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Euro Grass News, October 2009

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Market

Spot business – Good business?



The financial crisis is affecting the operational patterns of companies throughout nearly all industries. Like many other businesses, the grass seed industry also has a couple of challenges to face.

A correct mid-term assessment of the need for seed supply appears to be almost impossible in markets that have seen strong fluctuations in demand, supply and prices. Therefore, a cautious purchase behaviour is often seen as a strategy to reduce the inventory. The advantage of this is a lower inventory risk that minimizes the need for working capital, stock and quality management. Buying new seed at the time of demand, gives a firm basis for short-term calculation of mixture prices.

However, there are also a couple of reasons that are underlining the importance to secure a certain part of the seed requirements through mid-term and long-term engagements:

Availability of seed: A sufficient and sustainable supply of recommended products and specialities can, in many cases, only be obtained through good planning, which enables the producer to secure the necessary seed production.

Profitability and risk buffer: When markets are weaker, it makes sense to secure both the financial and volume planning not only in quality varieties, but also in commodities.

Swimming against the stream: Buying when few others are in a purchase mood and keeping calm when the markets are heating up is advantageous. Digging for the deepest offer of the day is therefore

far less important than good timing to sustain a business.

The actual purchase reluctance and an unstable demand situation are cloaking the fact that European grass seed production is currently at a low level. This will likely lead to rapidly changed market conditions in times of increased seed consumption. On the other hand, a commitment in the grass business will prevent a further decrease of the production base, and improve long-term planning security.

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■ Breeding

Rust in Forage Grass reduces Quality



Crown rust (*Puccinia coronata*) is the most common disease in forage grasses in Europe. Due to climatic changes, many regions are more severely affected now by rust infections, than 20 years ago.

Today, in regions where in the past we had no or infrequent rust infections, they are becoming more and more prevalent. These previously unaffected regions, the northern most parts of Europe, the UK, and the Republic of Ireland are now at risk of infection.

Euro Grass, in conjunction with the Federal Research Station of Agriculture in Braunschweig, have carried out investigations which show that rust infected pastures, some days, lose up to 30 % of their sugars (water soluble carbohydrates). Additionally, the animals sense, with their tongue, rust spores on the grass leaves and avoid eating infected forage.

Therefore, the grass should be as healthy as possible to give good forage. There are two different ways to reduce the rust infection in pastures.

1. Management strategies: The plants should always be in a good nutritional condition (hungry plants are susceptible to illness) and the leaves should never get old (use before the rust sporulation starts). That means a utilization of the forage every 4 to 6 weeks.

2. Breeding strategies: During recent years, Euro Grass has released a number of new varieties which are very good in rust resistance. For example: The tetraploid varieties LIMBOS, SURES and ASMIR, or the diploid variety SKIRON. SKIRON released in 2009 is, in Germany, the first diploid variety with a 3 rating (low susceptibility to rust).

During the last 20 years, Euro Grass has developed a wide range of breeding strategies to get ahead in the race against rust infection, to produce grasses resistant to the fungus. Rust resistant

Lolium ecotypes were collected from many areas in which rust is very common. Euro Grass transferred resistance genes from these ecotypes into modern breeding material. The same technique was used with resistant Festuca plants. Using recurrent backcrosses, rust resistance genes were transferred from the Festuca genus into the Lolium genus. After the crossings, Euro Grass uses its European network (with stations in France, UK, The Netherlands and Germany) to check the rust resistance under different climatic conditions. These tests are carried out several times to ensure that new Euro Grass varieties have a stable and sustainable rust resistance in all parts of Europe.

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■ Products

Horse meadows – Euro Grass has the right mixtures for all purposes



Duyselshof in Duizel (the Netherlands) is a stud farm which accommodates 70 horses and has a large number of paddocks and meadows.

Wim van der Leege, a businessman with a passion for horses, successfully breeds and trains show jumping horses. In order to have an optimal environment for the horses, all primary conditions must be first class. Therefore, during the last few years, Kees Oosthoek, field manager at Duyselshof, has renewed all existing meadows.

Euro Grass gives an “All-in-one Service”

In making their choice for the most suitable grass seed mixtures for horses, Oosthoek and his colleagues carried out extensive research. “Euro Grass is the company which provided the best option, because they do not only sell grass mixtures, they also give

very good advice about fertilization and maintenance. They have an all-in-one service” said Oosthoek.

What is the right horse meadow mixture?

VitaHorse GrassBalance was chosen because it contains a high percentage of wear tolerant turf varieties. Furthermore the mixture has a good feeding value as well as good palatability. In roughly two years Duyselshof will finish the training accommodation, which is currently under construction. From there on the meadows will be grazed less intensively. Oosthoek intends at that point to switch to VitaHorse Low Fructane Mix, which lowers the risk of laminitis (a painful disease for horses).



“If we can avoid this illness by using this mixture, it has to be worth trying” says Oosthoek.

For more information about VitaHorse from Euro Grass NL please consult www.eurograss.nl. For international sales please consult www.eurograss.com. Here you will find more information about Country Horse, Euro Grass’ international brand for horse meadows. Please consult our product manager Jeroen Giesen for detailed information about international deliveries of County Horse mixtures.

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■ Products

Euro Grass’ new turf mixture programme, “Euro Grass Turf”, benefits from top quality *Poa pratensis*.



Top quality *Poa pratensis* varieties, together with our *Lolium perenne* varieties make perfect sports mixtures.

In our last newsletter, Head of Turf Grass Breeding, Cord Schumann, wrote about successful breeding of Lolium perenne for turf use (article can be found

on www.eurograss.com). Similarly, Euro Grass has bred excellent *Poa pratensis* varieties for turf use, which can be found on the STRI (Bingley, UK) list:





- 3 varieties in top eight on the S2 list (Sports list)
- 3 best varieties on L2 (Lawn list)
- 3 varieties in top four on an imaginary calculated combined list

PARSIFAL has not finished testing for listing on the main lawn list (L2) yet but, judging from the “New cultivars” list, we expect it to be listed well above average on L2.

On a calculated combined list it will probably be listed above average, which is quite unique for such a dark type variety. JOKER is at present only listed in Germany and the Netherlands, where it shows outstanding performance; in some cases even better than that of LIMOUSINE, LINCOLNSHIRE and LINARES.

Poa pratensis is especially valuable in sports mixtures (recovery from rhizomes), in ornamental mixtures and in mixtures where winter hardiness is required. Consequently most “Sport and Play” mixtures and some “Ornamental” mixtures contain quite a high percentage of *Poa pratensis*.

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Euro Grass Breeding – STRI (Bingley) 2009

Lincolnshire, Linares and Limousine are on both lists (S2, Sport and L2, Lawn)

Cultivar	Breeder	S2 2009 (main list, sport)		L2 2009 (main list, lawn)		Calculated combined list 09		
		Mean	Ranking	Mean	Ranking	Mean	Ranking	
LINCOLNSHIRE	EGB	6,6	8	7,3	1	7,0	4	
LINARES	EGB	7,0	4	7,3	2	7,2	1	
LIMOUSINE	EGB	6,9	5	7,2	3	7,1	2	
PARSIFAL	EGB	6,3	12					
JOKER								
Bottom		4,5	24	4,4	23			
Total number:							21	

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