

# Don't be afraid of the lizard in you

## EXPERT VIEW

When it comes to growing and marketing combinable crops, pressing ahead with a bold business decision is rarely easy – but it often pays off, says **Jeremy Cole**



**I**t is hard to make a profit from simply growing and selling arable crops in the UK. Let's face it, farmers are great people – enthusiastic and committed to their business. But many growers still rely on the annual basic payment to make a living.

Agricultural consultants reiterate the mantra that UK arable farmers need £125-150/t for wheat to make a profit, depending on yield. Looking forward to harvests 2017 and 2018, futures prices suggest a less than rosy situation.

Unless some "shock" hits the sector, the futures market suggests there will be little financial gain from grain grown in the next three years. The "same old, same old" way of farming just won't do for many growers. Yet many continue to invest time and money in it anyway.

Instead, why not sell up? Or ask your neighbour to rent the farm and use your equipment to become a contractor. Join forces with a neighbour, set up a new enterprise or two, get a manager and go and do something else, retrain, or write a book?

Many successful farmers did

these things in the early 2000s when wheat prices were languishing at £50-70/tonne. Why haven't others? Many people talk about doing something but don't get around to doing it. They say they want one thing, then they do another.

Some want to be thin but eat too much. Others want to learn something new but don't want lessons. Still others want a new job but don't write the application. And some want to develop a new product but put off doing any research and delay the launch date.

### 'Lizard brain'

Why is this, what holds us back? The answer is the lizard in us all. The "lizard brain" is a physical part of your brain, the pre-historic lump near the brain stem, the amygdala. It is responsible for instinctive things; fear, fight/flight, feeding and reproduction.

This old part of the brain al-

lows us to react to a threat in an immediate and automatic way, without the rest of the brain processing information, thus gaining that split second that has enabled our survival for millions of years.

Nature is harsh, and nature will remove uncompetitive genes from the gene pool. Thankfully, life and death situations are rare in our lives these days. But the lizard still rears its head in the form of resistance.

Resistance is the voice in our head telling us to back off, be careful, go slow, compromise or not ask questions. It urges us to keep the status quo or take the safe known route. It encourages us to procrastinate, stop being self-critical and always find some excuse not to do something.

Resistance grows in strength as we get closer to decision, every time we want to create something new or do something different – especially at the point of no-return decision making moment. The lizard hates change and risk and is the opposite direction to our desire.

### Living recklessly

We can never completely eliminate the resistance and without it we would live life recklessly and probably have already doomed ourselves. Fear sabotages success – often subconsciously. But we can learn to live with it and be stronger than it.

This resistance was quantified by Professor Everett Rogers and his Diffusion of Innovations theory in 1995. But it began with an

agricultural study by Ryan and Gross in 1943, describing the introduction, spread and eventual adoption of growing of a new hybrid corn in Iowa.

In life, laggards and especially resistors are the opposite of innovators. They are driven by their lizard brain and may even actively obstruct innovation. Entrepreneurs, inventors and leaders still feel fear but they don't focus on it. Their goals are the antidote to their fear.

They ignore the irrational part that keeps you from succeeding and pay attention to the part that helps you survive. This is achieved by methodically going through the possible outcomes of things that are causing your fear to their logical conclusion.

Usually, the worst outcome is not nearly as bad as you imagined in your subconscious. So it is always wise to ignore the fear. If it is real, then you can take action now to mitigate it.

Your lizard brain is here to stay. But your job is to analyse how best to quieten it to allow you to pursue your goal of securing both a financially stable and developing business – balancing risk and reward, giving it longevity, and satisfaction for the participants.

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