



Case Study:

A&R Fraser's Braeside Farm,
Charlton, Shaftesbury, Dorset

Agri intelligence



South west arable expansion builds on family farming recipe

The CHALLENGE



Grow arable enterprise from

200 ha

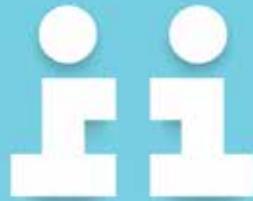
to over

1200 ha

(3000 acres)



Agrii's SOLUTION through R&D



- + Fully integrated Agrii agronomy, input supply and technical services.
- + Employing varieties Agrii research shows to be far more resilient.
- + More precise cultivations.
- + Gatekeeper for more efficient field-recording and communication with our agronomist.
- + improving crop marketing with impartial advice from Agrii specialists.
- + Making sure nozzle choice, water volumes, spray timing and chemical selection are as good as they can.



The RESULTS



- + Small improvements to agronomy that add – up to major gains in efficiency.
- + Integrating field – walking decisions seamlessly with input ordering, delivery and application.
- + Getting more from less; Solstice selected as main winter wheat having seen how much better it performed alongside Crusoe at AgriiFocus and taking advantage of its extra disease resistance.
- + Business simplicity working with a single, integrated supplier.





Agronomy+ supports sustained contract farming development

Over the past seven years, the Fraser family have grown their arable enterprise on the Dorset/Wiltshire border from 200 to over 1200 ha (3000 acres) through a single-minded commitment to continuous improvement. At the same time, they've built a thriving arable, grassland and slurry contracting business for clients across north Dorset and south Wiltshire.

Despite its scale and the speed with which it has developed, A&R Fraser continues to be run as a determinedly family business by Andy, his wife Ros and sons George and Jonny with the support of an impressive fleet of modern machinery, just one full-time employee and fully-integrated Agrii agronomy, input supply and technical services.

What's more, with this successful recipe they're set on pushing their cropped area beyond 1500 ha by taking on additional arable contracts over the coming year or so.

Client-focussed working

"We don't have a fixed formula for our arable contracts," explained Andy who took on the family's first arable agreement in 2000 alongside the local contracting services he and Ros had developed from the late 1980s to provide a family living from their 170 acre home farm. "Instead, we work with our clients in whatever way suits them best – from stubble-to-stubble contracts right through to share-farming.

"We also work closely with them to achieve the very most from their land while building firmly for the future in just

the same way we farm our own ground. For instance, we make the best possible use of organic matter from the slurry disposal contracts we have with dairy clients in particular to build soil structure and resilience. And to minimise soil damage

we employ tracks for all our heavy cultivation, drilling and harvesting operations and use the great capacity we have in our machinery to only work ground when conditions are right."

"We don't run a single fixed rotation round our different contracted farms in blocks either. Instead, because we farm as much for our clients as for ourselves – not to mention land ranging from shallow chalk brash to deep loamy clay – we run individual rotations very much geared to the capacity and needs of each farm.

"Importantly, our fleet gives us the flexibility to employ the most suitable establishment technique for the conditions as they vary from field to field and season to season," he added. "In cultivating we've the option of using either our Vaderstad Topdown, Simba Toptilth or seven-furrow Kverneland plough. Also we can drill with either our trailed system disc Vaderstad Rapid or mounted Weaving Tine Combi.

Continuous improvement

"We're always looking to do everything just that little bit better. Whether it's employing varieties Agrii research shows to be far more resilient; using auto-steer with RTK accuracy on our Challenger for more precise cultivations, Geospread on our new Kverneland spreader to maximise fertilisation efficiency and Gatekeeper for more efficient field-recording and communication with our agronomist; or improving our crop marketing with impartial advice from Agrii specialists."

Andy Fraser stresses that with an operation of the scale and complexity they now have, keeping things as simple as possible is essential. Even so, the personalised recipe and determination to improve has remained central to their business as they've grown both their contract farming and contracting enterprises since George and Jonny joined them from 2006.

Together with top notch equipment and close family team working – often in field-working shifts that seriously burn the all-night diesel – this is what their clients really appreciate and why they choose the business and remain loyal even though it isn't the lowest cost option in many cases.

Winter wheat and spring barley are the mainstays of the family's current cropping, with winter barley, winter rape, spring wheat and beans – both winter and spring – making up the majority of the rest.

Oilseed rape isn't grown nearly as widely or intensively as it is on many local units, with beans forming the main cereal break for their soil health, structure-building and all-round rotational advantages. Of course, they also fit nicely with EFA requirements of the new farm payments regime.

Close agronomy partnership

Eldest son George who is responsible for all spraying with the 24m Houseman self-propelled sprayer works closely with Agrii agronomist, Todd Jex in all aspects of day-to-day crop management.

"With crop markets as they are today we're concentrating on getting the highest outputs we can with the greatest cost-effectiveness," he pointed out. "Which means being very selective in the varieties we grow as well as managing them as precisely as we can for the lowest cost/tonne.

"Septoria was a huge challenge for us with the Solstice we grew as our main milling wheat last season. We brought in some decent 10 t/ha plus yields, but it was a real struggle to keep clean – and not cheap either. Having seen for ourselves how much better Crusoe performed alongside Solstice in the latest AgriiFocus

trials, we're taking advantage of its extra disease resistance as our main winter wheat this time around to get more from less.

"On seed specialist, Dorian Jones' advice too, we've drilled Xi19 into a substantial area grassland ploughed up this spring on a farm that's just gone out of dairying. He's identified some good local markets for the variety and we know it's a winter wheat that really wants to be a spring one. So it gives us a timely heavy-land opportunity to get decent yields and a valuable milling premium at a very favourable cost.

"Todd and I are working hard to make sure our nozzle choice, water volumes and spray timing as well as chemical selection are as good as they can be across all our crops this season. We're also looking to fine-tune performance with the sort of prescription micro-nutrition based on tissue analyses ahead of each main spray treatment that he's found so valuable in his 15-tonne Wheat Challenge.

"Since we started working together, we've identified a number of areas in which we can make small improvements in our agronomy that should add-up to major gains in efficiency for us and our clients. This includes making increasing use of Gatekeeper and its webApp so our field-walking decisions can be integrated as seamlessly as possible with input ordering, delivery and application."

Integrated support essential

"With our contract farming operations spread out across such a large area and time so critical in everything we do, we simply have to have the right products in each of our three chemical stores exactly when we need them," insisted Andy. "This is where we really appreciate the first class logistics of Agrii's thoroughly joined-up advice and supply service, alongside the personal access we get to the best research-based crop intelligence in the business and the specialist advice available on every area of modern arable management.

"Working with a single integrated supplier has become as important to us as keeping all our main kit within warranty. We need to keep our whole business as simple as we can. Just like our clients, we want a specialist partner we rate and trust to help us do the things we haven't got the time or expertise to do ourselves.

"We certainly don't want to have different advisers and suppliers passing the buck if anything goes wrong. And, with the arable farming as complex and finely balanced it has become, we have to have every aspect of our crop production as well-planned, structured, budgeted and managed as it can be. These days, in particular, we simply can't afford nasty surprises."



Thank you

Thank you for reading this case study. Other studies are also available and we hope you will find them useful:

1. Pushing wheat for maximum margins at the Brackley iFarm.
2. Soil-centred OSR improvement at Chillington Hall Estate.
3. Top wheat reward from Master Seeds recipe.
4. Growing precision drives quality wheat progress.
5. Agronomy+ supports sustained contract farming development.

Connect with the Agri-intelligence network

If you would like to learn more about Agrii, we invite you to connect with us in any of the following ways:

- + **Via our agronomy and advisory teams** – we have 300 agronomists throughout the UK who can advise on all aspects of modern crop production, and also seed and nutrition specialists.
- + **At an Agrii iFarm event** – we have 32 locations where, in conjunction with our host farmers, we demonstrate the latest technologies and production techniques. Lively events provide an opportunity to meet other farmers and quiz industry experts.
- + **On AgriiPlus** – a comprehensive information database available to our agronomy customers (more details from your Agrii agronomist).
- + **info@agrii.co.uk** – email us for more information, to check your local contacts or to ask us a question.
- + **On Twitter** – @AgriiUK – for regular updates.
- + **Sign up for our email newsletters** – eBulletin is a monthly update or eJournal for news and information relevant to your region.
- + **Speak to our Customer Services Team** – with any queries on 0845 6073322

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With thanks to Andy Fraser and his family at Braeside Farm, for their contribution and time.