

focus on Careers at Niab

FARMING SYSTEMS SPECIALIST – DAVID CLARKE

Your role at Niab

I work across a wide range of projects, including managing long-term soils and farming system trials and delivering technical research for Niab members, charity-funded work, levy board and the wider industry. This research focuses on soil health, cultivation, nutrient management and rotations. One of the best parts of my role is talking, writing and presenting this research to the industry through reports, open days and conferences – so it can improve farming systems.

I focus on applied crop and soil modelling and using on-farm spatial data sets such as yield maps and spatial soils data. I am currently developing modelling tools to support on-farm decision-making, particularly around nitrogen interactions with weather and soil properties. Ultimately the goal is to expand the use of these tools to support a wider range of decisions and make model-derived information more accessible/usable to growers.

Your previous experience

I've always had a strong interest in farming and environmental science, but it was during my postgraduate studies in climate change that I began focusing on food and farming systems. After a year working on the impacts of weather variability and climate change on wheat yields in eastern England, I realised that applied agricultural science was where I wanted to make a difference.

I joined Niab in 2017 as a Soil and Farming Systems Technician. Since then, I've developed my own research portfolio, completed a PhD, and moved into a specialist role supporting practical research and innovation in farming systems.

Your qualifications

- BSc Geography (Aberystwyth University)
- MSc Climate Change (University of East Anglia)
- MRes Impact of Drought on UK Wheat Production (Cranfield University)
- PhD Applied Crop Modelling for Nitrogen Management in Wheat (Cranfield University)

Your future

I'm keen to continue developing and applying tools and models that can improve decision-making on farms, as well as getting the most of Niab long-term experiments and data sets. I want to bridge the gap between research and practice, using long-term trials and real-world data to support more sustainable and productive farming systems.