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**NRoSO meetings are a welcome chance for many to get off farm and connect with others during the darker depths of winter**



## Back to farming after festive fun with family and friends

Luke Bullock, of Crop Management Partners, reflects on what has been a challenging start to the season

**W**ith Christmas and the New Year having been and gone, I can attempt not to focus on how much I managed to eat and spend. I admit that this year I have not bothered to attempt to fool myself (or anyone else) into involving either issue in any futile New Year Resolutions!

Humour aside, Christmas and the New Year bring a great opportunity to enjoy the company of family and friends. Even if this moment is only brief amongst life's (and the weather's) challenges. It is something we should appreciate. Surely the most hardened Grinches appreciate Christmas, even if they cannot admit it.

The autumn brought us some

challenging drilling conditions combined with an onslaught of unimaginable slug numbers for many. Some growers in favourable situations responded with drilling crops in frosty conditions, fearlessly racing the thawing topsoil. I suspect many others, however, have been left with a larger than expected spring cropping area for the 2024 season and perhaps a few more thoughts on SFI options.

Not to repeatedly remind readers of unnerving recent pasts – but let us hope spring 2024 is more tolerable than spring 23. However, periods of intense rain or drought appear to be the norm so I will brace myself for the worst.

For me, January brings some further training alongside technical updates and nutrient

management planning. I do enjoy the learning, and agriculture is a passion and more than just a job. Sitting still all day in a classroom does not come naturally, but I am comforted by the warmth and the dry.

I am pleased to be attending the AICC conference (Association of Independent Crop Consultants), the first in-person conference since the Covid-19 Pandemic. This event provides independent advisors with invaluable technical insights, updates, and developments, as well as the chance to engage with others in the industry. It is truly astonishing to think the disease which turned our lives upside-down emerged over four years ago.

As we move towards the end of January, our focus begins to shift towards our National Register of Sprayer Operator (NRoSO) meetings in February. These NRoSO meetings lend us with an excellent opportunity to provide updates relating to pesticide application, use and legislative change. The scheme also facilitates continued professional development and meetings are a welcome chance for many to get off farm and

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Some fresh change has come with BASIS taking over this year. Operators will be comforted to know that this year's presentation does not amount to 250+ slides and the online test has been scrapped. Sighs of relief all round...! Additionally, operators will now be able to accumulate ten points a year rather than thirty points every three years. A seemingly subtle change, that will hopefully reduce last-minute point searching for some!

At the beginning of February, Crop Management Partners will be hosting seven separate NRoSO events across the South of England.

Our event sites are available at multiple venues across Hampshire, Wiltshire, Oxfordshire, Kent, and Dorset.

