

KRM shows off its latest innovations in fertiliser spreading

The makers of KRM spreaders are putting more technology into getting fertiliser into the ground, in the right amount and in the right place. Chris Lyddon takes a look at the latest thinking, following a visit to their manufacturing plant in Denmark



M6W three-point link fertiliser spreader

“Fertiliser spreaders account for 95% of the company’s turnover”

Denmark’s restrictive rules on nitrogen application, which mean you are only allowed to apply 90% of the uptake that is optimal for your crops, are one reason why the company is making sure the nitrogen goes where you want it to, Nils Jorn Laursen, managing director of Bogballe, the 80-year-old Danish company where KRM fertiliser spreaders are made, explains.

Bogballe has also come up with a device that can control the distribution pattern, Bogballe SC dynamic (section control). “We see the need for more interaction between machinery,” Mr Laursen says. He explains there will be a demand for more traceability for political reasons – it is likely that growers will need to be able, in the future, to say exactly what had been spread, where.

“You have to understand the spread pattern,” he says, pointing out that much of farmers’ thinking on how they’d like to spread fertiliser in difficult places, like odd-shaped fields, is formed from their experience with boom chemical sprayers where you can shut off some of the nozzles at a time.

“With fertiliser spreaders it’s all about overlapping,” he says. “With booms it’s all about not overlapping.”

“We’ve developed a programme with which you can Google your field, define your headland and the machine will decide where to start and stop. It’s available on all M line models and can be retrofitted to other machines.

Bogballe isn’t going to be making its own GPS-assisted controller, but with its new Free concept it’s come up with a much more straightforward and much cheaper way of doing the same thing.

Heidi Thomsen, Bogballe sales manager, explains Bogballe’s new Free concept. “We’re doing what we’ve seen with the existing GPS controllers, but with a standard tablet,” she says. “You can control the spreader by GPS. We use a standard tablet because it has so many features that are excellent and we as machinery manufacturers know nothing about.

“This Free concept is for all weighing machines with the Zurf calibrator,” she says. “It’s not isobus. It’s our free app. You don’t have to pay for it. The first release is for Android. Then IOS [Apple].

“You have to have a proper antenna, not the internal antenna,” Mr Laursen explains. Ms Thomsen adds that it needs one-metre accuracy. “The cheapest tablet we’ve found in Denmark which will run this is an Asus, which cost 1,000 Danish crowns – £100,” Mr Laursen says, slightly underestimating the value of the Danish currency.

MANUFACTURING OPERATION

Mr Laursen described the manufacturing operation and the markets it sells into. “We have facilities covering about 20,000 square metres, or two hectares, and an exporter share of 96%,” he says. “We have machines running in 93 different countries.”

Asked what percentage of that would be in the EU, he puts it at around 75%. “Britain is quite important for us,” he says. “Our biggest markets are Britain, France and Germany.”

There are around 75 people working in the factory as well as six robots, laser cutting systems and a modern paint plant. With Danish labour costs high, there is a focus on achieving high levels of efficiency.

Fertiliser spreaders account for 95% of the company’s turnover. The remaining 5% comes from sales of spreaders designed for salt and sand for road protection.

Mr Laursen is particularly proud of the finish of Bogballe



Heidi Thomsen demonstrating the Free app

SPREADER TECHNOLOGY

machines. "On average 17% of the price of a Bogballe fertiliser spreader is surface treatment," he says.

Heidi Thomsen then introduces the M6W, the biggest three-point link fertiliser spreader in the world. "Farmers keep telling us they need something bigger," she says.

The company stresses that a three-point mounted spreader spends more of its time in the field and less time being used for transport.

"Use a spreader for what it's intended to be," she says. "Keep the focus on the main target," - spreading fertiliser with high precision.

Mr Laursen explains that the M6W has a capacity of six tonnes. "It's actually meant for caterpillar or tracked tractors," he says. Being mounted on the tractor makes it a more economical choice. "The price for the M6W is half the price of a machine with wheels."

Asked why the company is not involved in self-propelled sprayers, Mr Laursen replies: "We don't make any investment that isn't good for our farmers."

EXCITING INDUSTRY

He promises more efficient use of nutrients and stresses how phosphate use, in particular, will need to be monitored in the future with supplies increasingly tight. "The farmer will require better controlled distribution. We're in a very exciting industry. Our mission is to secure world order," he says. "We know the population worldwide will rise by 80 million every year. It's estimated that in 2050 we should be able to produce 70% more food.

"We're proudly contributing to maintaining the balance between the population and the amount of food available. We're trying to serve the world on a small scale. We believe our mission is very important."



Nils Jørn Laursen,
managing director
of Bogballe