



GRAB AND GO

A dedicated chassis-mounted integrated crane with a bucket attachment is gaining in popularity with trailed fertiliser spreader operators

Botex is increasingly moving from the woods, into the fields. Designed and manufactured for more than 30 years in the UK by Jas P Wilson/European Forest Machinery (EFM) of Dalbeattie, Scotland, the range of heavy-duty cranes and trailers is well known in the domestic forestry market.

Through its link with KRM, distributor of the Bredal range of trailed lime and fertiliser spreaders and an agent for Botex, EFM is expanding into the agricultural sector with its spreader drawbar-mounted crane/clamshell bucket assemblies. Operation is from an integrated seat and controls, or from a tractor; preferably with a rotating seat or reverse drive facility.

The advantages of the combination are that it turns spreading into a one-man/one machine operation, saving on a loader (tractor with a front end loader or materials handler and possibly a driver) standing idle while spreading is in progress. Depending on the lift capacity of the crane and the capacity of the bucket, there is also the possibility of reduced downtime through faster filling. EFM points out the substantial Botex range allows customers to buy the exact unit for the job, whether a long-reach loader or a heavy-duty unit.

Last September EFM decided to follow its Botex lime spreader units out from the production floor into

their place of work. Lime and fertiliser spreading is an important element of the operations carried out by East Yorkshire contractors Robinson Contract Services Ltd, Brandesburton. A part of the family-owned HC Robinson & Sons Ltd Group, it is also involved with big square baling, with six Hesston 4900 balers, bio-solids delivery and spreading, and green waste composting.

On the fertiliser and lime spreading service a 3- and a 4-wheel Challenger Terragator fitted with Bredal bodies, and two trailed Bredal spreaders, one equipped with a Botex crane and clamshell bucket, apply 5000 – 8000t of Fibrophos and 18,000 – 20,000t of lime/yr.

One of the Terragators and one of the trailed spreaders is equipped for GPS-controlled variable rate application. “We are getting more call for variable rate spreading, especially on the lime contracts,” says managing director Steve Cook.

As to the fitting of the Botex equipment, he says: “Prior to the 2012 harvest we needed to replace one of the trailed spreaders and KRM had a stainless steel model equipped for variable rate application. We also took the opportunity to look at self-loading. Where the machine is running outside the yard radius, unless there is a large quantity of material to be spread, it’s not economical to also send out a dedicated man and loader, or

a loader, which are idle during spreading. We sent the spreader to EFM, which did the conversion.

“There was the cost of the work, but the benefits outweigh the drawbacks. We’ve saved a man and a machine and the integrated crane and bucket has allowed us a greater degree of flexibility; we can send the spreader out as a self-contained unit with a spreading schedule and don’t have to worry about the logistics.”

A Valtra T213 tractor specified with a reverse seat was bought specifically for the spreader last year. “We tried using a tractor without a reversible seat,” Steve says, “but it was extremely uncomfortable for our driver, Joe Walton, who had to kneel on the seat and lean out the rear window to operate the crane. The Valtra’s rotating seat provides plenty of legroom in the reverse position. Also the T213 has the power to be on top of the job, and when applying bio-solids with our K-Two spreaders during the spring and autumn.”

Michael Harbison, JAS P Wilson/EFM Botex marketing manager, caught up with Joe Walton as he was about to spread a field with gypsum (recycled plasterboard). The material has been shown to make soils more permeable to rainfall, alleviate aluminium toxicity and provide calcium and sulphur. Applications are also said to improve particle aggregation, reduce erosion and help prevent the loss of phosphorous and other nutrients through run-off.

Joe commented on how much easier it made the operation. He also said he found the crane and attachment a “real joy” to use. With Valtra’s rotating seat, the entire process of loading and spreading is done from inside the cab. The clamshell easily loaded the 60t of gypsum. ●

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