

Drill and power harrow combo is worth its weight

Extra weight of new KRM kit makes crop establishment process quieter and smoother

After a difficult, wet autumn in 2012 on his 240-hectare arable holding, Northamptonshire farmer Dick Payne decided to change his power harrow and drill last year.

"With a wide rotation of crops to help counteract black-grass and soils that vary from light sandy stone in some fields to heavier clay based elsewhere, and small field sizes to boot, we knew it wouldn't be a straightforward task," he says.

Following a trip to the LAMMA show in early 2013 and discussions with North Yorkshire-based manufacturer Keith Rennie Machinery, Mr Payne bought a 2512 Soladrill together with a 3.5m Magnum power harrow from the same manufacturer via dealer A T Houghton last summer.

"The extra weight of the new combination made an immediate difference," he says. "Our old drill was too light and tended to suffer from 'coulters bounce' in the heavier soils. We also needed to look at more passes with the old drill, which made it an expensive way of establishing cereals. The slightly heavier, more solid construction of the Sola-Magnum combo made establishment much quieter and each pass was smoother without the bouncing. I also liked the simple calibration process. The design of the elite tine coulters gave me the precise depth control I wanted."

WIDTH ISSUE

Another key issue for Mr Payne was his average field size of about 5ha. "I knew we had to stick to a 3.5m working width drill, particularly as I needed to get from field to field quickly and prefer to refill the hopper back at the yard to save additional time transporting seed to each field," he says.

"I'm still only in year one with the new drill so it's a bit early to say how much my running costs have reduced overall. Diesel use has definitely improved though; I estimate it to be 5-6 litres per hour less through needing fewer passes."

Two minor modifications have been made to the Sola since last autumn. "I opted to change the position of the metering wheel from the middle of the machine just behind the coulters to the side of the drill. There was a small amount of slippage before I moved

the wheel but KRM were brilliant and once they changed the positioning everything went well."

The second alteration Mr Payne made was to blank off some of the coulters when drilling rape to enable drilling on 10-inch rows rather than five-inch rows as he does for other crops.

"All in all it's been money well spent and I now have a versatile drill requiring very little maintenance that gives me constant seed to soil contact and achieves a consistent planting depth," he says.



Fuel savings have been a bonus of using the 2512 Soladrill and 3.5m Magnum power harrow combination