

# ORGANIC

organic farming technical summary



## Variety Choices for Organic Wheat

OFTS52

Modern varieties have been bred under high input systems. This means their yield potential is targeted towards high inputs of pesticides and fertiliser and their disease resistances may be low. Fortunately organic crops have a lower risk of severe disease infection, and lodging, because of reduced nitrogen offtake and less dense leaf canopies.

Organic crops tend to be sown a little later than their conventional counterparts: this has benefits for weed control, and also reduces lodging risk. However, the slower developing varieties such as Claire, Consort and Access may not establish so well if sown after the end of October.

Although organic trials are limited in number, recent organic work by SAC and other trials in England provide useful guidelines for most of the current varieties.

**Access** is a slow developing hard feed wheat. This variety needs to establish well if it is to compete against weeds, though its high tillering potential is an advantage. It has moderate resistance against *Septoria tritici*, but has good resistance to mildew.

**Chablis** is a nabim Group 2 spring wheat that has yielded very well in autumn sown organic trials carried out by SAC. However, it is vulnerable to lodging under conditions of high soil fertility.

**Claire** has produced some excellent yields in English trials, but this slow developing variety is likely to under perform in Scotland if sown late or if mildew is severe. Limited evidence suggests it does not compete well against weeds.

**Consort** has shown some consistent, though modest yields in SAC trials. Moderate to poor for diseases, but with stiff straw, this variety is likely to perform less well if sown after late October.

**Deben** has performed erratically in English trials and is likely to be of limited success in Scotland.

**Exsept** is a milling wheat that has performed very well in English trials where its yield potential appears to be relatively high under organic conditions. SAC is awaiting results from its own trial this year.

**Malacca** has yielded well in SAC trials, though it under performed in some English trials. This short variety has moderate weed suppression and a good disease resistance profile.

**Maris Widgeon** is an older variety with good weed suppression, partly because of its fast development and extra height. This variety has shown variable yields, though it is also valued for its tall straw.

**Pegassos** is a German variety that has performed well in Scottish trials, partly because of its robustness under different growing conditions. This variety competes well against weeds and has good resistance to ear *Fusarium*.

**Riband** has shown erratic yields under organic conditions and suffers from early loss of its leaf canopy when disease levels are high, especially *Septoria*. Seed rates should be kept relatively high as this variety is shy tillering.

**Robigus** has not been tested under organic conditions, though with the exception of eyespot and yellow rust it has very good disease resistance ratings.

**Option** has yielded very well in Scottish trials. A mid to late October sowing should reduce lodging risk in this weak-strawed variety. This variety appears to be a good early competitor against weeds.

**Solstice** is in nabim Group 2. This is a relatively slow developer and like Claire and Consort it could suffer if sown too late. It has good resistance to ear *Fusarium* and has tall but stiff straw. It is vulnerable to mildew and *Septoria tritici*.

**Tanker** is a relatively fast developing hard feed wheat. It is susceptible to the *Septoria* diseases and ear *Fusarium*. As with Riband, seed rates should be kept relatively high in this shy tillering variety.

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