



One step ahead of the game the Helix Farm network expands

*Helix East host
Tom Jewers (right)
with agronomist
Mike Greener*

Change is inevitable - over the next decade farming faces many new challenges and opportunities. During this period, farm businesses need to remain financially profitable and sustainable. Helix will help them do so.

In order to move with the times, agronomists and growers will require new technologies and practices that allow them to become increasingly more efficient and adaptable, believes Hutchinsons Head of Technology & Innovation, Stuart Hill, who oversees the Helix project.

The most important question is whether these technologies have a benefit at farm level – are they affordable and practical and do they improve productivity and profitability?

This is exactly what Hutchinsons has set out to answer; testing the value and benefits of new technologies

on a farm scale level is the premise for Hutchinsons Helix Technology Farms. The National site, which was launched last summer, is hosted by Andrew and William Pitts of J W Pitts & Sons, located at Whiston in Northamptonshire.

At the very core of the Helix Farms approach is a proofing process to ensure that technologies offering this added value, are tested thoroughly on farm. This includes looking at any potential further development to simplify and integrate them into practical everyday use.



*Helix East
Co-ordinator
Rob Jewers*

2020 Helix Focus Areas: Testing Financial and Environmental value

How can using data improve profitability?

Measurement and monitoring to set targets for improvement and adaptation.

For example, using yield map layers with soil maps through the Omnia platform to realise different areas of productivity and subsequent actions.

How can we improve soils and soil health?

Soils are fundamental to deliver improvement in managing output, the environment and costs. For example, practices that increase soil carbon sequestration and options to measure change.

How can we deliver more benefits from nutrition (and soil) management?

Soils and nutrition are inextricably linked. Live and accurate measurement of soil and plant nutrition is critical to manage costs and output in season and long term. For example, TerraMap is a soils mapping technology already delivered through Helix that indicates more accurately areas of difference and consequent management and cost changes.

How can we further optimise crop health and protection?

Prediction is increasingly important alongside justification of decision making. For example, climate and pest models in the Omnia platform.

What benefit do genetics offer?

Improved genetics will support crop health and input management. For example, hybrid wheat development and tailoring management according to trait and farm situation.

Can integrated crop management deliver in terms of profitability and sustainability?

ICM covers all crop production activities and defined recording and output is necessary to demonstrate best practice. For example, rotational management and biodiversity tools.

"Everything that we are doing on the Helix sites will link closely to Integrated Crop Management (ICM) as we know that this will be a key requirement for future farming systems, and we are able to trial and test them within this context, which is a really valuable output," he explains.

He highlights the pest and disease forecasting tools being developed through the **Omnia Climate module** that brings together crop modelling, weather forecasting tools and historical data to ensure that spray timings are applied as accurately as possible and linked to the variety, yield prediction and threat.

Tom is particularly interested in how he can use technology such as Omnia's yield performance and cost of production mapping to allow him to be ahead of the game when the ELM scheme comes into force.

*"As we move to public money for public goods, I need to know what my best options are - so now is the time to test these. If I know what works for me, we will be **"match fit"** by the time ELM is rolled out"*



Working with his Hutchinsons agronomist Mike Greener, Tom plans to explore variety blends as a way of managing disease and if foliar nutrition can be used to replace certain inputs or improve nitrogen use efficiency.

Learn more about the Helix project via our dedicated website: www.helixfarm.co.uk

> Work conducted at the national site, has already facilitated the launch of exciting tools such as **TerraMap**, the highest resolution soil mapping system available, the **Omnia Precision** climate module, a BYDV prediction model, and later this year a rotational planning tool.

Now, Hutchinsons is rolling out the Helix Farm concept to regional centres and the first of these is the Helix East Farm, near Bury St Edmunds in Suffolk. Additional sites in north and central England will be launched later this year.

Helix East is Hosted by Tom Jewers of G D Jewers & Son at Wood Hall Farm in Rattlesden. Mr Jewers believes that by hosting the Helix Farm it provides him with an excellent opportunity to test new technologies and approaches on his own farm - at no risk to him.

Hutchinsons Helix East co-ordinator and crop nutrition specialist, Rob Jewers, will work closely with Tom across all of the focus areas and explains that these will be run on an improve or remove basis, ensuring that improving farm performance and therefore profitability remain the focus.