



EURONION

20 Years of co-ordinating bulb onion production across Europe

EURONION

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The year has started very dry with the unusual scene of fields being irrigated even twice to initiate germination, a far from ideal situation. Late winter there was only 25% of normal rainfall in the Southern onion growing counties. As per picture 2 a few April showers are improving the situation but very little. Whether there is gold at the end of the rainbow remains to be seen! As would be expected, working down land has been a challenge on the heavier soils then reducing the populations (due to excess of under 60mm bulbs in 2016 crop) has added to the challenge.

Direct drilled crops are at the one true leaf stage, at best. First to harvest however will be the overwintered crop in early July which has suffered earlier from very wet conditions for establishment in November and prevailing in January / February when very dry conditions took over. Some crops therefore suffered from shallow rooting as soil conditions became more critical and continue to be so.

The picture 1 shows a crop of overwinter Shakespeare 17/21 size sets which are doing particularly well despite the dry conditions (Lincolnshire silt soil).



There has been some relief from the dry conditions as in picture 2 where very occasional storms provide localised irrigation!

Spring sets are growing away well at 4-5 true leaves for early varieties planted in January and 2-3 true leaves for maincrop. Overall crop areas are being calculated at present but no great changes are anticipated. However, seed rates in combination with dry soil at establishment may well result in a later crop harvest than usual. All to play for at the moment!

With the declining availability of herbicides in the dry conditions, weed control is an increasing challenge. Euronion members have also been lobbying appropriate EU authorities to renew approval for Maleic Hydrazide. Currently available for the 2017 crop there is continuing uncertainty beyond this.

Brief update from David O'Connor 2nd May 2017

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