

# Opticut - take control

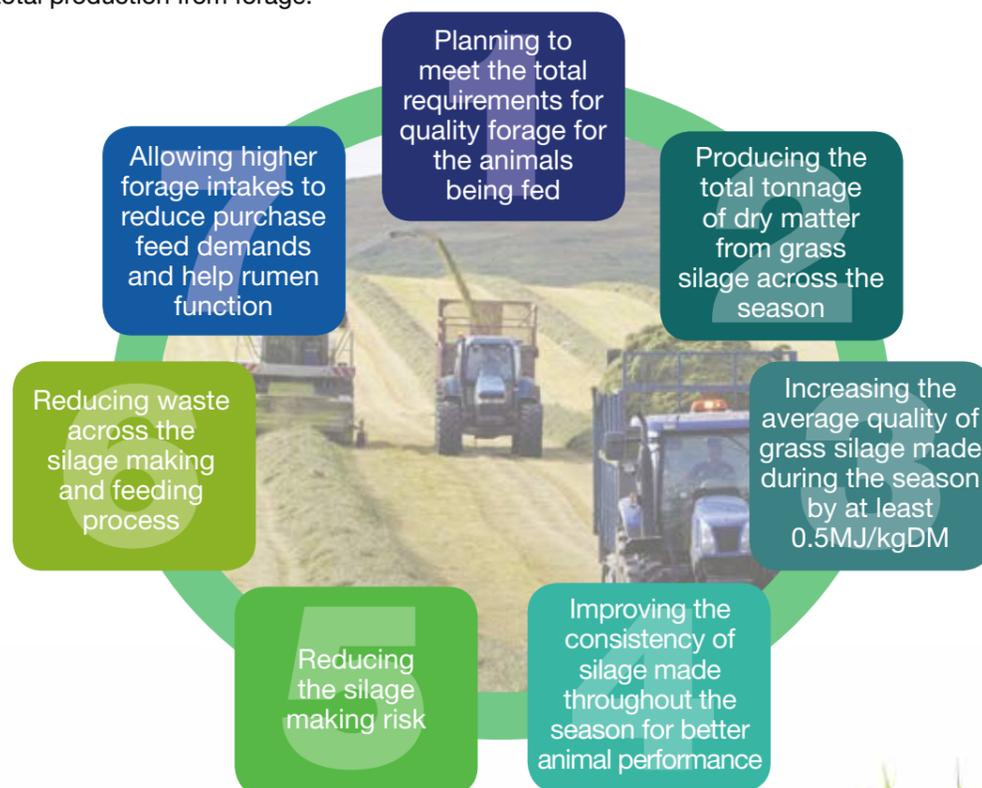
This Spring all the talk is about multi-cut grass silage, but how clear is everyone about what precisely you need to do to make a success of it?

Biotol's Roy Eastlake believes the term multi-cut can be misleading as it does not define the specific objectives for the individual farm and, after all, we have been multi-cutting grass silage for years with a two, three or four cut system. The talk now is about more frequent cutting at shorter intervals within a forage strategy to achieve higher production from forage.

To assist you in achieving this, Biotol has developed the Opticut System which focusses on cutting grass at the optimum growth stage to maximise forage quality without compromising season long production.

## What are the objectives of Biotol Opticut?

Before committing to a new system, think about why you are doing it and what you want to achieve. We set clear objectives with our Opticut farmers to ensure they will increase total production from forage:



With objectives agreed and a plan in place you can break the challenge down into the areas that make a difference and set benchmarks.



# with forage



## Benchmarks for success THE BIOTAL OPTICUT WAY

### Getting ahead of the game



**Work out the target cutting date**  
based on fertiliser and slurry applications, how soon can you cut?

**Get your contractor on speed dial**  
if you haven't done so already, make sure they know your plans and will work with you

**Monitor grass as it develops**  
use pre-cut testing to keep track of the key parameters - sugars of more than 10% in the dry matter and nitrates of less than 1000mg/kg freshweight for good fermentation, combined with NDF of 38-40% for quality

**Prepare the clamps**  
clean the clamps and tipping area and repair any holes in the floor and walls

### Silage in a day



**Silage in a day**  
only cutting what can be picked up in a day is the key to consistent silage and reduced risk

**Assess DM**  
plan to cut at 20-25%DM using the grass dry matter guide

**Don't overwilt**  
you want silage at 30-35% dry matter and grass dries out at approximately 1%/hour in good conditions

**Cut at the right stage**  
cut at flag leaf stage with grass at 15-25cm high. Cut when quality is right and get regrowth rather than let it bulk up and quality decline

**Chop length**  
cut at 2.5cm. Any longer can risk sorting in the trough

**Stubble height**  
target 6 cm for more rapid regrowth

**Get it fermenting**  
use the most appropriate Biotol crop and condition specific inoculant to achieve the rapid pH drop and efficient fermentation to maximise nutrient retention and reduce aerobic spoilage

### Target zero waste



**The buckrake driver is king**  
setting the rate for filling the clamp

**Build the clamp in layers**  
each layer should be no more than 25 cm

**Rolling constantly**  
good consolidation is critical to exclude air. Pay particular attention to the wall areas to reduce shoulder waste

**Sheeting**  
use a proven oxygen barrier film combined with even weight across the whole clamp, again paying particular attention to the shoulders where a wall sheet is recommended

**For more information on Biotol visit [www.biotol.co.uk](http://www.biotol.co.uk)**



### Grass dry matter guide

Take a handful of grass from the swath, roll into a tight ball and squeeze hard for a minute.  
**20-25%DM**  
Juice runs from grass



**25-35%DM**  
Ball retains shape but no juice



**>35%DM**  
Ball unfolds

