

» One farmer trying his hand at variable rate fungicide technology is Chris Owen, who farms 1,500 hectares of arable land near Shrewsbury, Shropshire.

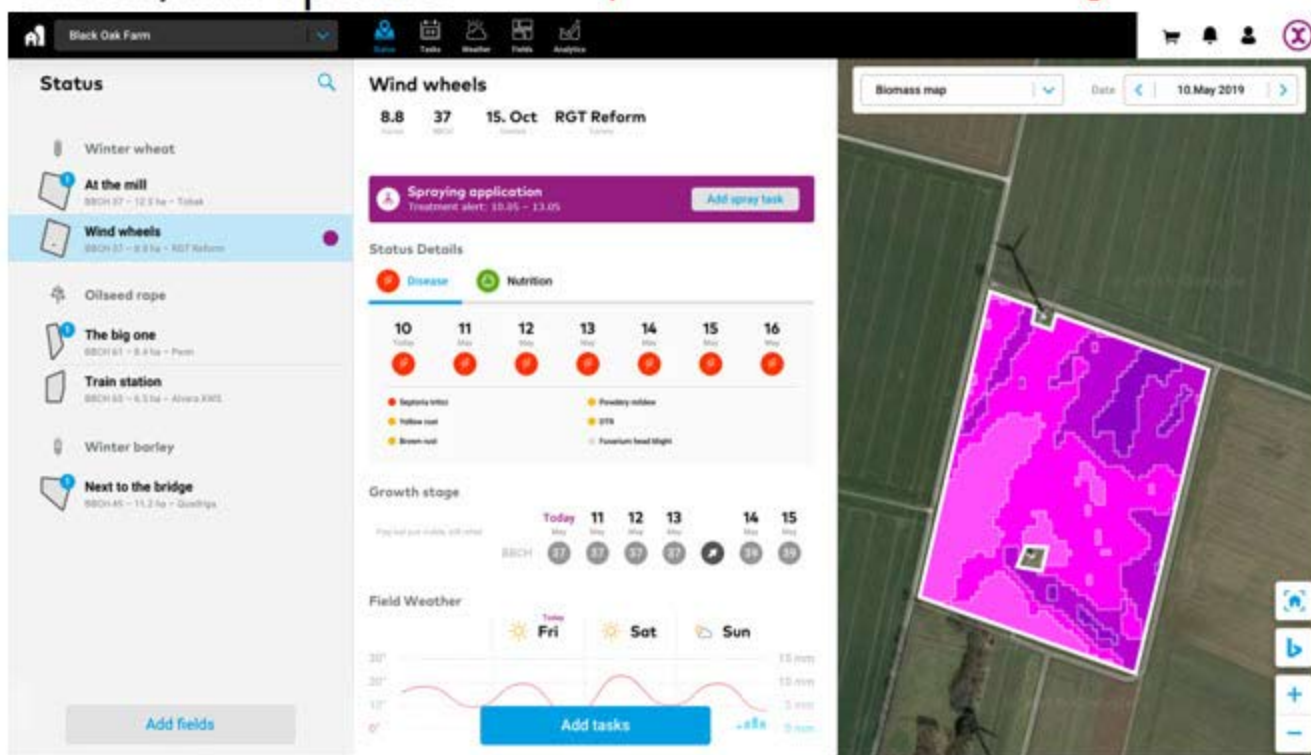
He has been trialling xarvio's Field Manager software for the last two years, which includes a variable rate fungicide application tool.

Using Zone Spray, which splits a field into up to five zones based on crop biomass data taken from normalised difference vegetation index (NDVI) satellite imagery, Mr Owen found significant savings were made without detriment to yield by using the programme at T2 on two fields of Skyfall.

He says: "We used 14.5 litres of Bravo, which is half a litre less than normal, and four litres less Librax. That would be £120 which, broadly speaking,

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CHRIS OWEN



Field Manager produces variable rate maps and uses weather and crop data to determine when disease pressure is high.

is £10/ha on that field. If you did that over your farm it would make a big difference. The yield map didn't show anything up and it didn't make a difference applying a lot less compared to the normal flat rate."

Zones are generated from a variable application map which alters spray rates, applying a higher dose to areas with the highest biomass and a lower rate to lower biomass crop, with rate decided by the user.

Mr Owen adds: "This means you're using inputs in a way they're supposed to be used. We did it at T2, but I can't see why you wouldn't use it at T1 as

well. You're likely to get a better yield, so you're hopefully making money as well as saving it in that respect. Over applying on areas where the crop is thinner, for example, is just a waste of money. It's not ecologically sound practice either."

Mr Owen said the tool could also be useful in regulating crop growth if he could use Zone Spray for his plant growth regulator (PGR) applications, where applying a flat rate can do more harm than good.

"If you're putting too much PGR on areas that don't need it you can be holding areas back where the crop is thin

and doesn't need the PGR the thicker areas need."

For more targeted control, the programme also gives guidance on spray timings, using weather and crop data to determine when disease risk peaks.

Mr Owen says: "Last year wasn't that wet, so I think it would be interesting if it rains early on and you're worrying about what to get on. Certainly when it did start raining in June, I was getting plenty of warnings we should be spraying on the ears.

"I found it helpful and it broadly worked to when I would be spraying anyway, but I'm sure that won't be the case every year."