

Livestock

New wave of maize varieties unlocks energy potential

- Offer high quality and digestibility
- Complement 'ultra-early varieties
- Get more from home-grown forage

A new focus on the role of digestibility in maize-based rations could improve feed utilisation efficiency and the cost-effectiveness of home-grown feeds.

Attention to detail of how maize performs when fed to animals could increase its value even further for growing numbers of UK dairy producers, says Neil Groom of Suffolk-based forage specialists Grainseed.

The introduction of new high digestibility maize varieties Bonnie and Absalon – and their positioning at the top of the 2018 NIAB descriptive list for less favourable sites – says much about the growing importance of feed utilisation characteristics, he says.

“Maize is primarily thought of as energy source for dairy rations and it is right that much of the breeding work carried out over the last 20 years has been driven by increasing ME produced per unit of available land.”

Bonnie and Absalon have the highest combinations of ME yield and cell wall digestibility on

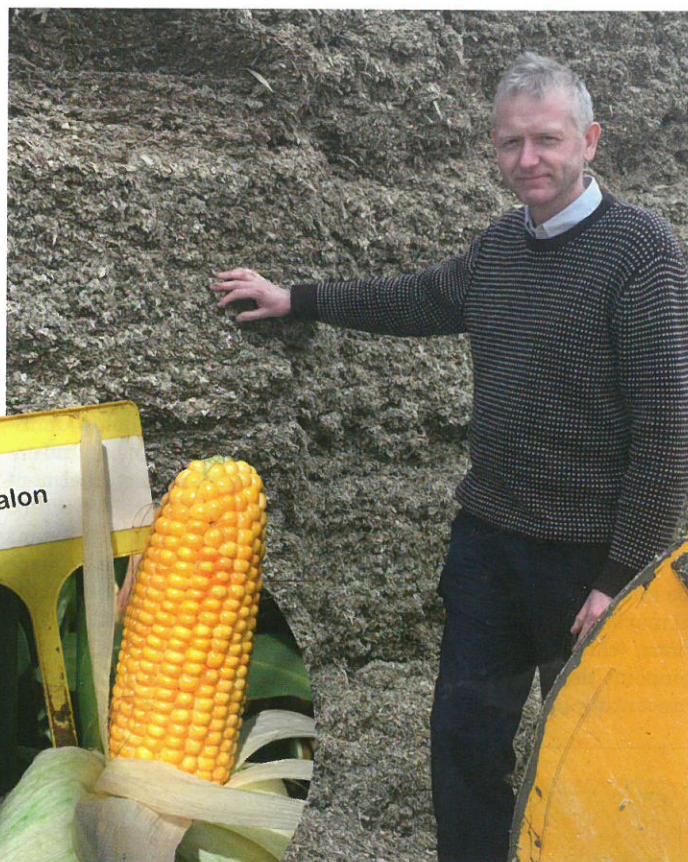
the NIAB 2018 forage maize descriptive list for less-favourable sites, making them the perfect forages for high performance dairy cows.

“In terms of getting as much energy into cows in a given time period, these new varieties are an ideal option and complement the characteristics of proven ultra-early varieties like Remington and Lovely, perfectly.”

At 197,000 MJ/ha, Bonnie has the highest outright ME yield of all varieties on the 2018 less favourable list, followed by Absalon at 195,000 MJ/ha. In terms of cell wall digestibility, Absalon tops the list with 58.5% and Bonnie is in second spot at 58.3%.

Easy to grow

“These are very much ‘next generation’ maize varieties designed to help producers get the most out of home-grown forages without having to resort to bought-in



The varieties will suit high output herds, says Neil Groom. Left: Absalon tops the list for cell wall digestibility

feeds and they're also exceptionally easy to grow," says Mr Groom.

He adds: "Because they're extra early, they can be used on most locations in the UK that have adequate heat units and they can cope with wider variations in growing conditions than more later maturing types."

Both varieties offer high quality in the main maturity group required by most growers and are perfect for feeding in rations with

a high proportion of maize. These would suit many growers in the UK with high output herds, says Mr Groom.

Growers in more exposed areas should still consider going for an ultra early variety rather than an extra early. Varieties Lovely and Remington are still proving very popular in such areas, he says, with Grainseed reporting a 10% lift in sales of these varieties this season.