

**'I maintain margins by managing production costs, taking expert advice on where to focus my spend.'**



Farm covers 1,500 hectares growing:

- Winter wheat
- Winter barley
- Oilseed rape
- Sugar beet
- Rye
- Triticale
- Vining peas

Ed Jones is a third-generation grower in Norfolk, running a busy family farming business operating a five/six year rotation. He says that having a team of advisors from the same company generates comprehensive advice and encourages joined up thinking. Perhaps surprisingly, he also believes it creates a level of frank discussion that helps him scrutinise and challenge farming practices in order to make more profitable business decisions.



The Frontier team directly advising Ed includes two agronomists, Andrew Melton and Neil Jordan; SOYL precision area manager, Peter Croot; and farm trader Richard Grant.

Ed says that managing his rotation begins with a better understanding of his soil using SOYL's services, and advice from Peter. Andrew and Neil deliver ongoing management of the crops and Richard helps to find the right consumer homes that will add value to his crop. The four advisors all liaise with each other and the wider Frontier team during the season, challenging and refining decisions and plans throughout.

They draw on the expertise of others within the Frontier group of companies for specialist advice. For example, Kings Crops for stewardship and compliance, and Anglia Grain Services to ensure farm-saved seed is handled appropriately.

Having a team of advisors from Frontier creates an environment of collaboration and healthy debate, meaning that each business decision is carefully considered to ensure it delivers against the farm's objectives and the bottom line.



**Peter Croot**  
SOYL Regional Manager

**Richard Grant**  
Farm Trader

**Ed Jones**  
Customer

**Andrew Melton**  
Regional Agronomy  
Sales Manager

**Neil Jordan**  
Agronomist

## The Frontier team supporting the Jones' family business.

### Continuous improvement through open debate

Agronomists Andrew Melton and Neil Jordan both look after different areas of land for Ed. Ed explains how having two agronomists from the same company stimulates collaboration and new thinking on the farm, "Even though they are both with Frontier, there are some very different ideas between the two of them. I sit in a very privileged position seeing two individuals operate. They aren't in competition, but they have some very different ideas and that provides some interesting discussions when we meet."

There is a constant and open dialogue between the agronomists. Neil says, "The areas of Ed's business that we manage are very different in terms of cropping and soil type but we work together and then both take our individual thoughts away to produce a programme that we prescribe to Ed to apply to the crops."

Andrew adds, "One of the key things about having two agronomists on a business of this scale, with so many different soil types, is we all interpret data slightly differently. Based on our joint experience and understanding of the different crops, we have quite a debate. I speak to Neil probably two or three times a week whilst he's walking part of the farm and I'm walking the other. So, there's a constant moving around of ideas and the plan's evolving all the time."

Meanwhile, strong links between the agronomists on the ground



*Andrew and Neil walking the wheat.*

and Peter at SOYL help Ed approach decisions using both data and in-field experience. He says, "Peter and the crew behind the scenes interpret what they see. It's fine doing that on a computer screen but I know my fields and so do the agronomists. We tailor plans using our experience of working the farm over the years. So we bring that to the table alongside the technology. We're not just theory-based, we're practical based but with back-up from theory and technology."



*Ed and Richard.*

### Grain consumer links keep mileage down

Frontier has strong relationships with many large grain consumers across the UK and in Norfolk close to Harold Jones Farms. Farm trader Richard Grant uses those links to maximise efficiency. Keeping transport mileage down when moving grain and other produce is something that's very important to the business. Oilseed rape from the farm goes to Frontier's Foulsham store, less than ten miles away, and the majority of the wheat goes to the ABN mill at Walsingham, which is under 20 miles away.

Ed says, "Frontier is a very diverse business and they have some end user homes that they are in control of. One of the things we like to do is deliver within 24 miles of the farm. We manage to achieve that with 90% of the produce we grow."

"It's such a volatile market we work in and I can't always be in touch with what's going on. That's where Richard's role is important to keep me informed of market activity worldwide and locally and if there's an opportunity for us to sell or deliver. He alerts me when there is a spike in the market and he ensures that our wheat crop goes to the local feed mill at the right specification and at the right time. We like to deliver our wheat crops in May-June to help cash flow and he masters that well."



“We work together to find the right solution for Ed.”



**Peter Croot**  
SOYL Regional Manager

## A joined up approach

### Precision to drive efficiency and margin

The farm uses precision technology from SOYL and advice from area manager, Peter Croot to help make the best use of resources and manage cost of production. Ed says, “We joined SOYL not necessarily to save money but so we could apply product more intelligently and target particular areas of the field. We’re now in year six and I feel that we are beginning to learn a lot more about the soil we are dealing with and it’s starting to pay off.”



*Ed & Peter study the SOYL results and recommendations.*

Variable rate seed is one aspect of precision which Ed believes has helped improve farm efficiency significantly. “I think SOYLseed is one of the most beneficial services to this business. We have very different soil types, ranging from clay to sand within the same field. I can genuinely say that we see payback from using variable seed rate across the board. With seed we can go from 150k/ha on one side of the field up to 210k/ha when we hit the clay. Having introduced SOYLseed you can clearly see we have a more even crop establishment across the field.”

“I’m mindful of cost per tonne because, at the end of the day, that’s where we have to make a margin. Without a margin, we won’t survive. I’m always considering that and what the land can actually deliver as well my past experience of the land. I have to think of all these things in my approach to what we do with crop protection and fertiliser application. Frontier is very helpful with this and we can identify what the land can do; the potential of it.” Ed Jones



### Drawing on Frontier’s 3DThinking network

Near to Ed’s farm is one on Frontier’s national network of ‘3DThinking’ trials and demonstration sites. Honingham Thorpe Farms is a demonstration site growing new and existing varieties on land that has very similar soil and weather patterns to Ed’s farm. At the site Ed can see how existing varieties are faring against the newer varieties under local conditions. The site is open for a number of group grower events across the year, but Ed and his agronomists can also visit during the season to keep an eye on current crop performance and compare the site’s progress with that of the crops they are managing.

“It’s nice to see the Frontier trials with all the different varieties. There are varieties there still going strong, the good old performers, and these are the ones that we are used to. Then there are the newer varieties and we like to see how the two compare. Obviously there’s an extra cost to growing new varieties and sometimes on more marginal, thinner land spending more money on a new variety isn’t necessarily the right thing to do when the older ones still perform well. On better land where I think there is potential for a 3-4% uplift on what we’re doing, I will try new varieties. If the new variety performs as hoped for, we’ll perhaps home-save some of it to use on thinner soil next season,” adds Ed.



*Ed and Neil assessing the beet crop.*

## Good, clear advice and financial stability



### Financial security underpins comprehensive advice

One of the reasons Edward chooses to work with Frontier is the stability of dealing with a business which has Associated British Foods and Cargill PLC as its two parent companies, “When I deliver something, I want to be paid. It’s alright fighting for an extra few pence but that’s no good if you’re not going to get paid. So I look for financial security and I don’t credit insure against Frontier either because I believe that they are strong.

“We get good, clear advice and they are always available at the end of the telephone and only too willing to help with the situation. If they can’t do it, someone else within Frontier can, which is always nice to fall back on. Working with Frontier gives me peace of mind. I can go to bed at night feeling I’m doing the right thing supported by their depth of knowledge and their whole-farm approach,” Edward concludes.



*Grain cleaning on-farm with Anglia Grain Services.*

