

“Our drivers preferred the TORION for comfort, visibility and manoeuvrability”



David Mann | **Waveney Mushrooms** | Suffolk

On one of the main farms in an East Anglian producer group, a new TORION 1410 Varipower is helping create the material to grow mushrooms supplied across UK supermarkets, restaurants and caterers.

Over 22.5 tonnes – around 50,000lbs – of closed cup and button mushrooms are produced each week at David Mann’s farm near Bungay in Suffolk, part of the Waveney Mushrooms co-operative of East Anglian growers, supplying supermarkets, wholesalers and caterers. Growing them requires a huge tonnage of compost. The task of handling the materials to make this has, since late last year, fallen to a 9.1t/3.7m capacity CLAAS TORION 1410 wheel loader.

Wheat straw, chicken litter and horse manure, all from local sources, are the key ingredients for that compost, with the addition of lime to neutralise acidity. Once the straw has been wetted over a number of days using a recycling water system, it’s then blended with the other materials through the farm’s mixer/windrower. The mixing is repeated each day over the following two days.

ITS ALL ABOUT THE COMPOST

The mix is then put into one of a pair of walled clamps with aerated floors, and as the material breaks down over the next fortnight, oxygen sensors ensure air is automatically blown through it daily as and when required, replenishing the oxygen consumed and sustaining the aerobic process. Every four days the material is transferred into the other clamp to keep it aerated, and over a three week period the ammonia created during composting turns to nitrogen and a sweet-smelling compost is created. After passing through a subsequent pasteurisation and conditioning process at a lower temperature and given a top casing of peat and chalk, it provides the ideal substrate for mushroom spawn to grow on, and the first flush of mushrooms is picked in around two weeks.

“We don’t need the reach of a telehandler, with our highest lifting being over the sides of lorry bodies when loading spent compost, but we do need a high lift capacity to handle big amounts of compost and the materials to make it.

COMFORT, VISIBILITY AND MANOEUVRABILITY

“I hadn’t dealt with our local dealer, MANNS, before now, but along with a couple of other dealers they lent us a machine to try, and although wary of changing brands, our drivers preferred the TORION for comfort, visibility and manoeuvrability. What also particularly impressed me was the build quality of the machine.”

The TORION 1410’s main operator is Terry Ransome, but Stefan Kubala also takes the wheel at times, and both drivers have been impressed with the machine, after a long line of wheeled loaders from another manufacturer.

“It’s got lots of power for handling loose material, and the engine is arranged perfectly for weight distribution and service access,” says Stefan.



HYDRAULIC CAPACITY

"There's plenty of hydraulic capacity for lifting the sort of wet materials we deal with, and digging into the compost clumps, and the Varipower hydrostatic transmission is a big step forward from the powershift on our old machine – much smoother and with better pushing power.

"It's a manoeuvrable machine, and with the 620/75 R26 tyres on which it was ordered, we can get close up to the compost clamp walls with the 2.7m fork we use for moving material."

With the business operating for 364 days a year to match supermarket demand, the loader is a linchpin of the farm's operation, points out David Mann.

"With all this material to handle to maintain a constant supply of compost, our handler is an important machine. The TORION was a big change from our previous wheeled loaders, but it's done exactly what we've asked of it so far."

CLAAS



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