Stephen Belcher gives the details for the new 2020 Recommended Lists

There is a saying that ‘there is no such thing as bad weather, only unsuitable clothing’. If only farming was as simple changing your clothing to suit the weather. 2019 was especially difficult for spring-sown crops. At the PGRO’s main trial area at Stubton, Lincs, early sown trials established well. But with only 5.4mm of rainfall during the six weeks of mid-March to 23 April even crop establishment became increasingly difficult, with double emergence of some later sown trials. In more Northern areas drilling was delayed because of wet conditions.

Both yield and quality have been better than the easily forgettable 2018 season. Within the Pulse RLs the mean yields of the control varieties from 2019 have been similar to or better than the 5-year average, with winter beans 1% higher, spring beans 0.1% lower and peas 11.6% higher. Downy mildew in peas and spring beans and chocolate spot in winter beans were problems this year.

Combining Peas

Only four trials were used and added to the RL matrix. A range of problems were encountered in trials, ranging from foot rot to severe downy mildew to uneven establishment. 2019 trial yields (5.02t/ha) were up on the 5-year (4.5t/ha) average. Highest yields came from a site in Lincolnshire at 5.26t/ha. Late infections of downy and powdery mildew were seen in some trials. Aphid-transmitted virus symptoms were regularly seen.

White-seeded variety Manager gains a full recommendation for 2020. Yields (105%) are just ahead of Karpate (104%), the highest yielding fully recommended white pea. Kameleon and Orchestra both gain a provisional (P1) recommendation for 2020. Orchestra (106%) is just ahead of Manager in terms of yield, but has a rather low rating for downy mildew resistance of 4. The yield performance of Kameleon (114%) was exceptional, outyielding its nearest rival large blue Kactus by 7%. Kameleon has relatively early maturity, stands reasonably well and has a downy mildew rating of 5. Karpate and Kareni remain as fully recommended varieties. Mascara, whilst having the best downy mildew rating in the white category, was removed from the RL.

Large blues Bluetime, Karioka and Blueman all gain a full recommendation for 2020. Yields of Bluetime (106%) are 8% higher than the highest fully recommended large blue Prophet. Karioka (104%) is just 2% lower than Bluetime, while Blueman is a little lower still at 100%. Blueman maintains an impressive rating for downy mildew of 8, while Bluetime and Karioka rate just one point behind on 7. Blueman has a relatively low thousand seed weight. Mankato and Croft move from P1 to P2 recommendation. New to the RL for 2020 are Kactus, Greenwich and LG Aviator. Kactus (107%) tops the yield rankings of the large blues, some 9% above Prophet. Greenwich (104%) is 3% lower than Kactus and LG Aviator (99%) a little lower still. Kactus and LG Aviator show good tolerance to downy mildew with a rating of 7, just one point off the best. Prophet, Daytona, Vertix and LG stallion all remain with a full recommendation. Bluetooth and Kingsfisher are moved to the becoming outclassed category. Greenwood (small blue), Manatara and Rose (both Maples) remain as fully recommended varieties. Marrowfats Banshee (83%) and Octavia (82%) gain a provisional recommendation for 2019. Both are just a little lower yielding than Sakura (84%), downy mildew ratings (3) are lower than Sakura (4) and standing ability (7) is a little better than Sakura (6). Sakura remains with full recommendation and Aikido is removed from the list.
Winter Beans

Beans established well in the autumn and trials looked better than they have for a number of years. Foliar diseases, chocolate spot and rust were seen at higher levels this year. 2019 yields (5.09t/ha) were a slightly up on the 5 year average of 5.01t/ha. Five trials were added to the RL matrix and the top-yielding site for the second year was in Herefordshire at 6.27t/ha.

Variety choice of winter beans remains the same, but having had two very good years in trial, Vespa gains a full recommendation for 2020 and becomes the top yielding variety (108%). Other winter beans Bumble, Tundra Wizard and Honey all remain with a full recommendation.

Spring Beans

Nine trials were taken through to harvest and as with the winter beans the highest yields came from a site in Herefordshire (6.07t/ha). 2019 trial yields (5.07t/ha) were slightly lower than the 5-year (5.12t/ha) average. As with winter beans, foliar disease pressure was higher than 2018.

Mallory (98%) gains a full recommendation for 2020. Yields are 4% lower than Lynx, and Downy mildew is good (7), rating the same as Lynx. Macho, LG Raptor, Ghengis and Yukon all gain a provisional P1 recommendation for 2020. Macho and LG Raptor (100%) are the highest yielding of these just 2% behind Lynx. while Ghengis (99%) is just 1% lower still. Yukon (92%) has relatively lower yields, but has very early maturity (9) and very good Downy mildew resistance (8). Macho, LG Raptor and Ghengis all have Downy mildew ratings of 4. Victus and Tiffany (both low vicine/convicine types) move from P1 to P2 recommendation. Lynx, Fanfare, Vertigo, LG Cartouche, Fuego and Maris Bead all remain fully recommended within their respective categories.

The RLs are based on 5-year rolling averages and statistical adjustments are made for new varieties where they have not in a trial for five years. This 5-year period has seen significant differences in weather patterns and the resultant impact on yield and quality.