

HE-VA Combi Disc proves its time-saving versatility in one pass

A Herefordshire farmer is saving two hours a day thanks to the inspired way in which he utilises the innovative features of his HE-VA Combi Disc

With over 1,200 hectares across five farms in North Herefordshire, Vaughan Farms is one of the most diverse farming operations in the area. Peter Vaughan and his son, James, have 890 hectares of combinables (wheat, oilseed rape and herbage grass seeds) and 40 hectares of permanent grass adjacent to rivers. Then there's a herd of pedigree Angus and Herefords, a herd of pedigree Texels and more than 200,000 chickens. They also grow 323ha of potatoes.

A time-saving idea came to Peter in 2019 during a demonstration of the HE-VA Combi Disc by Len Evans, his local HE-VA dealer. As Peter watched the machine subsoil, surface cultivate and consolidate the soil in a cereal field in one pass, he knew instantly that it could save him significant time and effort on both his cereals and 300ha of potatoes.

"We've been growing potatoes for more than 40 years. For the last 15 or 16 years, we've supplied Innovator, Russet Burbank and King Russet to McCain, and we also work with Parks & Sons," said Peter. "We only own one cultivator at a time, and we were finding it incredibly time-consuming setting it up to suit the needs of each crop. Everything changed when we saw the Combi Disc in use. I was impressed with how quickly things were changed, and I thought to myself, if it can do such a good job in a wheat field, working to seven inches, I bet it can handle potatoes."

Peter saw a compact mounted 3m version in operation. It's a model more commonly used at much smaller farms than Peter's, where owners are looking to undertake several different jobs, from primary and secondary cultivation to subsoiling and shallow disc cultivation.

What most appealed to Peter was the machine's adaptability and ease of adjustment. For example, the Combi-Disc's subsoiling legs can work down to 400mm (16in) or be lifted out completely. Changing

the working depth can be altered on the move, and the depth of the legs is controlled by the relative position of the packer roller at the back of the machine.

Once the leg depth is set, the discs can be adjusted and set separately. The discs can work to a maximum of 12cm (5in) or can be taken out of work completely. As with the legs, the discs can be adjusted and fine-tuned on the move from the tractor cab. In fact, the depth synchronised disc (DSD) system is key to the Combi Disc's performance.

Unlike traditional concave discs or aggressively angled discs that lift soil and cut out 'grooves', which create a corrugation effect under the surface, the DSD moves the whole of the soil surface and is effective at all depths. As the 510mm Sabre discs pull themselves into the ground, they assist penetration, so more soil is inverted and residue incorporated.

At shallow depths, the DSD system ensures that the angle of the disc to the soil is vertical, which means that the discs push the soil sideways, and the whole soil profile is moved. It also shears rather than 'scoops', which happens when concave discs work at an angle. This eliminates the smearing, which creates a disc pan.

With the discs lifted, the Combi-Disc can be used as a subsoiler, with the legs raised



ABOVE Peter Vaughan is impressed with the adaptability and ease of adjustment of the HE-VA Combi Disc

as a set of discs, or as a complete one-pass soil cultivator.

"We were so impressed with the Combi-Disc during that demo in 2019 that we bought the machine there and then," says Peter. "Its versatility and performance really stood out, especially compared to the ageing four-metre machine from another manufacturer that we used at the time. One of the best things for us was the ease at which we could drop or lift the discs and tines. With the other machine, it would take us at least two hours to change the moving parts. With the HE-VA, it's four minutes! Saving nearly two hours a day is just incredible!"

Peter and James used the 3m HE-VA Combi Disc and his existing older 4m machine in tandem for one season before selling them both.

"We wanted a bigger, wider machine as it would save us even more time," explains Peter. "So we sold the 3m Combi Disc and the old 4m machine and bought a brand new 4.5 Combi Disc. Thankfully, we own three 450 horsepower tractors as the wider machine needs that power, whereas the three-metre model only needs 180hp."

"I guess we are quite unusual, using just one machine across all of our crops. Wet, dry or whatever, we're using the Combi-Disc every day of the week!"

BELOW HE-VA Combi Disc 450

