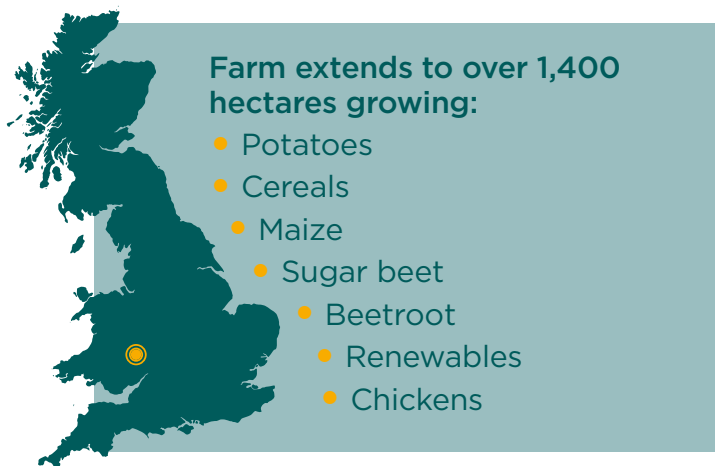


‘I want to farm intensively but sustainably, so I need new ideas and forward thinking advice on how to deliver that.



Producing quality, affordable food within a sustainable and intensive farming business is the overall objective for Mark Green and his family.



Since his father, Frank, bought the farm back in 1977, the Green family has been farming in Hereford. Building their successful and diverse farming business has been achieved whilst nevertheless being mindful of the future. Today, Frank is still involved in the day to day running of the farm, with Mark's sons Will and Henry beginning to take an active interest too.

Mark Green explains, "A sustainable business, to me, is making sure that the farm is here for the next generation. We've got to look after the environment.

"If it's done properly then we can take the best land that we've got to produce food, meanwhile the marginal land can be taken out and we can do other things with it."

A close-knit team of advisors from Frontier collaborates with the Greens to help ensure they achieve their financial and environmental objectives. Mark says, "The people from Frontier are hugely important because they're bringing the whole business together."

Lee Ward is the farm's lead agronomist managing cereals, maize, sugar beet and beetroot. He is supported by specialist potato agronomist, Fergus Hawkins, while farm trader, Robert Preston and SOYL area manager, Harry Rabbetts, provide grain marketing and precision farming advice respectively.

Mark says, "What makes Lee's advice worthwhile is that he is very enthusiastic. Many years ago the agronomist came for four or five hours, walked the crops, made some plans and went. Now we are having weekly meetings discussing where we think the future lies, how things are going, should we carry on with this crop, should we grow more or less of it? We also look at the soils, soil sampling, variable rate fertiliser and variable rate seed. Lee brings that all together."



Harry Rabbetts
SOYL Area Manager

Lee Ward
Agronomist

Mark Green
Customer

Robert Preston
Farm Trader

Fergus Hawkins
Agronomist

The Frontier team supporting the Green family's business.



Taking a long term view of crop production

Mark explains that flexibility is an important aspect of sustainable crop production. "Farming is much more of a long term business and you have to work on averages. Sometimes, some crops pay more than others but actually those crops help the next crop. It's not automatically about taking one crop and saying that's where we are going to make all of our money."



Lee, Mark, Mark's father Frank and Robert in the yard.

"Intensive farming is growing a range of crops but getting the very most out of those crops and the land we've got. It is putting on the fertilisers and sprays that we need to produce fantastic quality and yield, and affordable food. Alongside that, we need to make sure we are looking after the environment. It is taking the right land on the farm, and getting the best out of that and pushing it as hard as we can. We then look at other areas of the farm that are not yielding or giving us the quality we want and what we can do with them for the environment."

Pushing hard - staying sustainable

Agronomist Lee Ward explains that his role managing crops on the Green's farm is to get the most from them while looking after the farm's soil and the environment too. Working with Mark, land is managed to push the areas with potential, whilst non-performing areas are earmarked for other activity such as stewardship schemes that reward both the environment and the bottom line. Cover and catch crops are built into the rotation too, ensuring that whilst proudly intensive, Mark and the team are managing the land responsibly.



Lee checking the beetroot crop.

"Economically, intensive farming is here to stay but has to stack up. Each crop has to yield, each crop has to pay its way. We are pushing the soils harder, pushing machinery harder, pushing nutrients harder. The soil is under a lot of pressure, that's why here we grow cover crops. Currently we are growing anything between 170 - 200ha of cover crops, putting something back into the soil. Running alongside the cover crops we use a large amount of manures, that's both poultry manures and digestate from the anaerobic digester."

"We try not to have bare ground; as soon as a crop is harvested it is then replaced by another crop, or indeed a cover or catch crop. For example, we lift potatoes early on the farm in mid-July, we then have a three month period where that particular field would be left bare under normal circumstances. On this farm, we have embarked on a cover crop/catch crop programme over the last few years. This holds nutrients in the soil, creates structure and gives a good base for the autumn drilling."

“Our forward-thinking is absolutely key.”

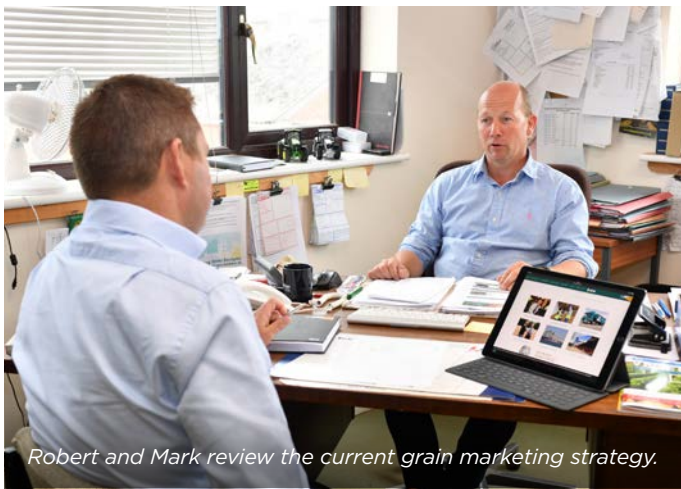


Robert Preston
Frontier Farm Trader

A joined up approach

Forward looking grain marketing

The Greens market their cereals and oilseeds with the help of farm trader, Robert Preston. Cereals are marketed to local homes in Hereford with the additional benefit of using grain pools to help manage risk. Professional storage for oilseed rape eases the burden on farm capacity.



Robert and Mark review the current grain marketing strategy.

Robert explains, “Absolutely key to Mark’s grain marketing is our forward-thinking. We are constantly looking at marketing options to see what else is out there and if we can add any different dynamics to it.

“Every single person that works on this farm with Frontier feels part of Mark’s team and that’s really, really important as we build going forward and look at these new things that come up and the way we can add value in different ways.”

The Frontier team’s approach on fertiliser is to work together to ensure everyone understands what’s required. Consequently, the farm gets the right products, at the right price, which are then in store when they are needed.

“Teamwork really comes in when we look at fertiliser. Mark will buy different grades of fertiliser and different types of fertiliser; solid and liquid. We have two agronomists on the farm as well as Harry from SOYL. It’s fairly complicated but we collate all the orders and make sure that the whole process is brought in together.” Robert Preston



Harry and Robert discuss Mark's fertiliser requirements.

Precision direction

As well as arranging soil sampling across the farm so that each field is tested every four years, SOYL advisor, Harry Rabbetts works closely with agronomists Lee and Fergus to collate fertiliser recommendations for phosphate, potash and lime applications. Harry explains, “When we nutrient map the fields we identify the areas that have the capacity to produce higher yields and the areas that have lower indices of potash or phosphate. We can build those areas up to maximise yield. We can view all of Mark’s yield data to identify the areas of the fields that consistently underperform or consistently perform well. We can then start to identify the reason for the low performance and see if it’s worth removing those areas from the production completely. For example; margins, headlands or wet patches.”



Fergus and Harry in the fields.

Precision decisions



Potatoes and precision

The Greens grow potatoes for a number of large consumers including Walkers, Tyrells, McCain and Lambwestern. Fergus says that adding value to the Green's potato production business is important. By linking up with SOYL for precision advice and Kings for stewardship management expertise, he has been able to improve management of the potato crop.

Fergus says, "For me it's very important to bring my ideas to the farm so I add value alongside my agronomy advice. Lee and I have worked together to introduce cover and catch crops as a way to reduce pest problems and increase soil health which is going to promote potato yields. Meanwhile, working with Harry and SOYL I am able to push parts of the field which previously haven't been as high yielding on potatoes as we would expect."



Frank, Mark and Will Green.

Three generations of Greens – one long term view

Mark says that the relationship with Frontier and its people works particularly well because of their team approach to supporting him. "They all talk to each other about the needs of the farm which is great. Frontier has brought so many other things to the business, which is great for us because it all interconnects. With farming businesses there is so much going on and it's easy to have one part of the business that isn't moving forward. With Frontier, the energy they bring and new ideas mean everybody's talking to each other."

As Frank Green concludes, the family approach to farming is a long term, collaborative one "I love farming, I love growing crops and I want to hand this over to my grandchildren. Mark is so enthusiastic about farming and I am sure he will be very pleased if the boys join him. Every year they show more interest so, when my day comes, I hope they will be involved in the business."



Fergus checks the potatoes for pests.