Cotswold Seeds Ltd
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Winners of the Soil Farmer of the Year 2021



Cotswold Seeds is proud to have sponsored The Soil Farmer of the Year Award once again, and Ian Wilkinson presented the winners with their certificates at Groundswell last week.

Tom Sewell, an arable farmer from Kent and Sam Vincent, a dairy farmer from Dorset have beenawarded the 2021 Soil Farmer of the Year as joint winners.The competition, now in its sixth year is organised by the Farm Carbon Toolkit (FCT) and Innovation for Agriculture (IfA) and is generously sponsored by Hutchinsons and Cotswold Seeds.

The competition aims to find famers and growers who are engaged with, and passionate about managing their soils in a way which supports productive agriculture, reduces greenhouse gas emissions, and builds soil health, organic matter and carbon.

Tom farms around 500ha across Kent running a simple low cost arable system focussing on building soil health, maintaining production and regenerating the landscape. An early pioneer of reduced cultivation, Tom's Nuffield scholarship in 2013 ignited his enthusiasm in soil health and the system has grown from strength to strength.Tom has been chosen as the winner for this year due to his enthusiasm, attention to detail and fantastic soil and crop health. He is constantly questioning his system and looking to innovate and focus on improving soil health and building resilience.

Sam Vincent farms 130ha in Dorset, running a dairy herd of 100 cows and followers. He transitioned to organic in May 2018, and all of his land is down to permanent pasture. Sam impressed the judges with his ability to make a regenerative system work on a dairy farm with permanent pasture. Using the cattle as a tool, he has improved the diversity in his pastures by adapting his grazing management from a traditional New Zealand paddock grazing system to a mob grazing approach which he follows now. This has improved his soil health, the resilience of his fields and the ability to provide grazing for extended periods.

Sam impressed the judges with his determination to make a system that worked for his soil type, system and livestock. The soils on the farm were well structured and pasture quality and species diversity was abundant.

The accolade of third prize was taken by Anthony Pearce from Buckinghamshire. Anthony is transitioning the whole farm to regenerative and is trialling a range of different techniques including no till, cover crops, integration of livestock and the use of compost. Anthony has spent the last 3 years learning about soil health, travelling to the states to take part in the Soil Health Academy and learning under Elaine Ingham. He also records his transition on the farm through his YouTube channel where mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities and a chance for sharing of ideas with other farmers.

The top three farmers will be awarded fertility building, cover crop or green manure seeds.

Becky Willson, FCCT Technical Manager said "Yet again we have been totally blown away by the quality and calibre of the applicants for this year's competition. The finalists were all

achieving amazing results and showing a diversity of approaches to building soil health and so the decision was incredibly hard. However our winners this year stood out in their ability to challenge themselves, continue to innovate and to achieve high quality production from fantastic soil management. Congratulations to all of the finalists."

Ian Wilkinson said: Cotswold Seeds has been sponsoring this award since it was launched and we fully support and applaud it's aim to celebrate farmers who are managing their soils in a way that increases organic matter to support productive and healthy crops and pasture, which in turn supports a profitable and resilient farming system. This echoes the work of Cotswold Seeds and FarmED, which aims to be at the heart of local, regional and global agroecological transition.

Seven farmers were shortlisted as finalists as part of this year's competition. These included, Casha Bowles Jones who runs an organic farm with a pasture fed dairy in Shropshire; Jack Martin an arable and sheep farmer from Staffordshire; Mark Oldroyd, who manages a mixed farm estate in Oxfordshire; and Rob Raven who runs an arable farm in Suffolk.

The top three farmers will also all be hosting farm walks who are open to anyone who is interested, where there will be a chance to see, understand and dig a bit deeper into what they are doing. Further details on these walks are available on the FCCT website.

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