

# Digestate is liquid gold

With the massive rises in compound fertiliser cost over the past year, the use of digestate has not only proved a massive financial benefit to Banks Farming, saving them in the region of £200,000, but also proved an invaluable aid for overall soil fertility and health.

Contract and share farming around 800ha of cereals based at Finedon in Northamptonshire, Tom Banks relies totally on digestate for all his wheat, barley, rye and oilseed rape nutritional needs, sourced from two local AD plants that take in food waste. In addition he also has application contracts with a further two AD plants near Oxford, from which digestate is spread on farms mainly within a five mile radius.

Central to the whole operation is a XERION 4200 bought in 2021, paired with a 28m<sup>3</sup>, tandem axle Kaweco swan-neck tanker, fitted with a 36 metre Vogelsang dribble bar boom with automatic section control and front-mounted turbo-filler.

## 100,000 TONNES PER SEASON

In a season lasting from March to early October, the XERION/Kaweco combination will apply in the region of 100,000 tonnes of digestate. Supported by a fleet of four nurse tankers, while the combination has the capacity to spread around 2,000 m<sup>3</sup> a day, for planning the average is nearer 1,000 to allow for moves and delays.

“Because the plants mainly run on food waste, the higher protein in the substrate results in a digestate that is higher in nitrogen and trace elements. The digestate is almost the equivalent of a 10/5/5 depending on feedstock, so is a well-rounded product that has certainly added a lot of potassium back into the ground. Over the five years that we have been using digestate, we have seen soil indices rise from zero or even minus in some places, to plus three or four,” explains Tom, who adds that financially over his wheat acreage alone, the digestate has saved around £300-400/ha in just nitrogen.

## EVERYTHING IS INTERLINKED

Tom and his team of drivers have all been impressed by how easy the XERION and Kaweco tanker are to operate, helped by the fact that everything is interlinked using ISOBus. This makes it easy to set-up and operate the tanker and boom via the S10 terminal and F functions on the CMOTION control, along with the GPS steering and, points out Tom, avoids having numerous terminals mounted in the cab.

For optimum flexibility, the Vogelsang boom can be used within any tramline width from 24 up to the full 36 metres, while the 16 sections with auto stop/start section managed by the section control function within the S10 terminal, ensure precise application.

“The ability to work within any tramline width is a great advantage when it comes to compaction and working in growing crops,” says Tom. “There is no getting away from the fact that farmers see it as a big machine. But both the tanker and the XERION are fitted with 900 wide tyres, plus the weight is spread over four axles, so they are often surprised by how little damage it does.

## MAXIMISING OUTPUT

“The ability to travel is important and in a normal season we realistically only have about 100 to 120 days when we can spread, so it is important that we can maximise output. Although it was expensive, I had autolube fitted to the tanker, which saves a lot of time, so the operator only really has to maintain the XERION and clean out the macerators. Having the filling system on the front of the XERION makes things much easier, and with a fill rate of 12,000 litres a minute, it takes minimal time whether we are filling from tankers or lagoons.”

While a tractor and tanker combination were always Tom's favoured choice, he did also look at the option of running a self-propelled machine. “The benefit of the XERION and Kaweco tanker option is that if we want to upgrade the tanker in the future it's very easy to just replace that element, while the XERION will always have a value as a tractor, and having the extra axles helps spread the load.

## COMFORT AND VISIBILITY

“The XERION is a fantastic machine to operate. It's very comfortable and the visibility from the cab is excellent. Also, I like the fact that it has an all mechanical drive. Because there is little power loss, both the traction and fuel economy are superb. Reliability has been excellent and the old 2012 XERION 3800 that it replaced, which we used for primary cultivations and drilling, was just the same.

“All in all the combination of the XERION 4200 and Kaweco tanker makes it a fantastic bit of machinery for our operation. Despite its size, due to its manoeuvrability it's surprising where it can get in, and because everything is interlinked it is just so streamlined and easy to operate.”



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# XERION 4200 & Kaweco Tanker



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