

MACHINERY

Prompted by the new three crop rule, one Newmarket farm manager took the opportunity to re-evaluate both cropping and drilling regimes. **Farmers Guardian** finds out more.

Updating farm systems widens drilling options

Following last year's announcement of the controversial three crop rule from Brussels, Newmarket-based farm manager Paul Jolland decided it was not only time to reconsider his cropping options but also to purchase a new drill which would enable him to widen his options on both late-drilling and spring drilling.

"We had always been wheat/rape due to prices but in order to satisfy the new rules we opted for spring beans as the third crop," he says.

Farming more than 250 hectares (618 acres) on heavy boulder clay at one of the highest points in Suffolk, 120 metres (394ft) above sea level, Mr Jolland also decided in changing his cropping, he needed to allow for greater flexibility on drilling dates.

"Due to our altitude our average soil temperatures often mean we can be up to two weeks behind neighbouring farms, so whatever we bought drill-wise needed to provide us with a bigger drilling window," he says.

First wheat

As a result, in September 2014 Mr Jolland purchased a six-metre SM1909 Soladrill from Yorkshire-based machinery importer Keith Rennie Machinery, which was used immediately to drill first wheat on September 23.

"Simply mounted on a three-point linkage I was impressed by the set-up speed compared to the Simba Freeflow drill we had used previously," he says.

Another bonus, thanks to being linkage mounted, is the ability to accurately drill right into the corners, says Mr Jolland,

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while working the headland area first which is his preferred method.

"There is very good clearance between the tines within the staggered four row configuration, so the trash moves effectively through the coulters during min-till or direct drilling:

"The Sola can also operate in all cultivation methods; direct, minimum tillage or plough-based, which is exactly what we needed having brought an additional crop into the rotation," he says.

Variety

Before purchase of this drill, Mr Jolland did consider several others, but felt none of them could work across as wide a variety of tillage scenarios as the Sola, he says. "Set-up time and simplicity of set-up was also a consideration and the Sola really impressed."

The move away from a four-metre working width to 6m also means fewer passes, but Mr Jolland has found the drill is still light enough to go behind his 140hp New Holland T7.

"I have not looked at the overall fuel savings yet but leaving the larger T8 in the shed has got to be a bonus," he says.

"Although we have only had the SM1909 for eight months, I don't foresee too many maintenance problems on the horizon.

Farm facts

- **Where:** Newmarket, Suffolk
- **Size:** 250 hectares (618 acres)
- **Cropping:** Wheat, OSR and spring beans
- **Soil type:** Heavy boulder clay



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While considering cropping options, Paul Jolland also took the opportunity to buy a new drill to provide a bigger drilling window.

The drill has a solid enough build and I like the hard faced construction around the edge of the seed outlet which should stop the fins wearing out over time.

"When the tips of the tines begin to wear I can simply replace the tip itself, not the whole tine, which was not the case on previous drills we have had," he says.

Rotation

"Coming back to the decision to widen the rotation, one of the key benefits I see is the control of our black-grass. The main plan is to create a stale seedbed and get all the black-grass sprayed off before we drill.

"However, despite our 'best practice' approach we had found previously some lighter cultivator drills moved the surface soil too much which

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actually helped the black-grass re-establish, undoing some of the good work we had done pre-drilling," he says.



Versatility of the SM1909 Soladrill was one of the key deciding factors behind the decision to buy it.