

LEXION – an absolute weapon

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James and Simon Burton, Lincolnshire, August 2020, LEXION 7500.



Having completed its second season with Lincs-based D&B Farming, a 2019 LEXION 7500 is continuing to impress, its performance further enhanced with the addition of a CONVIO FLEX header this harvest.

For brothers James and Simon Burton, their combining acreage seems to grow relentlessly year-on-year. Seven years ago the total stood at just 200ha (500 acres), today it stretches to well over 2,225ha (5,500 acres). Such monumental growth in such a short period of time has seen some fairly radical changes in the machinery fleet, not least in the harvesting department.

“Initially we started out with a second-hand LEXION 780 which was well over-capacity for our acreage at the time, but we knew more was coming our way,” explains Simon.

“As the area grew, its appetite meant that we could comfortably handle everything we threw at it – it was an absolute weapon. Then in 2017 we took on a big chunk more work and we knew we’d be stretching the boundaries. We decided the sensible option was another LEXION but a smaller straw walker 650.”

With yet more ground adding to the workload two years ago, that 650 was swapped for a brand new pre-production LEXION 7500 which arrived for harvest 2019.

Its performance surprised the Burtons, coming close to matching the 780 for output and beating it hands down on sample quality as well as fuel use on a litres-per-tonne basis. But with yet more ground to cover for harvest 2020, a good chunk of it spring cropping, there was a need to push harvesting capacity further.

“With more acres to cut and a lot of spring barley that had the potential to be troublesome, we felt we needed a little something extra.”

FARM FACTS

FARM	D&B Farming Co. Ltd, near Sleaford, Lincs
FARMED AREA	1,416ha (3,500 acres) plus 810ha (2,000 acres) contract combining and drilling
CROP INCL. CONTRACTING	Winter wheat 1,416ha (3,500 acres), spring barley 400ha (988 acres), oilseed rape 81ha (200 acres), winter barley 202 ha (500 acres) plus 810ha (2,000 acres) forage maize and 405ha (100 acres) sugar beet
STAFF	James and Simon Burton, Will Dean plus two full-timers and three others at harvest



“We’d heard good things about CLAAS’ new belt fed CONVIO headers and, having had a demo last harvest, could see the potential one could offer in gaining extra capacity, particularly in laid, awkward crops. So we put our name down for one.”

CONVIO FLEX HEADER

When the 7500 first arrived it was fitted with 9.3m (30ft) VARIO cutterbar, but it quickly became apparent that it was no match for the new machine’s appetite and it was swapped for a 10.8m (35ft) VARIO which helped to slow forward speeds while boosting output.

The move to a similar width CONVIO FLEX has taken the 7500’s performance up another level.

“Last year with the VARIO cutterbar in 7t/ha crops of spring barley I’d be averaging 50-55tonnes an hour with the 7500,” says James.

“With the CONVIO it’s more like 65-70 tonnes – it’s like a different machine. When we first got the 7500, despite being a narrow-bodied combine we saw it’s capacity as equivalent with a 760. With the new header it’ll comfortably match a 770 and in brackled spring barley will actually outperform the 780.

“It’s all about the way the crop feeds in – with the belts there’s none of that stalling, bunching and surging that you get from an auger on a conventional header, even in lumpy damp crops.

“In fact the belts seem to even out the flow of material so the combine just runs so much more and more efficiently.”

But it’s not all about extra tonnes per hour, the CONVIO has also

extended the working day so that by the end of harvest 2020 the 7500 had actually cleared more acres than the 780.

“The improved flow of crop means when the dew comes down in the evening we can keep running for an extra two to three hours with the 7500, when the 780 with its VARIO header has to park up because the crop simply won’t feed in the front.

“Where a standard header is often in contact with the deck, in damp conditions it’ll tend to bulldoze. The CONVIO just floats so it’s not an issue and you don’t have all that downtime of clearing soil off the table.

“Not only are we gaining extra output per hour but we’re doing more in a day. Given the CONVIO’s performance this season, we’ll be seriously looking at swapping the 780’s header for a CONVIO for next harvest. Not only does that have the potential to boost what it can do in a day, but by feeding everything in head-first, it should make for an even cleaner sample from the older combine.”

SMOOTH CROP FLOW

“The difference in diesel use between the 7500 and the 780 is unbelievable, which we’re pretty convinced is all down to the even feed of material through the guts of the machine,” says Simon.

“This season we’ve been able to go out with a full tank and go cutting for two ten hour days before refilling – it’s quite staggering.

“That smooth flow of crop also means it’s so much quieter in the cab. In combination with the rubber-belted intake elevator and new unloading auger driveline, it’s whisper-quiet in the cab, so much so that



Simon Burton.

you have to keep an eye on the power monitor rather than relying your ears to really know what’s going on back there!”

CEMOS AUTOMATIC

“Before we got the 7500 we’d never had CEMOS and I was initially very sceptical of a computer system that thought it could set up a combine better than an experienced operator.

“But as soon as I started letting it do its own thing last year it proved it was more than capable of out-witting me. Two seasons in, I still think it’s absolutely incredible.

“I can tinker with any number of settings and the computer will always beat me on losses, sample and output.

“Now I never change a single thing on the machine. I just pull into the field, select the crop type and go. Even with it set to maximum output all the time, the sample is way cleaner than any human could achieve – our customers can’t get over the complete absence of rubbish in the heap.

“Of course it makes sense – with the machine monitoring everything itself, left to its own devices it does a much better job than I can and, in combination with GPS and the CONVIO header, it’s so much more relaxing, safe in the knowledge it’s performing at its best.

QUANTIMETER

“The new QUANTIMETER is deadly accurate and has meant that our mobile weighbridge is now redundant.

“Rather than hauling it from farm to farm to establish exactly what’s coming into store from our various contract farming customers, we know exactly what each field has yielded just from the yield monitor.”

WOULD YOU HAVE ANOTHER?

“There’s absolutely no doubt this latest generation of LEXION is a big step on from what’s gone before and we’re keen to have another when our 780 is due for changing,” says James.

“What we hadn’t appreciated is what a difference swapping to a CONVIO header would make. If we can gain 20% extra output and go on for an extra couple of hours in the evening, then it gives us the capacity to comfortably deal with what we’ve got and a bit more without having to rush to change the combines.”

WHY CLAAS?

“First and foremost it’s down to back-up. The team at CLAAS EASTERN in Sleaford are a really good bunch of lads. Whether you’re dealing with someone in the stores, sales or the fitters, every one of them knows what they’re doing and is willing to help,” says Simon.

“On top of that we like the machines and know they’ll do the best possible job for us. And when it comes to running costs you don’t generally get too many nasty surprises – they hold their value so you can budget properly and plan for a sensible replacement policy.”