

SPREADING THE WORD ON IMPROVING APPLICATIONS

Latest technology makes life easier for National Trust estate farmer TR Limbrick and Son

FERTILISER SPREADER

With the right technology it is possible to make the fertiliser spreader work harder and save valuable setting-up time, while improving accuracy of applications.

This has been the experience of TR Limbrick and Son, who farm 360 hectares on a National Trust estate at Sherborne, in Gloucestershire.

In the spring of 2009, Jolyon Limbrick specified a Zurf controller for his KRM M2W fertiliser spreader, which is used to plan, control and record all applications.

Using ZurfCom software downloaded from manufacturer Bogballe's website, Mr Limbrick is able to plan applications for 99 named individual fields on the farm's office computer. A folder is created for each application (up to four separate applications per field can be recorded) during the cropping year, allowing a complete spreading record for each field to be generated.

CALIBRATION VALUES

In the office, Mr Limbrick selects his field then clicks on the chosen fertiliser type – the software includes calibration values for all fertilisers commonly used in the UK. The system then determines PTO speed for normal and headland spreading, vane selection and position and tilt angle.

Data is then transferred via a USB memory stick to the Zurf control box in the tractor cab, where Mr Limbrick calls up the desired field and checks that the settings are as required.

Spreading is then automatically controlled with flow rates adjusted on the move according



The KRM Zurf controller is used to plan, control and record all applications

to measurements from the weigh cells which assess changes in terrain and forward speed.

"It's as accurate as anything I've ever used," says Mr Limbrick. "Setting-up time is much less and we can cover more ground as we are able to travel at 14-15kph. We were previously limited as application rates could be affected when approaching the headland – now we can

slow down and then gently speed up as conditions dictate, without losing accuracy."

The spreader will also adapt for changing calibration values as fertiliser quality varies with the conditions.

"I can also monitor exactly how much fertiliser is left in the spreader and how many more metres can be covered, allowing me to get back to the headland without running empty for too long," Mr Limbrick explains. "It offers significant time savings as well as simplifying the set-up process."

RECORDS FOR TRACEABILITY

Spreading information can be uploaded once back in the office via the same memory stick, and there is the option to print 'as applied' records for traceability or import the data into management software, such as Gatekeeper.

"KRM provides excellent technical back-up and training," adds Mr Limbrick, "but it's very straightforward to use, particularly as all calibration is done via the computer."

He explains that his investment in the system is justified by the savings already being made and the possibility to fine-tune applications further with variable rate, as the Zurf controller is GPS compatible via an RS232 serial port.

He adds that the next stage will be to make tailored applications: "The soil nutrient analysts Soyl has supplied us with application maps which will be used with an Agrom controller talking directly to the Zurf controller, so we plan to make our first variable rate P&K applications with the spreader this spring."