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Daniel Crawford, Oxfordshire, 2023

FARM FACTS

Farm Compton Beauchamp Estates near Faringdon, Oxfordshire

Cropping Winter wheat
OSR
Spring barley
Winter barley
Spring oats
Peas
Grass
Stewardship schemes

Staff Daniel and Chrissie Crawford plus five others full-time and another five at peak times

CLAAS LEXION 8800 x 2

Connecting past and future

With over 17,000 tonnes of grain to harvest, store and market each year, Oxfordshire farm manager Daniel Crawford relies heavily on the latest technology to record yields and analyse the financial performance of different areas of the farm.

“Yield mapping has always been a big part of what we do here and my predecessor had the foresight to see that we needed to be recording crop performance well before we had any means of doing anything with that information,” explains Mr Crawford.

“When I started in 2016 we already had 20 years of yield data going back to the first LEXION 480s equipped with Quantimeters and memory cards.

“Having such a long back catalogue of records means we get a much more accurate picture of how different areas of the farm perform and, consequently, now we’re able to make good decisions based on that.”

While crop performance data is only viewed as one element of the whole picture, yield maps are overlaid with soil sampling results to give an overall representation of what’s happening within different fields and across the entire acreage.

“I’ll sit down with our agronomist and look at how blocks of crop have performed and if there are patches that have surprised us. We’ll then make decisions about what fertiliser regimes are appropriate and even what the following crop should be.

“Unsurprisingly blackgrass is our main enemy and our number one driver for all decision making. Although we’ll have a good idea of the areas affected, having those maps to quantify the losses is an eye-opener, and we’ll regularly alter our plans according to what we’re seeing.

“In a world where more of the farm income is going to come from environmental payments, we’re also able to use yield maps as a means of deciding which areas of the farm to put aside for stewardship schemes – it really is a fantastic tool for us.”

Data transfer

“One of the key things about the latest CLAAS TELEMATICS system is how easy it is to see the information. The combines are constantly pinging data to the cloud and I can then choose whether to download that manually or automatically – either way it’s straightforward.

“When I do download it, that data slides seamlessly across into our Gatekeeper farm management software ready for me to interrogate.

“Not only does it give me a really accurate picture of what we’ve got in the grainstores for stock management and marketing purposes, but it also provides a really precise source of figures for gross margin accounting.

“Critically it means I can produce reports for the management team so that we can really scrutinise the performance of different varieties, fungicide treatments, fertiliser regimes, etc... and make decisions based on that information.

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“It’s not all about yield – the financial performance of a crop is determined by how much money we throw at it. We need to know we’ll see a return on those input costs.

“For those decisions to be right it all hangs on accurate data from the combines and they’re now better than ever before at providing us with precise information.”

QUANTIMETER

“Our previous combines – a pair of LEXION 780s – were equipped with QUANTIMETERs and grain quality cameras which worked well, but the set-up on these latest machines is so much more accurate.

“At the start of each crop we do a test weigh of 100 tonnes over the weighbridge and calibrate the system based on that – that way we know it’s accurate.

“We’ve got sheds where there is no weighbridge and so previously we were guesstimating blind what was going in. Now I know exactly what’s there and can sell accordingly.

“I have such faith in the system that we’re now using the yield data to compare different drilling dates and varieties to make decisions on what we do the following season.”

Fleet management

“Being able to see machines of all colours in the CLAAS TELEMATICS package means it’s easy to manage the whole fleet. At harvest we’re running up to eight tractors, so it’s a really useful aid in logistics, whether it’s planning the next field move or how many trailers we need to be running.

“Even though we’re dipping into other manufacturers’ TELEMATICS systems it’s easy to set-up the link between all the machines, and everything is there in front of you, whether it’s on the office computer or on the mobile app.”



Why CLAAS?

“The estate has had CLAAS combines for decades primarily because of their ability to cover the ground. We’re expecting each machine to clear in excess of 8500-9000 tonnes of grain each season – we need to know they’re capable of that, and that they’ll still be as reliable five years down the line as the day they arrived on the farm. The fantastic back-up we receive from our dealer CLAAS Western at Cirencester means we have the peace of mind that it’s possible.

“The minute there’s an issue they’re onto it. But it’s not just the machines themselves, we get brilliant service for all the precision farming technology too. There’s always someone on the end of the phone to talk you through things and they’re more than happy to come out to actually show you how to set things up – we couldn’t ask for more in that respect.”



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