

## FARM FACTS

<b>FARM</b>	DE Hales, near Rye, East Sussex
<b>FARMED AREA</b>	500ha (1,235 acres) plus another 200ha (500 acres) of contract combining
<b>CROP</b>	Winter wheat 261ha (644 acres), OSR 50ha (124 acres), winter beans 100ha (247 acres), spring barley 80ha (198 acres), spring oats 25ha (62 acres)
<b>SOIL TYPE</b>	Predominantly Weald clays with some sandy loams
<b>STAFF</b>	Rob and Nick Hales plus one full-timer and one extra at harvest

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Rob Hales, East Sussex, August 2020, LEXION 6700.

# A walker that ticks all the boxes



Farming in the heart of the rolling Sussex countryside, the Hales family have considerable experience with CLAAS combines.

Over the last 30 years DE Hales have had more than 15 CLAAS harvesters pass through their gates, starting out initially with a DOMINATOR 106 and progressing on through the decades with 218s, 480s, a 530 MONTANA, a 570 LEXION TERRA TRAC and most recently an eight-year-old 770TT.

With some 3,000 engine hours on the clock, the 770 TT had seen over 60,000 tonnes of grain pour out of its spout and, despite being a rock-steady, reliable performer over its time at Clayhill Farm, the concern was that its dependability could falter if push came to shove in a tricky ninth harvest. So late last year the decision was taken to trade the 770 in for something newer.

“With our old LEXION being a Hybrid we knew we could comfortably cover the acres but I was conscious that we needed to maintain a reliable machine to keep our contract farming customers happy,” explains Rob Hales.

“The 770 had put a really good stint in but was beginning to show its age so we started looking at our options. Initially we had thought we’d be going down the same route as before, but talking to the team at our local dealer – MANNIS Kent – they came up with an alternative option.

“Based on what they had seen, they were confident that the new generation of straw-walker machines could match our expectations in terms of output.

“To be honest I was very sceptical at first, but on closer examination I could see the merits of going back to a walker machine, if it could comfortably handle our workload which extends to about 700ha in total.

“I was impressed with how much the technology had moved on and I liked the idea of having a straw walker combined with JET STREAM sieves. Having had quite a bit of experience of both Hybrids and walkers in the past, I was convinced that the sieves would make the difference.

“I’d always felt that we could achieve lower running costs with a walker machine but until last year there hadn’t been anything on the market that could provide the output we require. These new 6000 series LEXION seemed to tick all the boxes so we took the plunge and signed up for a mid-range 6700.”

## HOW HAS IT PERFORMED?

“With our old 770 we could comfortably churn out 50 tonnes an hour in standing wheat. Despite being a much lesser machine on paper, the 6700 can get pretty close to that if we’re pushing it.

“What’s so impressive about that is that it’s doing similar tonnages on about half the fuel. The 770’s Merc V8 would guzzle through 550-600 litres a day, whereas the straight-six in the new combine is only using 300-330 litres in the same time.

“I’m convinced that’s all down to the smoother crop flow through the threshing gear. The bigger drums and concaves make all the difference – it never feels pushed. On top of that, the DYNAMIC POWER system is clearly helping too – it senses when the grunt isn’t needed and cuts back the fuelling accordingly.

“That smoother crop flow also makes for much quieter running – I can now hear the returns and can tell when CEMOS Auto is tweaking the bottom sieve.”



## HOW DO YOU GET ON WITH CEMOS?

“We’ve had LEXION in the past with CEMOS but this is a completely different animal. Initially I didn’t trust that it could do as good a job as I could, so when I started out I had it switched off.

“Then gradually I started turning on the various elements and quickly realised that it was doing a far better job at constantly tweaking everything. Enabling CEMOS to first start making its own drum and concave settings and, then working that in tandem with fan speed and sieves as well as cruise control, I gradually gained confidence.

“Now I just pull into a field, hitch on the header, select the crop type and just let it do its own thing, tweaking settings constantly throughout the day.”

## AUTO SLOPE

“Adding AUTO SLOPE into the mix with CEMOS is just fantastic. By automatically adjusting fan speed as the machine goes up and down hill, it keeps output to the max without any increase in losses – it’s really impressive on our undulating ground.”

## GRAIN QUALITY

“The Grain Quality camera is an essential part of the CEMOS set-up. I like to be able to see it identifying rubbish and broken grains on the screen, but ultimately I let the combine decide what it wants to do about it and the result is consistently a fantastic sample.

“Part of that is down to the JET STREAM sieves which I know from previous experience are unbeatable. But also CEMOS is running the drum faster and the concaves more open than I’d ever have felt comfortable with before. The result is fewer broken grains and less smashed straw, but strangely not at the expense of losses.”

## QUANTIMETER

“The new yield-monitoring system is unbelievably accurate – in one 200 tonne batch of barley it was just 620kg different from what was measured over the weighbridge.

“But that level of accuracy isn’t just for cereals, in rape it’s equally precise. In fact, it’s now given me the faith that we can reliably build up some proper yield maps with a view to potentially moving towards variable rate applications of fertiliser and seed in the future.”

## TELEMATICS

“Although we’re not running a fleet of combines I find the TELEMATICS app on the phone very useful.

“Simple things like being able to check the fuel level means I can decide where to take the bowser out to. Critically it’s a fantastic health and safety aid, providing traceability and tracking for lone-working.”

## WHY CLAAS?

“It was a big leap of faith putting our names down for one of the first new generation straw-walker LEXION, particularly not having had a demo.

“However I have absolute faith in the team at MANNNS and if they say a machine is capable of doing the job, I know that it will be. More importantly, if we have any issues I know we’ll be well looked after and if it isn’t a quick fix then a replacement will be in the yard within hours.”