



Proof is in the pudding

Based quite literally a stone's throw away from Somerton, Somerset, Rob Canvin covers 700 acres split between the family-owned farm and contract-farming agreements. The business has been focused on keeping cultivations to a minimum, with most of the wide rotation established direct.

"I work alone, barring some self-employed operators who come in at peak periods," he explained. "So, keeping passes to a minimum is a massive benefit to me. However, I'm still a business, so the establishment and yield must be good enough to justify everything."

The seven-year rotation starts with a wheat crop, followed by barley and oilseed rape, then wheat again, winter beans, wheat and, finally, maize. Where weed and soil issues are present, temporary grass leys are used, with the ground left fallow in the worst situations. Working primarily on stoney ground, the plough is brought into work after maize as a reset to turn stones back into the ground.

The main drill on the farm is a 6m KRM SM-P Soladrill. Having previously used a different brand of tine drill, he first tried a KRM machine when he borrowed a neighbour's unit – a early generation SM model. "To be honest, there were a few things I wasn't keen on," Mr Canvin explains. "But the proof was in the pudding, as the crop established well. My previous drill wasn't aggressive enough and the even establishment really sold me on the KRM system."

When it came time to change his drill, KRM was one of the brands he looked at. "I saw that they had changed a lot of the things I hadn't liked about the previous machine. The calibration had moved from directly underneath the drill to an easy-to-reach position at the side of the hopper, which saved a lot of time and

Efficiency and flexibility are key for Rob Canvin's establishment regime, handling a substantial acreage as a one-man operation



effort. The whole machine felt far more intuitive."

He opted for the 6m model, which came as standard with a 2,000-litre pressurised hopper, 16cm row spacings and ISOBUS compatibility. The 6m working width enables Mr Canvin to cover the ground quickly, but he adds that it is also compact enough to safely travel down the narrow lanes in the area.

"I normally use it behind my New Holland T7.225 but that's probably a little bigger than the drill needs. It just gives that added confidence when working on some of the steeper ground," he explained. "It mounts so closely to the tractor that we've gotten away with running a John Deere 6R 145 before with no issues whatsoever."

Working across the rotation

The SM-P handles most of the drilling, backed up by another tine drill which is used primarily to winter beans. "This is

because of the wider row spacing. The 16cm spacing on the KRM is great in cereal crops, but I prefer a wider spacing when it comes to beans," he said, before noting that KRM has recently added a 25cm row spacing option to the latest SM-P models.


Despite the narrower spacing, the KRM has proven to be a valuable addition, even in beans when conditions have been tricky.

"I've been able to drill when others couldn't," he added. "Last year, when the ground was dried up solid, the KRM was aggressive enough to break through the crust and put the seed exactly where it needed to be. I even ended up planting some of the beans with it, and while the spacing wasn't what I wanted, the crop came up well."

A key feature of the SM-P is the SM tine; a narrow, low-disturbance coulters which can work shallow to aerate and loosen the soil so that the roots can get away. "I've had it working in all conditions, and it's been able to handle a high level of trash as well. A customer asked me to sow into some old permanent pasture. One of the fields had been ploughed but I just went straight into the other with the drill and both established evenly," he said.

Going forward, Mr Canvin is continuing to look at methods to minimise disturbance and establish a profitable crop in the fewest possible passes. An option he'd like to see on the next generation of KRM drills is seed and fertiliser. He's also considering variable rate to improve germination.

"Variable rate seed has got to be the way forward," he concluded. "It's something I haven't looked at just yet because I know the ground and I've been successful with changing the seed rate manually."

"However, as the business continues to grow, there are many benefits to adjusting the rate to suit the soil." 

TOP
Mr Canvin's 6m model boasts a 2,000-litre pressurised hopper yes is compact enough to travel along narrow lanes

ABOVE
Rob Canvin