

MONTANA makes a molehill out of a mountain

With a beef enterprise that can stretch to over 4,500 cattle at certain times plus 2,500 breeding ewes, there are a lot of hungry mouths to feed at Flass Farm.

All offspring from the breeding animals are taken through to finishing and so having a decent source of home-grown feed is central to the business. To that end the farm runs its own JAGUAR 850 forage-harvester to chop some 810 ha of grass a year and the entire 243 ha of cereal cropping is harvested and crimped for use a part of a ration for the beef and sheep.

For decades CLAAS combines have been the weapons of choice for this job, liked because of their robust build and dependability, running for up to ten years before being replaced.

This harvest saw the business switch from a TUCANO 440 to a pre-production 450 MONTANA – the only machine of its type with true full-body levelling on farm in the UK.

WHY A TUCANO 450 MONTANA?

“We found the 440 to be perfectly capable of cutting our 243 hectares of cereals but when I heard there was to be a MONTANA version with proper hill-side compensation my ears pricked up,” says Tom MacFarlane.

“It makes sense to keep the whole body of the machine level. That way everything’s running as it should, losses are kept to a minimum and output isn’t restricted when you get onto hilly ground – which we’ve got plenty of.

“It’s significantly faster travelling across side-slopes. In fact, in places we now make the choice to cut that way rather than travelling up and downhill.”

CEBIS

“Having driven CLAAS combines and foragers for a long time I knew my way around the old CEBIS computer pretty well. This new set-up is definitely clearer laid-out but I was sceptical about having a touchscreen.

“I’m often in and out of the cab with dirty hands and was concerned that wouldn’t suit the screen. But it’s not a problem because I can just use the armrest switches for the individual machine settings instead.

“I just flip the right rocker up or down to tweak things like drum speed, concave clearance and the amount of wind going over the sieves. I really like the fact that I don’t have to use the touchscreen but it still automatically brings up the relevant page when I toggle the appropriate switch, showing clearly which settings I’m altering.”

HOW HAS IT PERFORMED?

“Given that we’re cutting everything for crimping, we’re often working in some pretty damp, tough crops,” explains operator Will Nairn.

“Despite that TUCANO handles it pretty well. We’re never limited on power but with our previous level-land machine would be held back by grain going over the sieves.

“This new MONTANA doesn’t suffer that at all. Because it sits bang-on level all of the time I’m able to keep the stick pushed right forward and so we’ve seen a really significant increase in our daily outputs.

“And to match that we’ve got a bigger grain tank that’s faster to unload. When you switch on the auger it doesn’t drag the engine down – the TUCANO just keeps on going.”

WHY CLAAS?

“Over the time we’ve had CLAAS machines we’ve found the back-up from our dealer RICKERBYS to be fantastic,” says Mr MacFarlane.

“They’ve always been particularly good on spare parts and will generally have what you need on the shelf so any downtime is kept to a minimum.”



Tom MacFarlane | 1053 ha | Berwickshire

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