



## The need to feed

by Chris Jackson, Export Manager UK TAG



These notes come to you as I am travelling yet again. Never forgetting that I am very privileged to see our farming industry in practice in so many different countries and continents. All of which involves meeting different cropping technologies and scales of enterprise, most

importantly, the people involved – from subsistence farmers to the owners of multi-national farming businesses.

Something that they all have in common of course, the weather that dictates all cropping involved. It is the one input that is beyond our total control.

Over the decades techniques have been developed to mitigate the effects of the climate in the northern hemisphere. For instance, the use of glass houses and poly tunnels to grow sensitive vegetable crops, and in dry countries the use of irrigation, for instance, to allow cotton and rice to be grown using irrigation techniques in Australia.

In the meantime, our geneticists have developed varieties of crops to produce higher yields in shorter growing seasons. For cereal crops, drying techniques allow for harvesting crops with moisture content too high for storage. It is obvious that farmers worldwide must be the most innovative people in the industry, constantly striving to improve their incomes from the main fixed asset, the land itself, whilst having to work with the most variable of assets, the weather.

With an ever-increasing world population, the challenges are forever increasing. Across the world we see the best farm land being taken over for housing, roads, railways, airports, factories and all over infrastructure with what seems to be no regard for the loss of food production capabilities - meaning that more has to be produced from dwindling assets.

So far, this challenge is being met. It is, however, a source of annoyance when I hear some experts say that the world is producing an excess of food, when people are still at best hungry – and at worst starving. Of course, the people in these categories are the very

ones who cannot afford to buy food, and where they have land, face crop failures due to climate. They are the very ones who cannot afford the sophisticated technologies that could help them.


Really it is only in the life of our earth that the last 300 years have seen the greatest change to farming, and the need seriously develop methods to get food into the cities and the urban populations. In earlier years the majority of people lived off the land, and if crops failed, whole communities starved. With the advent of the new industrial age, everything changed.

Farms had to become bigger to become more efficient and productive. I am now referring to farming in the UK and Northern Europe, and what is referred to as “The New World”, the Americas, Australia and Southern Africa.

In some parts of the world, the old order of very small landholdings with their built-in inefficiencies that accompany these sizes of enterprises, still continue often with a lack of will to try and change and use updated technologies. Changes have to come and always have a price. From the milling perspective, technologies invented in the UK form the base of a highly sophisticated modern industry. It can be argued that the water and windmills from old England passing into the history books, as the world needed more and more food processed and delivered into the expanding cities and urban conurbations.

The demand for bread and cereal based food with all of their derivatives has driven a vast industry for direct human consumption; this is alongside the need to feed the livestock and aquaculture industries. This demand and innovation in this side of our industry presents a real challenge to make the best of the resources that are facing competition from industrial use, such as biogas and energy sources, which without a competent milling industry livestock production as we know today, would not exist. Therefore, producing food for the population is a partnership enterprise.

On that note, as we will be present at many of our industries major shows, I hope that we will have the opportunity to talk you about these topics alongside developing opportunities.

 @AgrictecExports