

MIN-TILL HIT WITH ITALIAN COMBO

With the combines exiting the field, agricultural dealers MJ Fry of Dorset seized the opportunity to put an Alpego Jet-X drill through its paces. With the drill mounted atop a Maratona disc cultivator which provided the required tilth ahead of seeding stubble turnips. Mike Whiting went to see it working.

The combined cultivator and drill system provides farmers with a flexible approach to seeding. The option to switch easily between discs and power harrow ensures the Alpego Jet-X is a flexible implement within a minimum tillage programme. The drill configuration applies a three-step principle of soil conditioning, seed hopper and coulter bar all connected via quick hook connections. The result is consistent work rates whilst utilising a mid-range sized tractor from the fleet with reports of good crop establishment.

OPTIONS WITH BENEFITS

Starting with the cultivation pass, Alpego offers either the RK or RmaX power harrows to compliment the Jet-X drill. The Maratona disc configuration, can also be purchased with either system fitting snugly under the hopper. This keeps the weight as close to the tractor's rear linkage as possible. Two stands hold the seed compartment securely in the raised position, with the combination implement hitched via either Cat II or III couplings.

The substantial build quality of both the PTO transmission powered unit and discs can withstand the dynamic loadings generated when re-entering min-tilled land. Alpego does offer an intermediate DELTA close coupled toolbar where tines can be fitted to loosen preceding soil down to a depth of 250mm.

The prime mover for our demonstration was a Deutz Warrior 7250 TTV. As for soil engaging components, the toothed disc sections are made of high tensile steel. Mounted on long life ball bearings provides for uninterrupted service

and lower maintenance costs. Tempering heat treatment reduces brittleness and increases toughness, an essential feature when dislodging stones from the 12 hectare field. The fishbone double disc arrangement evens up soil movement and avoids the driver having to correct any tendency to crab. Independent adjustment of the 455mm diameter discs behind the tractor's rear wheels can alleviate compaction ahead of the coulters. Keeping a clean run is maintained via the elastic side plates which direct clods back into the working area.



Ian Tanswell



Calibration of the drill is simple, with Alpego providing a visual tutorial on YouTube to support the operator's manual. Easy access to the hopper base is provided by the fold down ladder and open mesh platform. A sample bag included with the specification fits into a cradle to take a metered sample, with a small electronic scale provided. The operator selects the required seeding rate from the chart displayed prominently on the hopper. Settings are applied, and the sample weighed off. Results are inputted to the cab control unit and a percentage deviation to target displayed. A

quick calculation establishes the difference and the corresponding adjustments to the feed rate.

A USER'S VIEW

For an independent view of the Alpego Jet-X's capabilities we spoke to existing users Ian Tanswell and his father Chris. They farm 800 hectares near to the newly established town of Poundbury. In addition to their rented and contract farm arrangements they provide stubble to stubble services for local growers, trading as Manor Contracting.

Their machinery shed requires a range of equipment which can work down everything from grade one land to moisture retaining clays and heavily flinted soil. Typically, they'll drill around 1500 hectares each year. This includes cereals, pulses, oilseed rape, linseed and Italian ryegrass.

A kingpin in the equipment profile is the power harrow:drill combination. "Their ability to follow almost all methods of primary cultivation on varying soil profiles allows us to keep going," explains Ian. A visit to LAMMA in 2017

followed by a demonstration was the catalyst for purchasing Alpego's AS4 system. A front hopper with rear mounted four metre power harrow and seed distribution head are completed with an easy fit hose for seed transfer. Ian refers to the distribution of weight from the rear to the front of the tractor as a significant benefit. The extreme wet conditions during autumn 2019 left farmers searching dealers' yards to find machinery which could establish crops in unfavourable conditions. Based on the Alpego AS4's robustness and performance Manor Contracting set its sights on a three metre Alpego Jet-X. Completing the deal

on a single hopper ex-demonstration model with MJ Fry provided the three-man team with its own drill to maximise outputs. Two Alpego's operate alongside a trailed four metre disc unit from another manufacturer. The variations in working widths help to match customers tramline settings.

Where ploughing isn't undertaken, the cultivator of choice to prepare land for the Alpego Jet-X is a McConnel discaerator. This loosens soil to between 250mm and 300mm below the surface, giving the power harrow tines a reasonable tilth to bite into. A Vaderstad carrier can come into the frame, along with the essential 12.3m set of rolls. With their John Deere 6215R pulling the Alpego Jet-X, Ian can cover 20 hectares on a good day. Ian and Chris Tanswell use RTK guidance via John Deere Link as their precision guidance option.

ISOBUS OPTION

Operators have the option of either Alpego's own in-cab controller or as Ian's preference, to connect directly into the tractors ISOBUS facility. Reducing tyre pressures to 18psi ensures they tread as lightly as possible over the Dorset terrain. A 1500kg front weight provides the necessary counterbalance. Frugal flow for the fan averaging 23 litres per minute compliments mid-range tractor specifications. Should the going get too heavy, protection in the form of an automatic cam clutch prevents any damage to the Alpego's power harrow transmission.



The power harrow/drill combinations ability to follow almost all methods of primary cultivation on varying soil profiles allows us to keep going," Ian Tanswell.

FARM FACTS

WHATS IN THE SHED:

2 X JOHN DEERE 6250R

1 X JOHN DEERE 6215R

1 X NEW HOLLAND COMBINE 9.90 WITH 10.6M HEADER (ON TRACKS)

1 X AMAZONE PANTERA SELF-PROPELLED SPRAYER – 36M BOOMS.

1 X AMAZONE FERTILISER DISTRIBUTOR

1 X KUHN PLOUGH 5 FURROW VARI-WIDTH WITH AUTO-RESET LEGS

1 X KUHN PLOUGH 6 FURROW VARI-WIDTH WITH AUTO-RESET LEGS

2 X MCCONNEL DISCAERATOR

1 X VADERSTAD CARRIER

1 X 4M ALPEGO AS4 DRILL WITH FRONT HOPPER

1 X 3M ALPEGO JET-X DRILL (ALPEGO PK 300 POWER HARROW, WITH A 570MM PACKER ROLLER)


1 X 4M POTTINGER TERRASEM MULCH DRILL

1 X 12.3M DALBO ROLLS

LABOUR PROFILE

IAN & CHRIS TANSWELL

1 EMPLOYEE



The Maratona disc configurations output, direct onto stubble was 3.7ha/hr, seeding at a rate of 4.9kg/ha.

The agronomist's opinion on equipment choice is having a much bigger role in farmers' procurement plans. Both Pearce Seeds and local independent crop advisers approve of the even seeding depth, particularly after such poor working conditions during the past autumn.

SUMMARY

Where does this leave us on the disc and power harrow considerations? Simon Fry's output with the Maratona disc configuration direct onto stubble was 3.73ha/hr, seeding at a rate of 4.9kg/ha. Forward speeds of 13km/hr were easily achieved. Ian Tanswell particularly likes the finite adjustment via the Alpego Jet-X coupling links. This ensures that cultivation depth can be adjusted without adversely affecting seed placement.

The attraction of the Alpego Jet-X's is knowing that it will deliver across a wide range of soil profiles within min till systems. Ultimately this makes work scheduling for a busy contractor much easier.

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43

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