Matthew Brown

STRIP-TILL DRILL DELIVERS MAIZE GROWING CHAMPIONSHIP RESULTS IN STAFFORDSHIRE

The old saying of one man went to mow is adeptly applied to maize drilling by Matthew Brown, Farm Manager at G Baskerville & Co in Staffordshire. A progressive 250 herd dairy unit and followers requires plenty of nutritional fodder. Matthew has given careful consideration to cheaper ways of growing the farms 80 hectares of maize, as part of the rotation with Winter Barley, Winter Wheat, ryegrass and permanent pasture.

With just over 400 hectares (1000 acres) under his control on predominantly flatland near the River Trent, the water table is never far from the surface. Prior to late 2018, typical methods for maize establishment followed the mantra of soil inversion, with ploughing followed by power harrow combination drilling. After considering alternatives for min till establishment, Matthew and June Baskerville (farm owner) plumped for the Mzuri PRO-TIL 3T. Keeping it simple is a core principal of Matthew's with currently no application of either GPS or ISOBUS technology.

Although this doesn't affect labour efficiency; with drilling, fertiliser application, forage harvesting (both maize and grass), combining, baling and carting all undertaken in-house. Spraying activities are contracted out locally.

Ease of use is a key element of the 3.0m Mzuri drill's specification, with a single switch at the front which raises selected coulters out of work to achieve an optimum row spacing of 66cm. This follows a pit-stop to change the double shoot coulters to the single profile specification. Matthew considers the Mzuri "one of the easiest drills he's used to calibrate".

The choice of the Mzuri PRO-TIL 3T matched the existing tractor fleet at Common Lane Farm, coupling up to the New Holland T7.225 with auto command. Tweaks were applied to maximise power to weight ratio with tyre pressures reduced to 18 psi, 1500kg of front counterbalance, and rear wheel weights applied. The front discs cut through the surface residue providing a

FARM FACTS:

MACHINERY:

MZURI PRO-TIL 3T DRILL

NH T7.225, BLUE POWER, AUTO COMMAND. (2018)

NH T7.200, RANGE COMMAND. (2015)

NEW HOLLAND FORAGE HARVESTER FX58. (2002)

NEW HOLLAND COMBINE TF78 WITH A BISO 25FT HEADER. (2001)

NEW HOLLAND BB940 SQUARE BALER

MCHALE FUSION 3 ROUND BALER

KUHN AXIS 40.1
GRANULAR FERTILISER APPLICATOR (2016)

400 Ha
BORDERING THE RIVER TRENT

LABOUR:

MATTHEW BROWN
(FARM MANAGER

JUNE BASKERVILLE
(FARM OWNER)

HERDSMAN

250
DAIRY COWS
AND FOLLOWERS

clear run for the leading auto reset tine behind which 80kg/ha of Nitram is placed. Harvesting the ryegrass during mid-April provides clean stubble ready for a light application of manure. Following up with the Mzuri PRO-TIL 3T, the maize varieties of Bonnie, Calvini and Perez are drilled at a consistent depth of just over 25mm. As the work schedule timings in mid-Spring are critical, Matthew has identified the benefits of the Mzuri's hydraulically pressurised seeding arms and following consolidation wheel. The surface closure of the soil around the seed allows the ryegrass to be sprayed off after drilling with a tank mix of non-selective herbicide before the maize seed chit commences. The minimal soil movement and moisture retention reduces weed populations, negating the need for a further two or three herbicide applications, usually required with prior establishment methods.

With typical daily work rates of 26 hectares per day, Matthew is very pleased with the performance of the Mzuri PRO-TIL 3T, and so are the judges having achieved 1st in the District and 3rd in the County competitions for maize growing. A succinct three point conclusion from the Mzuri's experiences to date;

i) Operator friendly drill.

ii) Time and labour saving, hence reductions on fixed and variable costs.

iii) Healthy soils – Maintains worm numbers. Demonstrated by the overwintering 2019 stubbles which are clear of surface water residue.