



NEWS RELEASE

Sentry's James Mayes carries off top award

James Mayes, a farm manager with Sentry Limited in Bedfordshire, has been crowned the 2011 best candidate in the UK's top crop protection qualification, the BASIS Certificate in Crop Protection. He received the Barrie Orme shield from David Caffall, Chief Executive of the Agricultural Industries Confederation at a ceremony held at the Farmers Club in London.



David Caffall, left, presents the Barrie Orme Trophy to James Mayes

The award which is sponsored by the Agricultural Industries Confederation, Nufarm UK Ltd and C & J Supplies, recognises technical ability and professionalism in crop protection. 2011 was a bumper year for the Crop Protection Certificate with 241 successful candidates passing the exam. This compares to 186 in 2010.

Presenting the trophy, Mr Caffall reminded his audience of the origins of BASIS, which was first established as a self-regulatory organisation in the late 1970s. He highlighted the establishment of the Professional Register in 1992, which now boasts 4,400 qualified, and regularly updated, members and said: "We should be extremely proud of the level of professionalism that exist in the industry today; professionalism which has been brought about through self-regulation."

James' exam marks put him in the top three candidates in the country, but the Barrie Orme award is not just about academic achievement. He has also demonstrated that he is a good ambassador for UK agriculture, for example working with universities and attending student careers fairs for Sentry.

"Thank goodness we have the quality of young people like James coming into the industry," added Mr Caffall.

Accepting the award James said: "Thank you for this accolade which is much appreciated. I recognise what a prestigious award it is. Going forward I think holding professional qualifications will become more and more important. At a personal level it has also given me more confidence."

As well as the trophy, he received vouchers for travel to London, accommodation for two nights for two people with theatre tickets and spending money.

James grew up on a large farming estate near Haverhill in Suffolk and, although not from a farming family, he always wanted to be a farmer. He studied at Otley College and then Writtle, before joining Sentry, as a trainee farm manager, in 2004. James was quickly promoted to Assistant Manager and two years later was given the responsibility of managing a farm. Today at 32 he manages 1100 hectares in Bedfordshire under a mixture of agreements ranging from tenancies to contract farm agreements, working for three separate landowners and, of course, Sentry; so he has four bosses! James is a great example to other young people that they can come into farming without the background or family farm connections and do well.

Taking the BASIS Crop Protection exam was a logical development following on from passing the FACTS fertiliser qualification. "It has taught me more than I expected and has changed the way I look at everything we do on the farm," said James. "My thanks go to my trainer Debbie Wedge who runs the Chelmsford and West Essex Training Group who helped me through it all and to Sentry for their support and ambition to ensure their managers have the best training and development at both a professional and personal level." he added.

It is the third time in the eleven year history of the award that Debbie has been the trainer behind a Barrie Orme trophy winner. As a freelance trainer she also has a hand in training two of the 2011 runners-up - William Corrigan (via the Vale Training Group) and Sam Patchett (working for Landbased Training) so 2011 was quite a year for Debbie!

The BASIS qualification is a comprehensive challenge. The assessment involves a written project, James' was on differing cultivation effects and their bearing on populations of blackgrass germination within a drilled wheat crop, a written exam, a practical identification test and one-to-one questioning in the field from each of three examiners. "I was very pleased to hear I'd passed, let alone been put forward for this award. On a personal level to win it is very rewarding," concluded James.

Runners-up were William Corrigan a regional business manager with Dow AgroSciences, Edward Dicken a lecturer at Harper Adams University College and agronomists Phillippa Dodds from Angus Soft Fruits, Andrew Gough from Agrovista and Sam Patchett from Masstock.