



LEXION 7500, 750, 630 MONTANA 2023

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Andrew Fairs,
Essex, 2023

FARM FACTS

Farm	HJ Fairs and Son, near Colchester, Essex
Farmed area	2225 ha
Cropping	Winter wheat Oilseed rape Peas Spring barley plus specialist crops including borage, echium, quinoa, camelina, chia, linaria and star avensis
Staff	Peter and Andrew Fairs, Chris Barron plus six full-timers and an additional six at harvest
CLAAS history	2023 LEXION 7500 2020 LEXION 630 MONTANA 2018 LEXION 750

The perfect combine team

With up to 10 different crops to cut and a harvest that can stretch right through from early July until late October, the team at HJ Fairs and Son and Fairking Ltd in Essex know the importance of having versatile, dependable equipment.

Central to the harvest operation are three CLAAS LEXION – a six-year-old hybrid 750, a five-walker 630 MONTANA with four seasons under its belt and a latest generation 7500 that arrived at the beginning of last harvest.

“We run three very different combines because they’ve each got their own strengths. For churning through the acres in cereals the new 7500 is unstoppable and we find that the twin rotor set-up in it and the 750 is better in dealing with hard-to-thresh crops in less-than-ideal conditions.

“The 630 compliments the two bigger machines, being gentler on delicate crops. Being a MONTANA we see an advantage on even the slightest incline, particularly when we’re restricted on the amount of airflow we can use over the sieves in small-seed crops. Previously if we weren’t careful those flyaway seeds would go straight over the back – body-levelling did away with that.”

Why a 7500?

“Although we’ve got a big acreage of cereals to cut, with our specialist crops we’re not after out-and-out throughput, it’s much more about handling valuable crops in tricky conditions and the quality of what ends up in the tank.

“That said, with its bigger APS drum and concaves up front, the 7500 is an awesome thing to see in action in wheat and it has definitely sped up harvest in our conventional arable crops.

“We need to stick with narrow machines because we’re in a very densely populated part of the country and getting around on the roads can be a real nightmare. And although there’s a significant cost associated with running three smaller combines where two larger harvesters would probably do the job, having three working away in different locations helps to keep contract farming customers happy and keeping up with the wide variety of crops as they become ready.”

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How has it performed?

“Aside from the extra output in cereals, the single biggest thing of note with the 7500 is the quality of the sample. The bigger drum can be run slower with the concaves set more open so you end up with less trash on the sieves with the result that what ends up in the tank is so much cleaner.

“Despite being a flat-land combine the 7500 is much better than previous hybrids in our oddball crops thanks to its bigger sieve area, 4D system and Auto Slope functions. The new combine does as good a job, if not better.

“As seed growers, being able to easily clean down the combine is essential. Being able to pull the bottom section of the concave out of the side of the machine makes the job a whole lot more straightforward, particularly in borage where we inevitably end up picking up a lot of soil and rubbish.”

Set-up

“Unsurprisingly there are no pre-programmed settings for our oddball crops in the LEXION’s CEBIS settings computers. For that reason, being able to set the machines to deal with some fairly tricky crop characteristics is essential.

“Without standardised factory settings our guys need to be constantly adjusting the combines as conditions change throughout the day. CLAAS have made that simpler than ever before on the latest generation LEXION. To date we haven’t found a crop that these machines can’t handle – but we keep putting that to the test!”



Headers

“Over the years we’ve tried all makes and manner of headers in our weird and wonderful crops, but we’ve found that the CLAAS standard VARIO cutterbar will do most jobs when direct cutting.

“Having the ability to tilt the header forward is a must in ground-hugging crops or where they are laid. It’s a brilliant optional extra that lets you get right underneath them and lift them off the ground.

“For the crops that have to be cut and swathed we have CLAAS’ SWATH-UP pick-up headers. Their design is such that they scoop up crop in more evenly with fewer losses than anything else we’ve tried. With sectional belts they’re cheaper to repair and because everything comes through CLAAS we know they’ll have the parts to us within 24 hours.”



Why CLAAS?

“CLAAS LEXION are true all-rounders. They’re more than capable of dealing with our wide range of crops from pinhead-sized flyaway chia seeds to dense conventional grains.

“With our range of cropping we need machinery that we know we can depend on. In our experience CLAAS combines are the most reliable on the market.

“That has a significant impact on our running costs. Rather than changing machines every three to four years, we have the confidence the combines we’re running will comfortably do seven harvests without any major gripes.

“That’s backed up by having MAXICARE service packages on all three of our LEXION. In addition to fixing our running costs, it gives us peace of that we’ll have no nasty surprises should anything big go wrong.

“When it comes to back-up we’re really lucky to have local service dealer Adam Borrett close at hand. Whether it’s late night or early morning, he’s out like a shot but to be honest we rarely have to call on him because he does such a good job with our winter servicing.

“Our business is all about people and relationships. Both MANNS and CLAAS have good people who are always prepared to talk through ideas and share their expertise – that means a lot.”



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