


# CONVIO FLEX

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Andrew Smurthwaite



FARM	Rosebery Estates, near Edinburgh
FARMED AREA	1983ha (4900 acres)
CROPPING	winter wheat 526ha (1300 acres) spring barley 323ha (800 acres) winter barley 121ha (300 acres) oilseed rape (OSR) 303ha (750 acres) spring oats 40ha (100 acres) spring beans 40ha (100 acres) fallow 120ha (296 acres) grass leys 200ha (494 acres) remainder in permanent pasture and woodland
LIVESTOCK	1270 Texel/Lleyn ewes plus followers
STAFF	Andrew Smurthwaite plus 7 full-timers and another 3 part-time at harvest







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With land stretching across a 40-mile area from the banks of the Firth of Forth south into the Scottish Borders, Rosebery Estates has a wide variety of landscapes across its farmland.

Much of the cropped area is undulating, sloping ground which presents its challenges when trying to get the most out of a single high-output combine.

“We’ve seen our farmed area grow quite considerably in recent years,” explains farm manager Andrew Smurthwaite.

“But despite that we were determined to stick with only one combine – we didn’t need the logistical headaches or the extra costs of running two.”

While a six-year old LEXION 760 with 10.5m VARIO cutterbar had served the business well until 2017, it was becoming stretched with the extra land the estate had taken on, particularly in a difficult season. So last year it was swapped for a brand new 780 equipped with a 12m VARIO.

“We immediately saw a jump in output with the bigger combine and were happy with the job it was doing, but felt we could probably make more of it with a wider header.

“We wanted the extra width to reduce the number of combine passes and therefore help to limit soil damage, particularly because we’re often harvesting when ground conditions are less than ideal.

“But the real focus was to maximise the output of the combine to ensure we could complete harvest with one machine rather than two.”

So last season the team at Rosebery were given the opportunity to trial a prototype 13.8m CONVIO FLEX header. Pretty quickly it proved itself and convinced Mr Smurthwaite to order one for the 2019 season.

## What benefits does it bring?

“Moving to the 13.8m CONVIO header we immediately saw a 15-20% increase in combine output.

“Much of that is down to the way the crop feeds into the machine. Using rubber belts rather than an auger to draw material to the centre means that everything arrives at the intake elevator head-first. That results in a much smoother flow of crop right through the combine.

“The belts also mean header losses are massively reduced in crops like oilseed rape and spring beans because they don’t tend to bunch and shed in front of the knife. It all just drops onto the table head-first before anything can escape.”

## Why a CONVIO FLEX over a standard header?

“It’s all about topography really – a lot of the ground we farm is undulating and sloping so we wanted a header that was better able to follow the contours.

“Because the knife is able to flex by up to 25cm across its width it travels over the lumps and bumps and is less inclined to pick up stones.

“When you’ve got to get down low when the crop’s beginning to go over, it doesn’t tend to dive and start ploughing at one end or ride up and snip off just the ears at the other.”

## What’s it like to set-up and adjust?

“Being a true CLAAS product rather than a draper header from a third party supplier, it talks seamlessly with the LEXION CEBIS computer. You get an extra settings page and the option to set up its functions on the standard hotkeys. You just plug it in and drive on as normal.”

“It’s really useful being able to adjust the speed of the belts to control the flow of material through the combine and fine-tune it to exactly match forward speed.”

## Other benefits?

“Being smoother and more flexible than steel tines, the plastic reel fingers seem to do a better job of pulling in laid crops without getting in a tangle.

“And being able to alter the angle of the header’s forward pitch is brilliant. If you’re going downhill you set it forward to keep the crop coming in and when you’ve got anything laid you can use it to scoop it off the deck without having to fit lifters.

“The other big plus point is that because there’s no auger to draw crop to the centre of the header, views down to the knife are so much better.

“That’s helped by being able to turn off the rape auger when it’s not needed so you’ve got fewer moving parts and less going on in front of you. It’s all easier on the eye.

“Lights inside the header help with visibility at night so you can see exactly how the crop is feeding in.”

## Why CLAAS?

“I wasn’t keen on the idea of going to a third-party supplier for the header because I wasn’t convinced we’d get the excellent level of back-up that we do with Tommy Malcolm and the team from SELLARS. With the CONVIO we know we’ll get properly looked after all the way through.”







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