

## Have prices bottomed out?

The spectre of ever rising fertiliser prices has passed but have prices fallen as far as they are going to? “Calling the bottom of any market is an impossible task but the signs are that all the price adjustments to raw materials have happened and these have now been fed through to end market prices,” says GrowHow’s Marketing Manager, Ken Bowler.

One thing is certain, farmers need fertilisers. With many having sensibly run stocks down in recent high price years, the fertilisers which grass and arable crops need for yield and quality will have to be purchased at some stage. “I don’t think it’s too early to be talking about demand recovery,” he suggests.

“Understandably many farmers are still reluctant to buy too early after their experiences last year, but the market is now very different,” he adds.

From an arable perspective the autumn weather has been generally favourable and plantings are up on last year. The grassland market is always harder to predict, but as our survey at the Dairy Event (see panel) showed, de-stocking has been rife and the need for NPK compounds is well understood. “At the same time we have started to see some signs of green shoots in the wider economy with, for example, oil prices rising from a low point of \$30 a barrel to around \$80 today.”

### Our Dairy Event survey said:

- 45% of farmers who had yet to buy were looking to buy at least some fertiliser by Christmas
- End of season on-farm stocks were 50% lower for N and 70% lower for NPK products than in 2008
- The expectation was that similar rates to those of 2009 would be used in 2010 but with low stocks more product would have to be purchased
- Over the last two years 40% have moved from compounds to straight N. However all participants realised that this practice could not continue for long

## So should you buy now?

The answer will depend on farm circumstances, however it is important to recognise that, compared to 12 months ago, fertilisers are around half the price they were. At the same time the continuing weakness of the £ is inflating the price of imports.

“To my mind there is very little downside to purchasing now,” says Ken. “Prices have stabilised, product will be needed and, for those who have cash flow concerns, GrowHow Finance is available through ING with competitive terms and flexible payments. Having at least some of your requirement in the shed also acts as an insurance policy in case of delivery or other supply problems in the spring.”

## Happy Birthday Nitram®

Nitram, the iconic British fertiliser brand is 45 years old and to celebrate GrowHow is offering customers the chance to win 45 bags of Nitram worth up to £6000.

What’s more you don’t have to answer any difficult questions or come up with any annoying slogans.

## Here’s how it will work

Anyone who takes delivery of 10.2 tonnes or more GrowHow product between 1 October 2009 and 31 March 2010 will be entered automatically into the prize draw. Prizes will be drawn in April and the winner will be announced in Farmers Weekly (FW).

Nitram was the first ever ammonium nitrate fertiliser. Developed by ICI and introduced in 1964 it superceded Nitro-Chalk, with prills replacing granules.

GrowHow has also sponsored a special fertiliser poster as part of FW's own 75 birthday celebrations. Watch out for your copy in the 30 October issue of FW. The poster will also be available on request from [www.growhow.co.uk](http://www.growhow.co.uk)

## GrowHow to team up with Syngenta

GrowHow Adviser for the East, Tom Land, is to work with crop protection and seed company Syngenta to provide fertiliser advice for their Platform demonstration site near King's Lynn.

Tom will be concentrating on canopy management using GrowHow's N-Min<sup>®</sup> & N-Calc system to calculate fertiliser requirements for the winter cereals and oilseed rape plots. Prior to this he will be taking part in Syngenta winter grower briefings which are to be held in December and January where he will be commenting on the lessons learnt from GrowHow's own trials and explaining the benefits of using the N-Min & N-Calc service.

## Farming excellence is recognised

Well earned congratulations go to three worthy winners of GrowHow supported awards.

On 8 October Andrew Gloag was crowned Arable Farmer of the Year at the prestigious Farmers Weekly Awards evening held in London's Grosvenor House Hotel. He was presented with his trophy by TV star Julia Bradbury. Mr Gloag's family business in North Yorkshire is an excellent example of how a single operation can be developed to the mutual benefit of many. When he took over in 1984 there were just 89ha of arable, today he crops about 1,850ha under contract-farming arrangements.

Welshman Dylan Jones has won the British Grassland Society's National Grassland Management Competition. Mr Jones farms 156ha in North Wales. He achieves an impressive 37% of the 8500 per cow yield from forage. He received his award during the Dairy Event.

Meanwhile in August at the Pembroke Show, Hefyn Wilson of Tregibby Farm, Cardigan was named winner of the GrowHow / Wynnstay cup for the best Holstein cow. Hefyn sells pedigree Holsteins and Jerseys throughout the UK. His 75 pedigree Holsteins average 10,500 litres with 4.5% butterfat and 3.2% protein with the Jerseys at 7,000 litres, 6% butterfat and 4% protein.

Of course it's not just the winners who deserve our congratulations, the quality of the finalists in all three events was impressive – well done to you all.

## New plant opens on Teesside

GrowHow's investment of £15 million at its Billingham plant has substantially increased Nitram production. At the same time discharges to both air and water have been significantly reduced as the company helps to meet the Environment Agency's goals for the Tees Valley.

Speaking at the official opening, Rt Hon Lord Smith of Finsbury, Chairman of the Environment Agency, said: "This project is an excellent example of how regulators and industry can work together for mutual benefit. We believe that the result will be a significant contribution to environmental improvement: better air quality, continuing improvements in water quality, a return of increasing numbers of migratory fish such as sea trout and salmon to the area and a greater business efficiency for the company too."

Paul Thompson, Chief Executive of GrowHow UK, added: "The environmental benefits are important for wildlife and the local community. There is also a serious gain for UK farmers. Increased efficiency will enable us to raise annual production capacity by over 80,000 tonnes."

### Captions:

Arable Farmer of the Year Andrew Gloag with Julia Bradbury, GrowHow's Ken Bowler and Jane King

Dylan Jones (left) receives his award at the Dairy Event in September. GrowHow's grassland specialist Elaine Jewkes, (centre) was one of the judges

Back home with the trophy Hefyn Wilson (right) with Wynnstay's Cefin Evans

At the opening left to right: Carol Devlin, CAO & Company Secretary, CEO Paul Thompson, Cllr Paul Kirton Mayor of Stockton-on-Tees, Rt Hon Lord Smith and Manufacturing Director Ashraf Malik