

AD TRIALS

2016 REPORT

ANAEROBIC DIGESTION

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GRASS FOR ANAEROBIC DIGESTION RESULTS TO DATE SHOW MIXTURES OUTPERFORMING STRAIGHT VARIETIES

Cropvale Research Site, where the grass trials for anaerobic digester is taking place.

Barenbrug, one of the largest grass seed producers in the UK, today announced initial observations from a research trial assessing the suitability of different grass varieties and mixtures as feedstocks for anaerobic digestion (AD) plants.

At its 15-acre Cropvale trial site in Worcestershire, Barenbrug's agricultural team is mid-way through a two-year programme evaluating the AD potential of a range of shorter-term grasses, perennial species, and mixtures.

Barenbrug's AD trial was established in autumn 2014 and will run for two harvest years. Plots of Italian ryegrass, hybrid ryegrass and tall fescue have been sown

alongside a number of areas containing mixtures of these varieties. Five cuts were taken in 2015 and observations from 2015 suggest that the mixtures generally out-yielded the straight varieties, but 100% Italian ryegrass performed best of all. Achieving high yields of dry matter per hectare is the key objective for farmers entering the AD field, so Barenbrug is investigating how to achieve extra bulk and how to support farmers looking to branch out into this fast growing aspect of the agriculture industry.

Mhairi Dawson, Forage Research & Development Manager at Barenbrug UK, said: "By the end of 2017 it is estimated that the UK will have more than 75,000 hectares of land producing forage crops for AD plants. Currently, the majority of feedstock grown in the UK for AD is forage maize. However, with numerous new sites planned up and down the country – some in areas where maize will not be suitable – grass is set to become far more commonplace as an input stream.

"Building an AD unit makes good financial sense for many farmers. Different government subsidies are available plus a number of UK energy providers are actively seeking farm partners that are willing to either supply feedstocks or build AD plants in return for long-term rental payments.

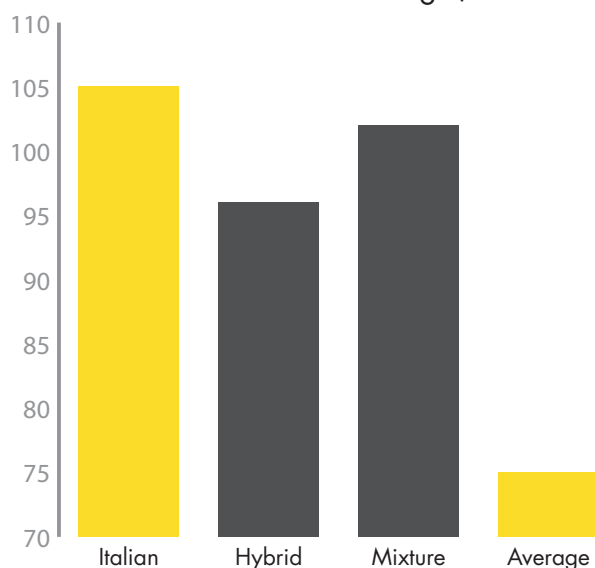
"As more farmers start to consider AD as an extra revenue stream, we're ramping up our research so we can give them solid scientific advice on the best grass varieties to grow for this purpose. We look forward to seeing if the trends that we've spotted so far continue or if the longer-term species will offer a higher yield overall over the term of the trial.

"We realised a couple of years ago that there could be significant interest in grass as a feedstock for AD – and have been working behind the scenes ever since. While dry matter per hectare will be the key driver, we are also taking into consideration the impact of delayed cutting for extra bulk versus quality. We are also looking at the adaptation of grass swards to multiple applications of digestate."

The number of AD plants operational across the UK has grown significantly in recent years. A market report published by the Anaerobic Digestion & Bioresources Association (ADBA) in July 2015 revealed that there are now more than 400 AD plants up and running nationwide, with around 150 of these on farm.

Interest and planning applications for AD plants continue to grow with current predictions of double growth by 2020.

Tonnes fresh weight/ha



GET IN TOUCH TO DISCUSS YOUR GRASS REQUIREMENTS



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