



Hazel Bull

Syngenta UK

Q&A >



Hazel, can you tell us where you are based and how you ended up working there?



I'm based at Syngenta's barley breeding station in Lincolnshire. I've been here for nearly 5 years now.

Prior to that, I was based at the James Hutton Institute in Dundee, where for eight years I worked on a diverse range of projects, all aimed at trying to understand how the characters we observe in the field are linked to the background genetics of the plant.

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Tell us a little bit about your role at Syngenta?



I lead the Conventional Malting Barley Breeding Programme developing new varieties for the global malting market. We have a superb team here at Syngenta, we bring together Breeders, Quantitative Geneticists, Malting, Commercial and Operational Specialists whose diverse skill sets enable us to develop successful products.

On a day-to-day basis my role can change from selecting plants in a field to office-based interrogation of genetic, agronomic and quality data to identify the best combinations for the breeding pipeline and differing market segments.

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What are the most exciting innovations happening in the Malting barley research and field today?



The past 20 years have seen huge advancements in terms of genetics and our understanding of the barley genome and genetic markers. The challenge now is to integrate this data with our more traditional field and quality data to select the best products possible.

Traditional field assessments are also changing with recent developments in imaging technologies offering the opportunity to assess our breeding material more accurately and efficiently.

Sustainability is a key challenge and focus of the malting barley supply chain -we are working to develop varieties that deliver consistent product under more energy efficient production systems whether that be in the field or malt-house.



How do you work with the farming, brewing and distilling communities?



Growers, Maltsters, Brewers and Distillers are the centre of what we do. We develop products which are agronomically suitable for the Grower, but also fulfil the quality and processing requirements of the Maltsters, Brewers and Distillers. We actively engage and collaborate with all of these areas of the malting barley pipeline to understand their changing requirements and develop solutions to the challenges that they're facing.

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Did you always want to be a scientist?



Science was the subject that I most enjoyed at school -the unpredictable nature of setting up an experiment to see what happens! This combined with growing up in a family who are all keen gardeners and outdoors whatever the weather, provided great foundations for a career in Plant Breeding. My first summer job was with a local plant breeding company; it was during that time that I realised I could combine my passion for the outdoors & plants with a career in genetics.

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QUESTION 6



How would you encourage more people to study plant science given the need to enhance the vitally important research that underpins the future of our planet?



The global food crisis and food security are huge challenges which Plant Scientists can offer real solutions to. In my experience the plant science community and in particular the barley community are extremely friendly with a strong ethos on collaboration. Whether it's understanding complex molecular genetic pathways in the laboratory, traipsing through fields (like I do!), or more computational aspects such as image analysis and bioinformatics -Plant science really does offer something for everyone and a real opportunity to network around the world!

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barleyhub.org