

Button Farm

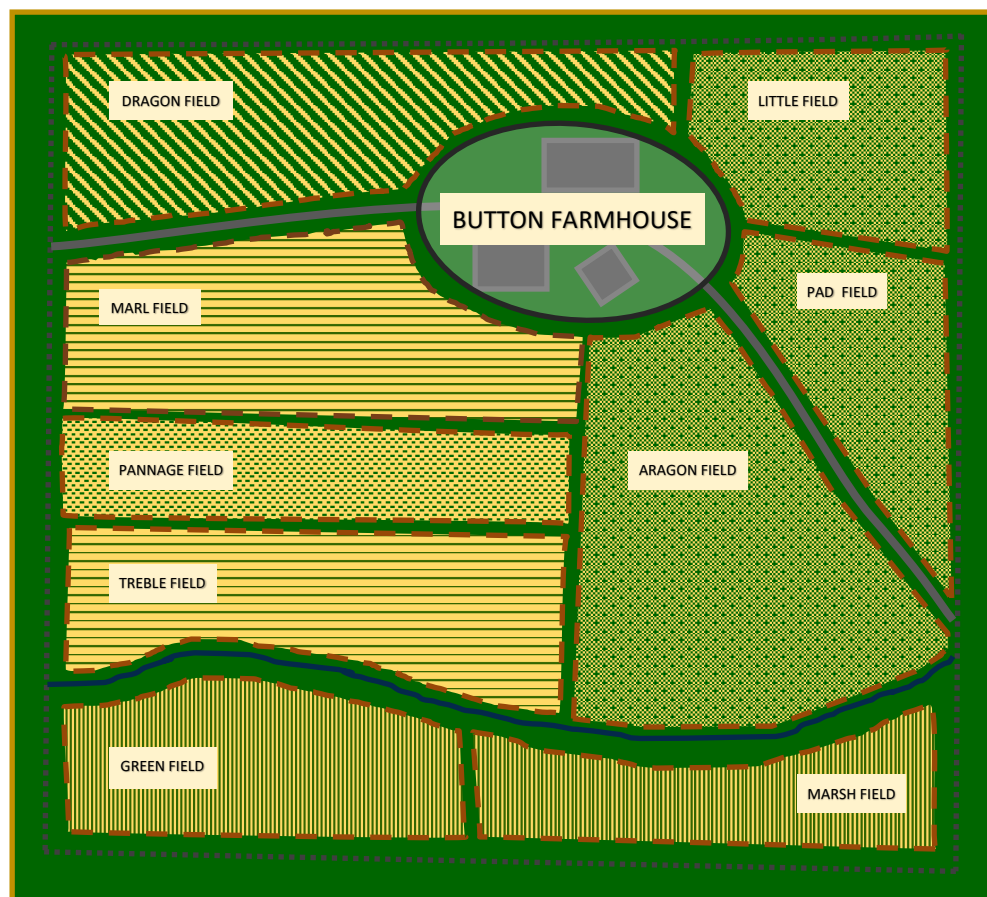
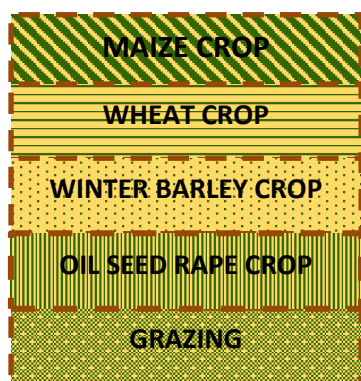
A small family farm with both arable crops and a dairy herd.

Martin and his family have been at Button Farm for three generations. They work hard to ensure that the farm is successful and enjoy working together as a team. Martin manages the arable enterprise, growing crops such as wheat and barley, whilst his daughter Paula is in charge of the dairy herd which produces milk.

The Farm is 303 hectares in total. Currently most of the farm is being used to grow arable crops and the remaining fields are being grazed by the dairy herd.

1 hectare = 1000m² which is approximately the same as 1.5 professional football pitches

Dragon Field – 35 hectares
 Marl Field – 46 hectares
 Pannage Field – 23 hectares
 Treble Field – 40 hectares
 Green Field – 33 hectares
 Little Field – 22 hectares
 Pad Field – 23 hectares
 Aragon Field – 49 hectares
 Marsh Field – 32 hectares



Currently Martin and Paula do not employ any staff, they work all day every day (even at Christmas), thereby minimising the costs of running the farm.

The River Avour runs through Button Farm and provides the perfect habitat for many species of wildlife and birds who benefit from the well maintained river banks and help the Button family by feasting on many of the less desirable bugs that would otherwise damage the crops, such as aphids and slugs. The river also deposits important nutrients in the low lying fields improving the health of the soil.

Wide grass margins between the fields and the river minimise the run off into the river of animal waste and other potential pollutants which may otherwise upset the ph balance of the water and make it uninhabitable.

The farm yard consists of a variety of buildings, including a new modern grain store, a traditional brick and slate workshop/store which is used to house the farm machinery, a livestock barn for the cows and a milking parlour and adjoining bulk tank store which is where the milk is kept cool until it is collected. Recently the decision was made to replace the combine harvester with a used model purchased from a neighbour.

Arable operations

Last year Button Farm grew the following arable crops:

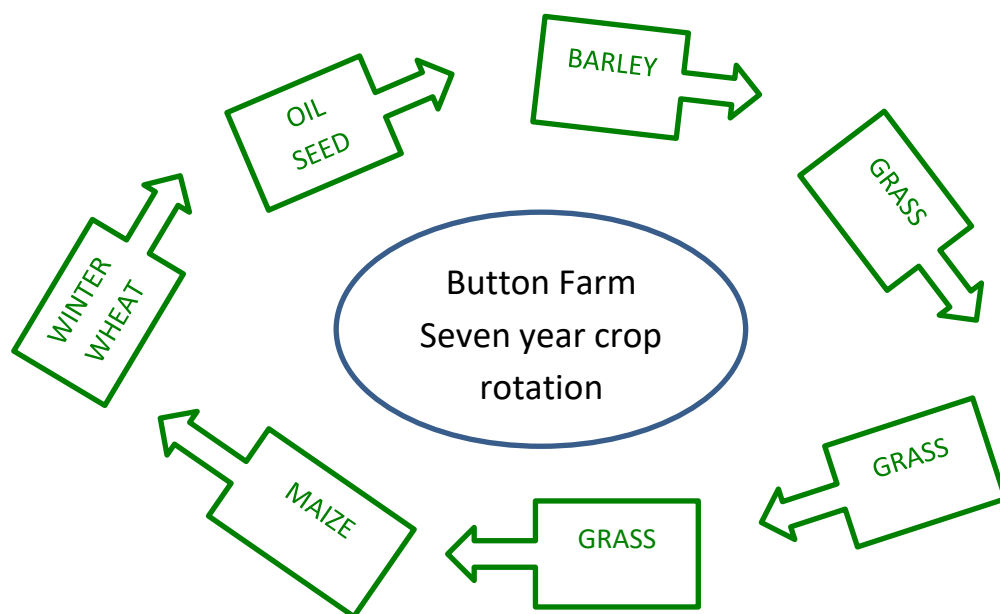
Data is recorded GBP per hectare	OIL SEED RAPE	MAIZE	WHEAT	WINTER BARLEY
<u>VARIABLE COSTS</u>				
SEED	94	149	70	80
HERBICIDES (weed killer)	62	60	84	38
FUNGICIDES (control fungal infections)	57	0	45	71
TRACE ELEMENTS (vitamins and minerals)	2	0	42	9
FERTILISERS (food to help the crops grow)	139	171	192	130
INSECTICIDES (pest control)	9	0	3	3
GREEN COMPOST (Natural nitrogen rich compost)	0	80	0	0
ESTABLISHMENT LABOUR AND TRACTOR COSTS	144	142	147	131
<u>OUTPUT</u> (tonnes of seed per hectare)	3.4 T/Ha	39 T/Ha	7 T/Ha	6.8 T/Ha
<u>SELLING PRICE</u> (£ per tonne)	345/T	24/T	160/T	135/T

The maize is grown specifically for the Farm's dairy herd to supplement their diet during the winter months when there is no grass available and the herd are kept indoors. It is stored in air tight conditions and allowed to ferment to maximise its nutritional value for the cows. Whilst not sold on to a third party the maize selling price is the cost



of purchasing maize silage from another source when additional costs such as transportation would also need to be considered.

To ensure the health of the soil, the crop being grown in each field will change every year. Like many farms the Button family choose a rotation system to ensure that specific minerals taken out of the soil by a crop are replaced in subsequent years by different crops. As an arable and dairy farm, the cows' grazing is also included in the seven year cycle. This system also helps the Farmer to manage the weeds and avoid exhausting the soil.



Each spring Martin will start to consider which crop will be planted in the fields following the harvest. It is vital to plan this far ahead, even though the product won't be ready to be sold for another 16 months.

When deciding which arable crops to plant on the farm Martin maximises potential profit by considering:

- How well certain crops have grown in previous years
- Recent trends in demand and value for crops
- New developments in crop varieties and associated products.
- The structure of the soil in each field and the crops which would benefit from such conditions
- The cost of the seeds of each crop
- Whether any specialist equipment is required to grow each crop, such as additional machinery to cope with the height of the maize plant compared to wheat
- The potential risks involved with each crop, such as how susceptible it is to slug infestations
- How well the crops cope with unseasonal weather, such as drought or flooding

Farming is an incredibly risky business, and only those with a crystal ball are guaranteed to make any profit. By spreading the risks, growing a variety of crops and producing milk with the dairy herd, the Button family hope to make a small profit each year which can they reinvest in the farm to ensure its future within an uncertain global market.