

# Diversification Farmer of the Year

## THE FINALISTS

Andy Fussell  
David & Jayne Newman  
Robert Borrill



# FARMERS WEEKLY AWARDS

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## Being 'a little bit different' has benefits

James Andrews meets three farmers who have turned the challenges facing their businesses into opportunities

### THE JUDGES

James Andrews from *Farmers Weekly*, independent judge Peter Prag and William and Caroline Alexander, last year's winners.



*"All of our finalists have demonstrated huge determination, initiative and enthusiasm in establishing their diversification enterprises. They have generated fresh income from previously unprofitable areas, which is helping to support their core farming businesses."*

Peter Prag Independent judge

### Andy Fussell

Somerset

Olive oil is a long standing favourite among discerning chefs and diners, but one of our finalists is championing a home-grown alternative that is giving it more than a run for its money.

Cold-pressed rapeseed oil is Andy Fussell's answer to maximising the value of his most important break crop. After investing in an Alvan Blanch rapeseed crusher he began turning his normal, commercial oilseed rape into high-quality cooking oil which is sold at farmers' markets, distributed to local restaurants and hotels and is even creeping into the supermarkets.

Declining oilseed rape prices were the primary driver for diversifying, he says. "I had to find a way of adding value to the crop. First, I looked into producing biodiesel and quickly realised the figures didn't stack up."

But quality rapeseed oil offers much more attractive returns, he says. "You get roughly 600 litres of cold-pressed oil from 1t of oilseed rape and it sells for £5-£8 per half litre," he says.



ALEXANDRA JOSEPH

The oil is sold under the Fussells Fine Foods brand – spelled with a single 'l' to make the product label look cleaner – which was dreamt up by Andy's marketing guru Gary Holloway.

The oil is classified as cold-pressed because no heat is applied during the extraction process. This gives a lower yield than "super heated" processes which produce the standard vegetable oil found in the supermarkets, but retains the full flavour and quality of the oil. And because it only passes through the press once, it can be sold as extra-virgin, competing with the best of the olive oils, he says. "Rapeseed oil also has half the saturated fat of olive oil and can be cooked with at high temperatures without breaking down."

He uses 130t of his own oilseed rape and sources a further 1800t from neighbouring producers. Castille is his favoured variety, but DK

Andy Fussell recycles oil to produce enough biodiesel to run most farm vehicles.

### FARM FACTS

- \* Owns and manages a 142ha arable farm
- \* Share farms a further 70ha
- \* Products extra-virgin rapeseed oil
- \* Biodiesel oil recycling scheme
- \* Haulage business running 26 lorries
- \* Feed mixing business

Cabernet and Vision have also been used, he says. "There doesn't seem to be a difference in taste between varieties or varieties grown on different soil types."

After winning the gold award in the 2007 Taste of the West competition Andy decided to expand his product range to include rapeseed oil-based sauces, dressings and mayonnaises. These are made using Fussell's rapeseed oil by Newbury firm Atkins and Pots. "They don't return high margins, but they are an important part of the product range."

Farmers markets are the cornerstone of his marketing strategy along with local radio advertising. He even did his own voice over on the radio campaign. As well as promoting the brand it helps raise awareness of the crop, he says. "People notice the yellow fields across the landscape, but they don't know what it is used for. We have achieved much greater

awareness in the local area and people really enjoy the connection between the crop and the product."

Fussell's Fine Foods also has its own rapeseed recycling scheme. Used oil from trade customers is collected when new deliveries are made and is turned into biodiesel. "The economics stack up because the oil is recycled."

He collects about 300 litres per week which produces enough biodiesel to run most of his farm vehicles. "People like that it's going to good use and I don't get a horrible fuel bill – and my Landrover Discovery gives a zero emissions reading on its MOT."

He would like to expand the fine foods brand and produce a Fussell's ale to add value to his malting barley. "My grandfather used to run the Fussell's brewery and I'd like to reproduce this by putting my malting barley through a local micro brewery."

### THE JUDGES LIKED

- \* Committed to establishing an identifiable brand identity in a competitive market
- \* Enthusiastic and effective at increasing local awareness and understanding about wider farming issues
- \* Effective and original integration of several diverse enterprises
- \* Energetic marketing into supermarkets, retail outlets and farmers markets
- \* Recycling scheme for used oil

Firestone is proud to sponsor the Diversification Farmer of the Year. The winner will show outstanding entrepreneurial skills, making the best use of the resources available. A clear focus on the customer is one of Firestone's key values and will be vital to win this exciting awards category

Barry Coleman  
Firestone

## Together Everyone Achieves More

