



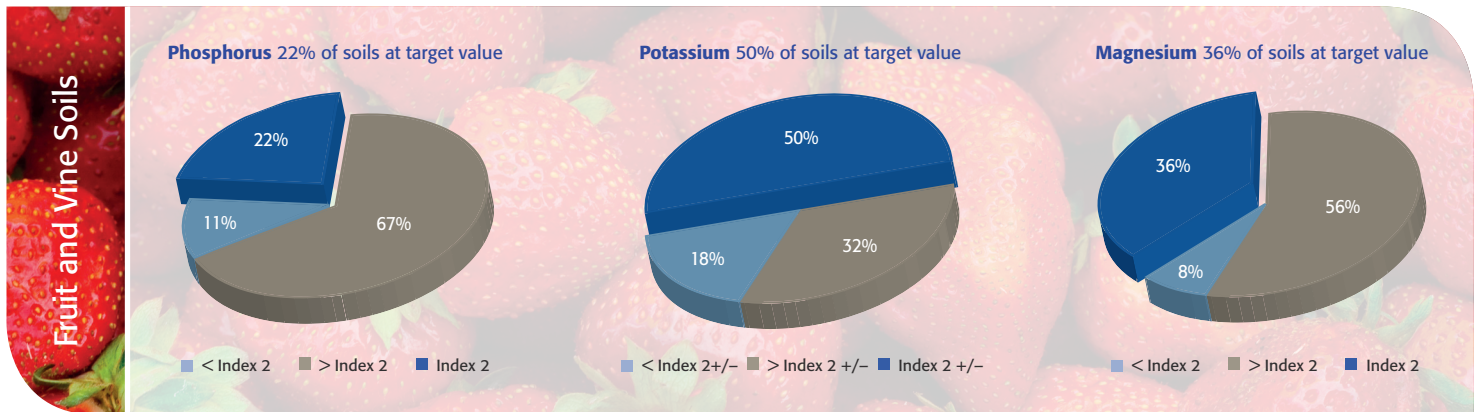
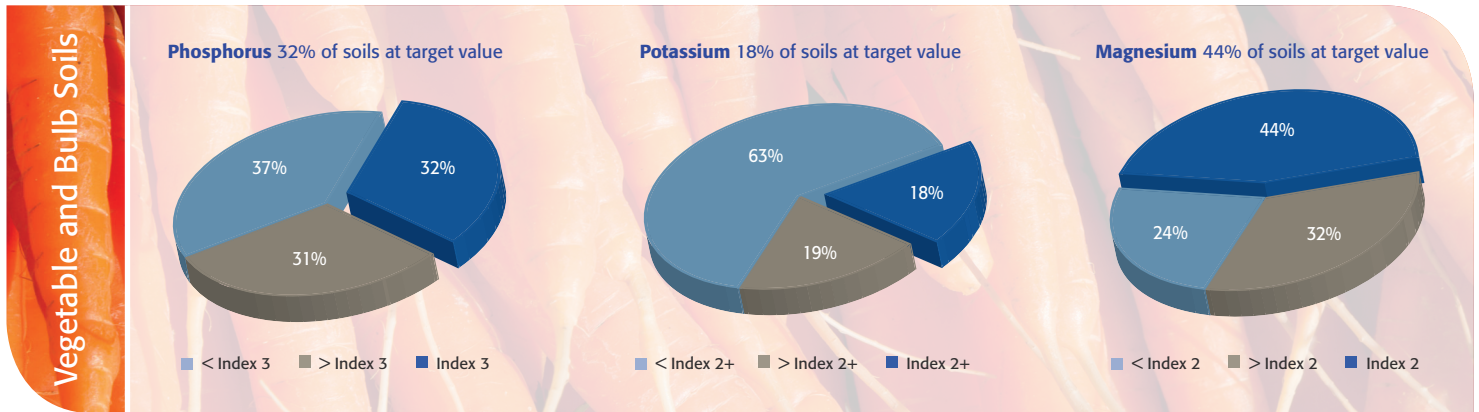
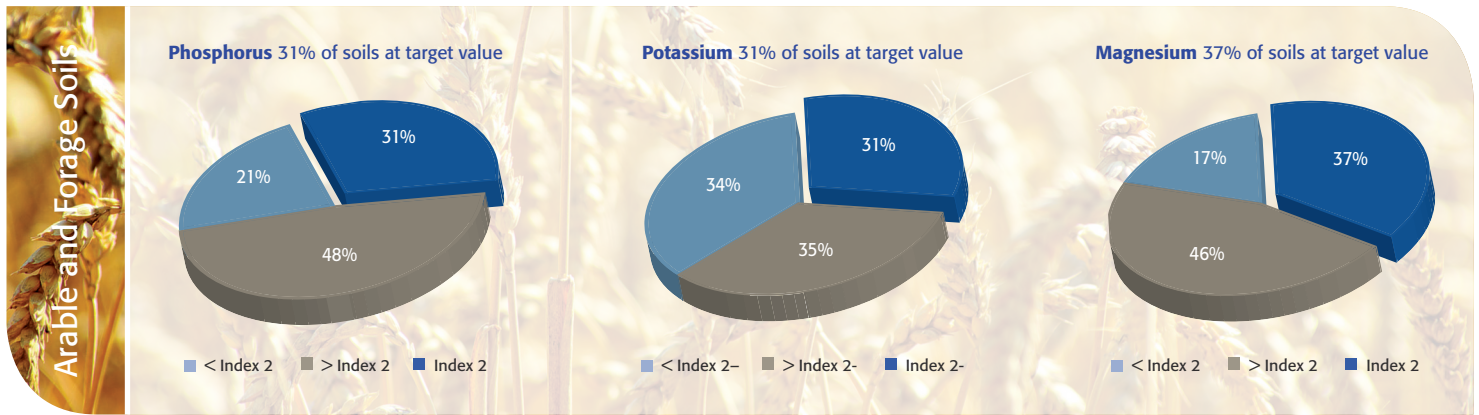
Part of the Cawood Scientific Group



Soil Nutrient Status

Data Summary 2010 - 2011

In our third annual review of soil nutrient data we look at soils from four different crop categories with an in-depth focus on grassland (see overleaf). Below is a summary which details the amount of soils with indices at, above or below the optimum levels for P, K and Mg in each crop category for the 2010 - 2011 season. The nutrient levels and crop categories are those specified in the 8th edition of the fertiliser manual RB209.



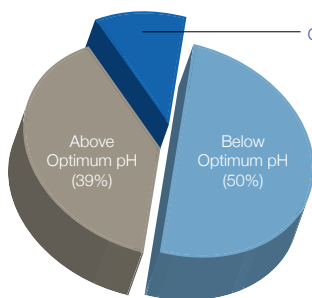
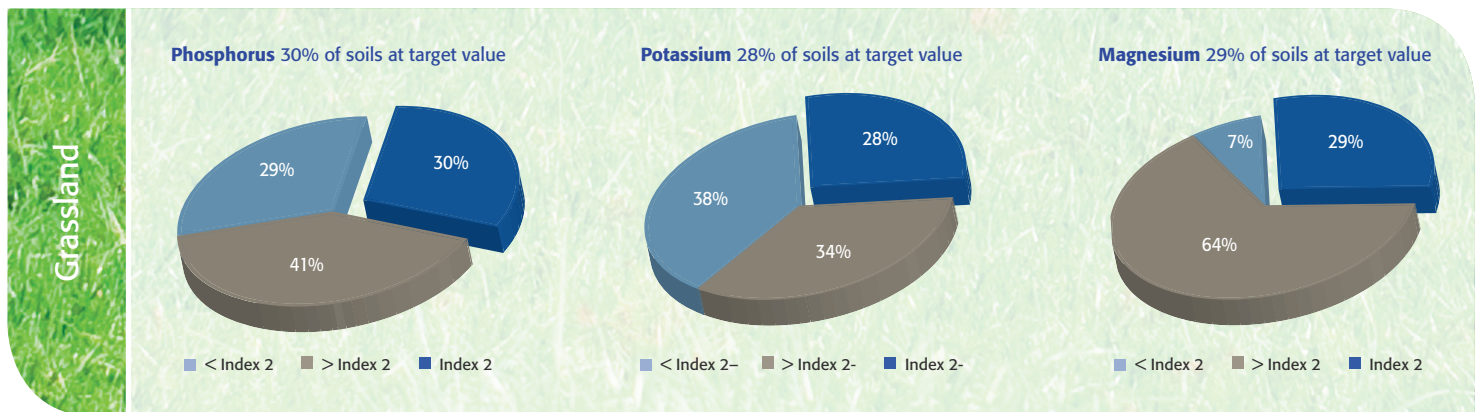
Conclusions should be drawn cautiously as this data was not necessarily representative of all UK fields and data collations were not statistically rigorous.

Optimising your grass yield

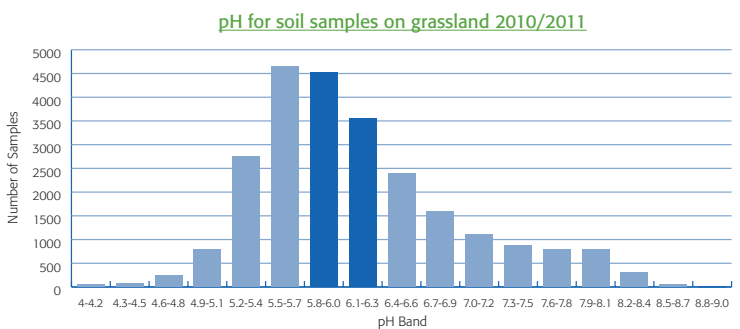
Introduction from our Chairman Sir Ben Gill

Understandably farmers and growers spend a considerable amount of time seeking to maximise the value of what they produce to maximise their profits. And yet, all too often, they do not give appropriate attention to ensuring that they are reducing or optimising their input costs. In the grassland sector, traditionally, there has not been the uptake of soil analysis to support the knowledge of the state of their growing medium: their soil, as has been the case in the arable sector. And yet the results of the survey work show that the benefits in maximising yield and reducing fertiliser costs can be substantial in the vast majority of grassland scenarios.

In January this year the Government's Foresight report highlighted the global need for "Sustainable Intensification" of our agricultural production to feed the world. This critically means that the tools of precision farming need to spread from arable farming to the land occupied by our biggest and potentially highest yielding crop in the UK: grass. To achieve this, our livestock farmers need to have available the basic information that these annual survey results suggest could deliver significant benefits in reduced costs and increasing profit margins.



Proportion of samples above and below optimum pH (6-6.2) for grassland



With the price of feed in the UK markets increasing, making the best use of grazed or conserved grass should be the priority for livestock farmers. Grasses are highly effective at maximising uptake and incorporation of available nutrients into your livestock's biomass. Livestock farmers able to exploit the maximum value out of their fields will see major financial benefits.

Ensuring the right establishment and maintaining correct nutrient levels of grass mixtures in well managed leys is essential to produce plentiful, high quality grazing material. This also ensures increased yields of high quality silage can be produced.

Soil analysis for grassland soils is carried out far less than for arable soils and it is often the case that fertiliser and manure usage is not soundly based. There has been a significant increase in the uptake of precision farming techniques by arable farmers, where large amounts of information can be gathered for every part of the field. This is not being mirrored in the livestock sector, which can be a problem as farmers can have very little knowledge of individual field performance and not take the appropriate steps to address any problems.

A recent soil sampling project run in conjunction with EBLEX, FWAG and the EA getting soil samples from individual livestock farmers across the country found that overall, only 9% of fields sampled were at the target index 2 for both phosphate (P) and potash (K).

When looked at separately, only 26% and 28% of fields hit P and K targets respectively. About 29% of fields had high levels of P or K. This increased to 44% (P) and 37% (K) for dairy farms. Around 43% had low levels of P or K and 45% of fields showed soil acidity (pH) levels lower than target – this increased to 73% of upland farm samples. EBLEX livestock scientist, Liz Genever, said:

"These findings show that in many cases we are not optimising the fertility of our soils. Standard soil tests are relatively cheap (around £10 per sample) compared to the potential savings (£100s) and farmers who are not regularly testing cannot manage their nutrients as efficiently as those who are."

For further information on the analytical services that NRM provides in the agricultural sector please contact our customer service team on:

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