

Impressive, cost cutting traction

A reduction in horsepower to a 445hp AXION 960 CEBIS has given Stody Estate the capability of handling all the heavy cultivations previously completed using a far more specialist powerful tractor, but with flexibility to do other jobs and so spread tractor costs over more hours.

Farming with the environment while pushing their soils hard is central to the ethos of the 1750 arable hectares on the north Norfolk estate, where up to 14 crops are grown over a 12 year rotation on its light, sandy soils, which are highly reliant on irrigation.

“We have a large area of stewardship, and we do work the soils hard but are very mindful of managing grass weed risk, with the result that we have very little blackgrass,” explains farm manager Mike Wilton. “Having root crops means that we are often having to work soils in less than ideal conditions, so we are at the higher end of the horsepower scale for a lot of tasks.”

The arrival of the AXION 960 CEBIS last October marked a considerable change for the farm as it replaced a more specialist equal wheeled articulated tractor, which was around 100hp more powerful and 6 tonnes heavier. However, despite this reduction in power and weight, the AXION has proved more than capable of handling all the same cultivation equipment, including a 5.5m He-Va Combi-Disc, a 5.0m Vaderstad TopDown, a 7-leg He-Va subsoiler and 7-furrow Lemken plough.

“The catalyst for the change was that our previous tractor had a breakdown and Simon Bloomfield at MANNs lent us the AXION, which was his demo tractor. We couldn’t believe how well it gripped. Adam Godwin the operator also liked it and it ticked a lot of boxes. From there it was down to price and service support,” explains Mike.

“In the past we tended to use deep cultivations because the tractor gave us the horsepower to do it, rather than because we had to. But the tractor was only any good for cultivations and so spent

a lot of the year parked-up. With the AXION I want to move to a system where cultivations will be chosen appropriate to the soil and conditions. By going back to a rigid tractor, the AXION is a compact workhorse that has the weight distribution and high traction that enables it to pull all the same equipment, albeit that with the Combi-Disc it is at its limit, but it has the flexibility that allows it to be used for other jobs such as hauling grain or sugar beet.”

This flexibility is evident in the fact that compared to their previous tractor which did around 7-800 hours a year, the AXION in its first year has already clocked up 1,200 hours. Not only does this reduce its running cost but, states Mike, are extra hours that would otherwise have had to go on another tractor.

So pleased has he been with the performance from the AXION 960, that he has now added a AXION 870 as a second string tractor. The policy is that tractors are paired, so supporting the AXION 960 is another 370hp tractor, while the 280hp AXION 870 supports an older 290hp tractor for secondary cultivations and corn carting, with another pair of 175hp tractors below these.

For operator Adam Godwin, while the arrival of the AXION 960 marked quite a change, he has also been very impressed with its performance and pulling power and having technology such as the S10 with RTK gps and CEBIS touchscreen terminal makes it very easy to set-up and use.

“The AXION is a far more refined tractor and overall I have been very impressed with it – it has far exceeded my expectations. The CEBIS is so intuitive and easy to use. Every button does what it should. So it’s very simple to change the engine settings, for instance from max power for the Combi-Disc to a more economic setting for the TopDown or ploughing. Likewise the S10 makes it so easy to save your settings and A/B lines. It works very, very well.

“Also the LED lighting package is phenomenal and it’s such a comfortable tractor. As a rule I hate leather seats – but the ventilated leather seat in the AXION is brilliant; I love it!”

“The AXION is a good product that’s well priced, and the support MANNs provide is faultless. Also the relationship the service team have with Adam is important as it helps him to get the best out of the tractor,” concludes Mike.



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Both Mike Wilton (right) and operator Adam Godwin have been impressed by the pulling power of the AXION 960 and the flexibility it offers.

