Profiting from Reducing Tillage and Lowering Emissions

Case Study 5—Hew Hunter, Broachrigg Farm

National Advice Hub
T: 0300 323 0161
E: advice@fas.scot
W: www.fas.scot

Hew Hunter farms 1200 acres south of Edinburgh, basing himself at Broachrigg Farm. The business carries about 2000 lambs and fattens 200-300 head of cattle a year.

Cropping extends to 350 acres of cereals, of which, typically, 200 acres is spring barley and the balance split between winter barley and winter wheat. Fodder rape and fodder beet sit within the rotation along with over-winter cover crops and AECS green manures.

Some 400 acres has seen open cast mining in the past so fertility building has always been an ongoing priority. Soil type is predominantly sandy loam, interspersed with heavier clays, although more sandy gravels across part of the farm do predispose those areas to drought.

As time has gone on and the soils have improved, Hew has seen his horsepower requirement fall and now runs a 240hp Fendt tractor on the 6m Horsch Sprinter. The drill has the ability to direct drill crops into stubbles and the front packer wheels also enable drilling into ploughed and pressed ground when and where ploughing is retained for weed control reasons. Hew is keen to maintain flexibility in his system because of the nature of the autumn drilling window and will revert to a more conventional combination drill setup from his local contractor if the weather dictates.

But behind all Hew's work is his message that soil improvements take time and gradually reducing tillage depth is done in line with the soil's capacity to self-structure as organic matter content improves.