDY STRIP-TILL SWITCH SHOULD CUT COSTS AND BOOST SOIL CONDITION

After five years of having the oilseed rape at the 1000ha Penlynn Estate, Llwynhelig, Cowbridge in Wales established by a contractor using the Mzuri strip-till system, the estate has bought its own 4m Pro-Til 4T model and a stubble rake for the coming season.

The crop accounts for about a quarter of the 400ha of arable area, and was previously established using a Biodrill on a TopDown cultivator.

“As a break crop it’s becoming increasingly marginal to grow, so strip tillage will help reduce establishment costs while improving soil health and structure,” says assistant manager Damien Burnell.

The contractor was David Williams of Brigam Farm, Llanharry. “It was his results and glowing recommendation of the Mzuri service and

back-up that gave us the confidence to invest.” Yields on the mainly loamy clay average 3.5t/ha but have reached 4.2t/ha on some fields, he notes.

“We get about 1200mm of rain a year and slug pressure can be high in the autumn, so good establishment is essential.

“Our target sowing date is the third week of August. Flea beetle isn’t a great problem in this area but it does seem to be becoming more prevalent.”

Good establishment starts with the combine, stresses Mr Burnell. “Residue management is hugely important. Spreading the chopped straw evenly helps with controlling slugs and retaining soil moisture. Drilling into moisture is critically important.”

The estate usually sows hybrid varieties, their



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rapid autumn growth helping to combat flea beetles, he explains.

“Good seed-to-soil contact, essential for germination, is enhanced by the individual press wheels on the rear of the Mzuri.

“The drill allows us to apply both DAP fertiliser and slug pellets at sowing. The fertiliser is placed below the seed for easy uptake via the roots, and slug pellets are broadcast on the surface behind the press wheels.

“I’ve noticed improved root development which I attribute to the banded fertiliser application and to the seed being placed directly into the strip-tilled area behind the cultivation leg.”



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