Bean rust is not the problem it used to be

As judicious spraying can pull you through.
I wouldn’t recommend using non-systemic products, such as Maneb and copper. Although they can provide some protection when properly applied, it’s difficult to cover all surfaces thoroughly enough to achieve a meaningful difference. You’d also need to spray well before the onset of symptoms.
Modern systemic products can be very effective. If my operation is facing a potential threat, I examine the leaves regularly.
As soon as I notice the light specks developing, I spray immediately, followed by another 10 days later. Usually this is enough to produce a clean crop.
Discuss this with your pest control adviser so that you can alternate systemic products with different chemical compositions and prevent rust from building up resistance.

When I started breeding beans, I evaluated different varieties, but I used to get a lot of rust.
Spraying half of each variety allowed me to see how vulnerable to rust it was, while still evaluating its overall performance on the sprayed side.
The method described above let me keep these strips completely clean.
Since I’ve practised no-till, the soil has improved so much that I get very little rust. Even highly susceptible varieties get only a few specks. This was an eye-opener for me.
In fact, no-till has reduced many diseases, though not all of them. My powdery mildew levels are just as bad.

- Contact Bill Kerr on 016 366 0616 or e-mail alphaseed@atlantic.net. ■FW