

# SOIL FERTILITY SERVICES LIMITED

## Robert's Ramblings!



### 2010 - NEW YEAR SUNSHINE!

**HOT AND SUNNY - Well it was where I was on New Year's Eve! On 27th January we took off from Stansted airport for the Canary Islands (Lanzarote) and enjoyed some wonderful sun, sea and good food.**

So while you may have been freezing, struggling to rescue and feed stock, or keep the men occupied, just 4 hours away it was around 24° fairly breezy but under the wind, hot 40° in the sun.

For those of you who have not been, Lanzarote is a lovely little island - all volcanic with amazing hills and tiny roads through the smallest fields you could imagine, each fenced off by a small volcanic rock wall. Having had plenty of rain in December, the island was quite green with every type of bush and shrub growing happily; unlike summer when it would have been quite brown or black and very little colour.

They can grow pretty much anything in this rich, black volcanic rock if they only had the water. There is enough in the winter to grow any quantity of Canarian potatoes, (I love them) as well as vegetables and salad of all types, but in the summer they will struggle. The natural water resources are very limited and all domestic water is from a desalination process, but as this still leaves a lot of salt it is not suitable to drink or to irrigate.

If you do get the chance to just grab a week away, then the 4 hour flight will get you to any of the Canary Islands and it is worth the extra time to avoid Spain which is great for spring and autumn, but for a real winter break you need to go a bit further. The time zone is the same as ours which makes keeping in touch easy and there are plenty of wi-fi zones so that you can check email etc.

#### 2010 - A BUMPER YEAR?

2010 could be a bumper year; the autumn sown crops generally went in well and should come through this cold spell in good order. **Be ready to get some early nitrogen on to OSR - 70 kg/ha as urea will do well about the 1<sup>st</sup> or 2<sup>nd</sup> week of February.**

OSR rooting is generally very good which means the plant can access good levels of minerals, but it is amazing that in the period from stem extension to flowering it can use up to 10 kg/ha per day of potash. This is a huge amount to extract from the soil in such a short time - up to 300kg, so if you think you would like to 'go-for-it' and get the 5, 6 or 7 tonne/ha crop then you may need to add

some extra potassium, up to 180 kg/ha with nitrogen in early March. However, this is not enough on it's own; everything else has to be there, not least sulphur and luxury levels of boron and magnesium.

This crop will also need 60 kg/ha of nitrogen for every tonne of seed so if you are going for the 6 tonne/ha crop, then you must have 360 kg/ha of nitrogen available. There will be around 80kg/ha in the soil, you can put on up to 250 kg/ha from the bag and we can then top it up with the **OSR N-Hancer**, improved now to contain extra boron plus nitrogen fixing microbes. Apply at 40 litres/ha to supply the equivalent of another 40 kg/ha of nitrogen. This needs to go on in mid April in order to give the nitrogen fixers time to establish on the crop and to do the work of providing an extra 40 kg/ha of nitrogen from the atmosphere.

#### GUARANTEED RESULTS?

Hell NO!! I will mostly guarantee everything I do, but this one still has to be proved - I am confident it will work and in other countries (Germany) they seem to make it work. I have spent a lot of time on research and development for it and other people are using it; from what I can read it should work, but let's find out. If you want to give it a go, then just use 1 tub (1000 litres) on 20 hectares or so, the cost is about £0.87 litre (£40/ha) so it isn't cheap; I can't make it any cheaper as the bugs cost £17, the boron and plant stimulants are £20 plus mixing, delivery etc so there's not much I can do, still I think a tub is worth a punt - an extra 250 kg/ha OSR seed is worth £60 per hectare and this is what I would expect to achieve (or more) and that's with OSR at £240 tonne, if it goes to £300 then it is worth £75 per hectare.

#### WHEAT:

What about wheat yields and potential? It's too early yet, but most crops were well established and should have good potential, we'll look again in mid February and then decide what we need to do.

When you need to use Lime

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## PROFIT OR LOSS!

### POTATOES:

Potatoes are a disaster - brilliant crops, excellent quality, but no money. I looked in our local supermarket, and loose baking potatoes are about 90p per kg £900/tonne; as a producer you will be lucky if you get £140 tonne. I know they have big overheads, but a mark up of 600%? The thing is it would make no difference to sales if they put the price up to 99p per kg - £990/tonne and paid the farmer another £90/tonne, it would make a lot of difference to the producer, but this goes for a lot of commodity products, you are at the beginning of the supply chain with a perishable product that you have to move and you get pretty much what you are given. I still think the day is getting very close when we are going to be short of food and then maybe it will be your turn to dictate the prices - 2012 for sure - mark my words! Put it on a forward calendar and watch this space!

## DON'T FORGET TO CLAIM YOUR

## 5% EARLY PAYMENT DISCOUNT

## ON YOUR 2010 ORDER FOR BETTERGRASS PRODUCTS

(TO QUALIFY - YOU MUST  
PAY FOR IT BY END OF  
JANUARY 2010)

YOU NEED TO ORDER NOW

### GRASSLAND:

Grassland farmers have been having a mixed return; lamb and beef prices have been good but how the heck you can buy in stock at £800, keep them for 6 months or a year and then sell them at £1000 AND make a profit, search me.

Milk at one time was looking much better then slipped back to below the cost of production. How do you people keep going? A huge number of dairy farmers have given up and we are short of milk; the £ is weak and we will not be able to import all we need; what does this mean?

Higher prices are just around the corner; this country is broke, our credit rating is crap and there are too many people not working and of those that are employed, very few are prime producers, which means there is no one out there actually earning money. With the billions that Mr Brown has poured into the economy and the very low interest rate, inflation must be just around the corner - then you can make some money. In the meantime keep your costs down - I don't have to tell you that! grow as much high quality grass as you can and keep your stock healthy with mineral-rich grass and you will soon be making some real money (about 9 months time I reckon).

A new Government will blame it all on the other lot: "Not my fault mate" and stand back! Brown, Blair, Bush and the rest of the dirty dozen have had it, the problem is that Cameron, Osbourne, Hague and crew do not exactly fill you with confidence. They have all been caught with their snouts well and truly in the trough and the fact is, the problem of the economy is bigger than any of them can manage. One thing you do know, you and I are going to have to pay for this mess for a very long time; higher taxes, lower spending on infrastructure and high unemployment; a good dose of inflation might well be the only way out but you can be sure we are getting close to being a second rate nation with a second rate road system, a second rate power system, education system and NHS with no money to spend on any of them.

It's easy for me to spout off sitting here in the sun, but I will be back to it all on Monday morning, 7am as usual.

## A LITTLE NORFOLK HUMOUR:

Granfa he say to Granma:  
"whatever happened to our  
sexual relations?" " "  
Oi don't know" say Granma,  
"We don't even get a Christmas  
card no more."

The future lies in  
**BIO-LOGICAL FARMING SOLUTIONS**

