



TRION 530 MONTANA 2023



Matt Keeling,
Somerset, 2023

FARM FACTS

Farm M. Keeling Ltd, near Bath, Somerset

Farmed area 263 ha

Cropping Winter wheat 100 ha
Winter barley 28 ha
Spring barley 32 ha
Winter beans 56 ha
Linseed 40 ha
Oilseed rape for crushing 28 ha
Forage maize 8 ha
Remainder down to grass.
(With contract cutting for a neighbour the TRION 530 covers a total of over 283 ha a year including 20 ha of quinoa).

Livestock 400-head of Angus cross store cattle taken through to slaughter weight on home-grown feed incl. barley, beans, maize and oilseed rape cake from crushing

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

CLAAS combine history
1993 DOMINATOR 78
2000 DOMINATOR 98
2009 LEXION 520 MONTANA
2016 LEXION 630 MONTANA
2023 TRION 530 MONTANA

A game changer

The steeply rolling countryside of north Somerset means CLAAS MONTANA combines have long been the Keeling family's preferred choice when it comes to clearing their diverse range of crops.

A truly mixed enterprise situated close to Bath, Wilmington Farm plays host to some 400-head of Aberdeen Angus cross beef cattle, which are taken through to slaughter weight on a predominantly home-grown diet of barley, beans, maize and oilseed rape cake – a by-product of the Keeling's Bath Harvest rapeseed oil business.

"We've run CLAAS combines for decades going right back to our original DOMINATOR 78," says Matthew Keeling.

"They've always proved to be dependable, reliable performers even when buying them second-hand. Our first combines were level-land machines which trundled along quite happily, but were held back when they got onto our steep ground.

"But that all changed when we bought our first MONTANA – a three year-old LEXION 520. Having true body-levelling was a game-changer – our acreage had grown and it was the only way to match the output we needed."

Having done five harvests for the business, in 2016 it was changed for a newer LEXION 630, this time with a 6m VARIO header. It was a step on again and enabled the family to start working with a neighbouring farm, pushing the total workload to over 283 ha a year.

While it handled the acreage comfortably, after seven harvests at Wilmington Farm it was felt it was time for a change.

"We're not ones to rush to replace kit if it doesn't need it, but it's a careful balance between depreciation, cost to change and ongoing running costs. We decided the 630 had reached that point and after some careful deliberation opted for a five-walker TRION 530 MONTANA."

Equipped with a 7.5m wide version of the latest generation VARIO header it arrived ready for harvest 2023.



“Being able to see harvest progress via CLAAS TELEMATICS system is a big advantage when you’re sharing the combine between your own farm and a neighbour’s.”

Matthew Keeling, Somerset, 2023

Cab and controls

“The first and most obvious change is the new cab on the TRION. It’s so much quieter and more spacious than before and the control layout is a massive improvement.

“Although the new touchscreen is totally different to the set-up on our previous combines, I can’t believe how easy it has been to get used to. Although it has similarities to the old CEBIS – in terms of layout and hotkeys – it’s a massive upgrade.

“It’s totally intuitive – you just tap the part of the combine you want to adjust on the machine outline on the screen and you’re straight into the settings menu you want. Then you just twiddle the dial to tweak it, click to confirm and it’s done.”

Combine capacity

“Initially I was sceptical about going for the smallest MONTANA model and whether it would be capable of clearing both ours and our neighbour’s crops in good time.

“Those concerns have proved totally unfounded and we’re clearly over capacity for our acreage going on this season’s performance – it happily averaged 25 tonnes an hour in cereals this year.

“What’s really impressive is the reduction in fuel use per tonne harvested. Despite being some 40hp less than the old 630, the TRION matches it for output while using less diesel. While the tanks are the same size, we only have to top up after two days’ work, whereas previously we’d struggle to go for more than a day and a half.”

Why a MONTANA?

“When we first got 3D sieves on our Dominator 98 it was a massive improvement working on our banks, but the move to our first MONTANA was a complete revelation.

“Having true body-levelling means that when you’re going across a side-slope you never see losses start to climb – you maintain the same output whether you’re on flat land or on a hill.

“Although you pay a premium for the MONTANA system in the first place, it pays dividends all the way and when you come to trade the combine in you get a better price for it being a hill-sider.”

Sample quality

“Hillside compensation means the sieves are never overloaded, which has a huge impact on sample quality.

“That’s particularly important for our oilseed rape as we’re using a big proportion of it to go through our own oil press for bottling. For that it needs to be as clean as it would be for seed – the new TRION is a step on again in that respect. In combination with the MONTANA system, the bigger fan and JET STREAM sieves make for a totally trash-free sample.”

Four-wheel drive

“It’s no understatement to say our ground is pretty steep in places and keeping a combine on track across side-slopes can be tricky. Moving to the first MONTANA meant it was the first time we could travel across our hillsides rather than going up and down.

“But being a two-wheel drive machine it could struggle, particularly if the ground was soft. So we splashed out on a completely new driven rear axle – a well worthwhile investment that meant we could travel pretty much anywhere.

“It was a given that we ticked that box on the options list for the TRION. We’re moving to a much reduced tillage regime and so keeping the soil in good health is an increasingly important focus for us. Without 4wd you really know where the combine has been. With it turned on it barely marks the ground.”

VARIO header

“We’ve had VARIO headers on our last two combines but the latest version on the TRION is an immense improvement.

“There are no filler plates to fit when you’re switching to rape and even with the side-knives in place you’ve still got table travel. The move to a shaft-driven wobble-box should also stand the test of time.”

TELEMATICS

“Being able to see harvest progress via CLAAS TELEMATICS system is a big advantage when you’re sharing the combine between your own farm and a neighbour’s. I’m able to see how they’re getting on while we’re off baling and plan the next days’ workload accordingly.”

Why CLAAS?

“We’ve always had a really good relationship with CLAAS Western at Frome. The workshop guys are fantastic and they’ve nearly always got the parts we need on the shelf. If not they’re with us by the following day. It’s the same story whether it’s combines, tractors or grass kit hence why we typically go for CLAAS kit where we can.

“When it comes to combines though I’m convinced CLAAS leads the field particularly when it comes to hill-siders – I wouldn’t have anything else.”



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