

Power efficient XERION

Hay Farms saw the enormous potential of having a XERION 5000 as their main cultivations tractor.

The past six years have been ones of considerable change for Hay Farms which owns or contract farms under various agreements 3,360ha on 33 farms, spread over 18 miles from their base at Easter Rhynd near Perth.

Of this, 2,600ha is down to arable crops and until 2014 cropping also included 160ha of potatoes. "The potatoes just didn't fit well with the rest of the arable operation, which suffered as a result," states David Hay. "Not having potatoes gives us more time to concentrate on cereals, with the result that average yields have increased 10%, partly due to improved soil structure but also attention to detail and being able to hit timings right."

20% MORE LAND FARMED

The change also prompted a complete tractor rethink. Due to potato work, the Hays' tractor fleet consisted mainly of mid-range 200hp tractors whereas today, of the eight tractors in the fleet, six are over 300hp. "We now farm 20% more land than we did in 2014 with one less tractor," comments David.

Until last year, the fleet included two articulated tracked tractors, one for the farm's 8.0m Vaderstad drill and a second 620hp machine for ploughing and cultivations, and it is this machine that has now been replaced by the wheeled 530hp XERION 5000.

"The biggest issue with the tracked cultivations tractor was the wear to the running gear we were getting due to roadwork," explains David's son Finlay. "With block cropping the drilling tractor is fine as that will stay in one place for about three days drilling, but the cultivations tractor is always running about between blocks and it is not uncommon for it to do up to 60 miles a day. For our system it was starting to cost a lot of money, and the bulk of that from the running gear."

POWER TO THE GROUND

Looking to change back to a wheeled tractor, the choice was narrowed down to the XERION and one other conventional 517hp tractor. "Both are good tractors, but the factors in favour of the XERION were the ability of the four equal sized wheels to get power to the ground, and that it could be operated in crab mode to spread the load. We never felt the other tractor fully got all its power to the ground," states Finlay. "Also we really liked the ease with which we could add or remove weight on the rear platform with a telehandler, so we can weight it up for ploughing, but then easily remove the weight again for cultivations, which is not so easy on a conventional tractor."

"In addition it also has a proper three-point linkage on both the front and rear, which is important to us as we like to mount home-made stone forks on the front of the cultivations tractors, so they can clear stones as they find them."

One feature in the other tractor's favour was a variable tyre pressure system. However, after discussing this with CLAAS UK, the XERION was taken to Saxham where an after-market variable pressure system was fitted which, says Finlay, has transformed the tractor.

"Having the ability to travel at 1.6 bar on the road and then drop pressures in the field to 0.8 bar has made a considerable difference to traction. Even in last autumn's conditions it was impressive where the XERION could still go. Even though we have dropped from 620hp to 530hp, on our heavy soils traction is the ultimate problem as the XERION never dies for power."

CLAAS STEERING

To fully maximise tractor performance the Hays' have been using an Agleader RTK steering system for the past 10 years. However, for the XERION they have stayed with the CLAAS steering system due to its compatibility with the XERION's crab steering modes. "It's very, very good and extremely clever how it compensates for crab steer. We have been really pleased with the steering system. It does what it needs to do and we don't need to worry about it as its all integrated."

"There is a lot of technology on the XERION, but the operator Struan Wilson does make full use of it. It's pointless having all that technology if it's not used properly to maximise the savings that can be achieved. But it's also very important to have the support when you need it, and CLAAS have always been very good, and arranged for someone to come and sit with Struan for a day and just show him how to use the various functions on the XERION."





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