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Tom Monk

# Flexibility for a high quality harvest

**Growing upwards of 30 different varieties of seed for a number of seed merchants, each with their own specifications, requires not only a highly efficient grain handling and storage system, but also flexibility, efficiency and timeliness with harvesting – the responsibility of three CLAAS TRION combines.**

AF Monk have specialised in growing high quality seed crops since the 1980s. Extending to 1,400ha with 90% of their crops for seed, the large majority are C1 for C2, but if required they will grow Basic and Pre-Basic. In addition to a grain storage system that enables them to segregate crops into 50 to 60 different 'heaps', they also have their own seed testing laboratory and crop inspector.

"For us harvest is all about timeliness and having the ability to be in three different crops at once. We can be growing the same variety for a number of different merchants, all to a different specification, so every time we change or move between crops, it takes 1½ hours to completely clean out the combine," explains Tom Monk, who this year is growing 9 winter and 1 spring wheat varieties, 6 winter and 6 spring barleys, 3 winter and 2 spring oats, as well as herbage seed, oilseed rape, peas and poppies, while last year the mix also included sunflowers.

## CHANGE TO TRION

After many years of running CLAAS LEXION combines, all of which have been MONTANA versions since 2004, last year saw the arrival from OLIVERS Winchester of a new TRION 660 MONTANA with a 770 CONVIO FLEX header in place of a LEXION 660. That was followed this year by a further two TRION 750 MONTANA with 930 CONVIO FLEX headers in place of a LEXION 760 and 670.

"The combination of having both straw walker and the rotary (ROTO PLUS) machines works well as it gives us flexibility, but also some crops are better suited to different machines. Oats, for instance, thresh better and produce a better sample using a rotary while the straw walker TRION 660 is better suited to herbage seed and greater straw quality."

All the TRION have been specified with full CEMOS AUTOMATIC. In addition, one of the TRION 750 was specified with a variable feeder housing for harvesting certain crops, while the 660 is fitted with an agitator in the tank for small grain size crops such as herbage.

"It's all about flexibility and having the right machine for different crops, not just output. Going from two to three machines again gives us that bit more flexibility, especially in a difficult year, but also future proofs us for any expansion. The LEXION worked very well for us and was why Phil Cole suggested that the TRION would be a more suitable replacement, as we would be swapping like for like.

## QUALITY UTMOST PRIORITY

"We trust in CEMOS AUTOMATIC and it takes a lot of the stress off the operator and helps with efficiencies. Split grains are a big 'no-no' and obviously grain quality is very important. Working with the 'Quality' setting in CEMOS helps us achieve that. The operators have also been surprised by how quick they can go using it. There are times in the day when you know that you can push on, or when to hold back, but CEMOS enables the combine to react far quicker to those changes and is very good in the evening.

"We initially trialled the CONVIO FLEX cutterbar with the TRION 660 and were very pleased with its performance and the flexibility it gave us, especially in crops like poppies, peas and beans when they are close to the ground where it works very well. We went for the wider 30ft headers for the TRION 750 as the drivers felt the greater width meant it flexed better. We have also found the CONVIO FLEX to be easier to clean than the VARIO and the crop flow into the combine is more even.

"Having the combination of CEMOS AUTOMATIC and the CONVIO FLEX cutterbars, we have certainly seen a noticeable increase in output and we are driving quicker. Typically with the LEXION we would be running at 4kph, but with the TRION we are up to 6kph and holding them back.

"CLAAS combines have historically worked very well for us and we like what the combine gives us in terms of straw management and grain quality, but they also self-clean well and are also easy to clean down.

"And combined with that is the support that we get from OLIVERS with the good availability of spare parts should we need them – it's good, total back-up."

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