

AXION 870 boosts efficiency for top Cornish grower

Agricola Growers | 1500ha | Cornwall



photo by Rowan Kitto

With 295hp under the bonnet and its CVT transmission an AXION 870 is helping to improve establishment efficiency on a Cornish farm.

An opportunity to take on more land prompted a Cornish farm and vegetable processor to make a step change in its approach to autumn establishment. Now one operator is responsible for cultivating 900ha for Agricola Growers with a new 295hp CLAAS AXION 870 and a 5.0m wide cultivator.

Agricola Growers was founded in 2004 by Jeremy and Sarah Oatey. Today it farms a total of about 1,500ha at Antony, near Torpoint, with cropping including cereals, daffodil flowers and bulbs as well as potatoes and onions. All the vegetables go to its own HF Produce business, which supplies washed and peeled produce to local firm, Ginsters, to make Cornish Pasties.

“When we took on 200ha of extra land we realised we needed to make a change,” explains Jeremy Oatey. “We were already on the edge of efficiency and needed a new system to take over from a 3.0m wide Sumo, which was too slow. With the AXION 870 powering a 5.0m wide Lemken Karat cultivator we now have a one operator/ tractor system. This also frees up labour and equipment in the autumn, when we are also busy on potatoes.”

Since arriving in October 2017, the tractor has already clocked up 2,250hrs, with the cultivator and a six-furrow mounted plough. “We did look very carefully at buying the new AXION because we did have some ‘issues’ with some previous models,” says Jeremy. “But CLAAS and the dealer HAMBLYS, dealt with these very well. This experience, along with a good deal and warranty, gave us confidence to buy another.”

Operator, Lewis Kitto, is delighted with the tractor’s performance, comfort and controls. “I’m now cultivating twice the area I was before with the Sumo,” he says. “With wide equipment you can’t afford not to use auto-steering, which is operated via the optional large screen, S10 ISOBUS terminal. This provides an accuracy down to 2.0cm using RTK NET that replaced the original EGNOS GPS system, which we found had problems receiving the signal in some areas.”

The tractor is also equipped with TELEMATICS and Agricola Growers has given permission to HAMBLYS to use this to monitor the tractor. This, adds Jeremy Oatey, allows the dealer to spot any potential problems and should help prevent break-downs.

“It’s also a good security measure,” states Andrew Finnamore, production manager. “I get an email the moment the tractor moves. I can also receive emails about the tractor performance – when its moving, fuel consumption, area worked etc.”

FEATURES AND BENEFITS

The AXION 870 is equipped with the CLAAS CMATIC CVT transmission as standard and Lewis says this is easy to use and set-up and, he feels, responds more smoothly than other CVTs he has used.

Lewis says he mainly uses the multi-function lever, but there’s also an option of an accelerator pedal – with both automatically adjusting the engine speed and transmission ratio. As well as the ability to set three speed ranges in both directions of travel, there’s also a cruise control that can be selected, on-the-move, in each.

With its ability to set any forward speed at any engine rpm the continuously variable transmission also helps maintain the working quality and possibly improve economy, says Andrew Finnamore.

“One of the main reasons for the change was because we wanted to increase efficiency by doing more, but without increasing running costs,” he explains. “The FPT engine provides plenty of power to work the Karat at high work rates and we feel it’s quite economical –

it’s not using any more fuel than the previous set-up. We have noticed it does use more AdBlue than expected, which is probably because it is almost always working hard. But it’s not actually a big cost,” he adds.


Up in the four-post cab Lewis appreciates the comfort offered by not only the suspension, but also the ventilated premium air-ride seat. “It’s a large and comfortable cab and I’ve found all the controls are easy to reach and set. It helps the joystick is the same as the one on our CLAAS LEXION 750 TT combine.


“While we do make variable rate applications of seed as well as P and K with other tractors, the S10 terminal on the AXION 870 is mainly used to run the auto-steering. I do map the boundaries and fields and, although it’s ISOBUS compatible, the equipment I use doesn’t require that,” he adds.

As well as cultivating with the Karat, the other main implement is a six-furrow, Lemken Jewel plough, which Lewis says the AXION has no problem handling on its 10.5t linkage capacity. Although the plough has electronic control, it’s not able to run through the ISOBUS.


“I am, however, able to use the tractor’s CEBIS screen to set and adjust the electronic spool valves for speeds and flow rates to make it easier to control. I also like the headland management system and use this all the time to automate the lifting and lowering sequences with the Karat, including the engaging and disengaging the four-wheel drive and diff-lock for the turn,” says Lewis.



 Jeremy Oatey, Agricola Growers managing director (centre) with operator, Lewis Kitto (left) and Andrew Finnamore, production manager.

 Operator, Lewis Kitto, praises the large, suspended cab with its ventilated premium air-ride seat. He finds the CMATIC CVT transmission operates more smoothly than others.



 The 10in S10 touch-screen terminal (lower left) is used mainly to run the auto-steering, which the farm feels is essential to maintain efficiency with wider implements.