

Cream of the crop

“Technology isn’t a threat to farming, it’s an aid that can save time and money.”

Machinery LAMMA show

This year’s LAMMA has been hailed as another success, with more kit than ever filling the halls of the NEC. CPM scouted the stands to pick out the latest developments in innovation.

By Charlotte Cunningham

Now in its second year at the NEC, it’s fair to say that the 38th LAMMA show was a resounding success, with over 40,000 visitors making the pilgrimage to the Midlands, to the UK’s machinery Mecca.

Despite a tough time for the industry, event manager Kate Walsh noted a ‘surprisingly positive’ mood. “A number of exhibitors reported very positive conversations and leads with plenty of key on-farm decision makers.”

And visitors were pleased too — with some calling it the UK version of Agritechnica. “Many visitors were here to keep a close eye on the latest developments so they will be able to make the right decisions and make the most of more favourable times when they return. Others were looking to tweak systems to optimise margins and make their

businesses more resilient in the face of economic, political and physical pressures,” she added.

With exhibits covering over 56,000m² — the equivalent of eight football pitches — there was no shortage of shiny, new, innovative kit on display.

For those that couldn’t make it, CPM trawled the trade stands to pick out some of the best bits from the two-day event.

Valtra

Given the buzz on social media — and visitors at the show sticking to the exhibit like bees to a honeypot — it only makes sense to start a LAMMA debrief with the special edition Valtra.

Lighting up Hall 9 in its striking purple and green chrome-effect livery, the T234 Direct certainly caught the eye of many — whether you were a lover or a hater of its customised look.

Featuring the hashtag tagline “#theskyisnolimit”, Valtra showcased just some of the options available to buyers via the Valtra Unlimited Studio. This includes everything from bespoke colour wraps, sound systems and optional extras.

“One in five tractors are now coming out with something special from the Unlimited Studio,” says the firm’s Andy Miller.

Opico

With a keen eye on soil health and preservation, Opico presented a number

of tools designed to help growers take best care of the ground below.

“It’s well documented that reduced surface disturbance is essential in fighting grassweeds,” says HE-VA product specialist, Glenn Bootman. “Where a min-till or no-till regime is employed — either constantly or during the rotation — there’s a growing demand for effective, low disturbance subsoiling to loosen and fracture the medium depth subsoil to relieve compaction, thus assisting drainage, aeration, nitrogen uptake and encouraging crop rooting.”

Based on this thinking, Opico have ▶



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GROWING TOGETHER



Aside from its sheer size and power, what makes the Ideal 10 different from anything else is the lack of steering wheel.

► worked with HE-VA to design a brand new ultra-low disturbance subsoiler, specifically for the UK market, and aptly named it “Stealth” — which made its debut in a somewhat commanding grey attire at this year’s LAMMA event.

The HE-VA Stealth is a medium depth, ultra-low disturbance subsoiler, boasting scalloped straight, front cutting discs to cut through trash, vegetation and top-soil, reduce soil burst and in turn grassweed germination.

Legs are staggered in two rows to allow residue flow through the machine and reduce the required tractor lift capacity while maintaining a lower hp requirement.

Leg spacing is standard at 500mm but can be altered to 450mm, 500mm or 550mm, adding versatility for differing soil types and conditions, according to the firm.

The hardened cast steel points are tungsten tipped and 120mm wide creating the necessary lift and shatter whilst ensuring longevity, says Glenn. “Similarly, the 15mm ‘Hardox 500’ legs are thinner but stronger and more durable than standard subsoiler legs, while a “V” profile roller re-consolidates and helps to retain moisture in the surface.”

In terms of size, the Stealth is available as a 3m, 3.5m, 4m and 5m mounted or 5m, 6m and 7m trailed machine and the Stealth kit (e.g. legs and points) are available to retrofit to existing HE-VA machines, he adds.

While the Stealth has been designed to satisfy the requirements of no-till and reduced input farming systems, it’s also suitable for use in all farming systems where repair to damaged soil structure is required, for example, on headlands, tramlines or other trafficked areas, notes Glenn.

Fendt

It’s safe to say that anyone who missed the Fendt stand at LAMMA ought to pop to their local opticians as soon as possible, as the colossal new Fendt 10 dominated

not only the firm’s stand, but also much of Hall 9.

For those that haven’t been lucky enough to see Fendt’s latest creation in the flesh, it really is a thing of beauty. That is, of course, providing you find a 790hp combine beautiful...

Aside from its sheer size and power, what makes the Ideal 10 different than anything else is the lack of a steering wheel. The latest offering from Fendt is claimed to be the first combine in Europe to operate without a steering wheel, but hopping into the cab, there’s certainly something a little unfamiliar about not having that traditional central focus spot.

So how exactly do you operate it? With Fendt IdealDrive steering, the machine is controlled proportionately to the movement of a joystick on the left, with all the same functions on the joystick on the right armrest, says Fendt. “It gives the best view of front threshing attachments and offers the perfect overview, even on the road, and the unique system complies with all European vehicle and traffic regulations.”

Sulky

A new multi-hopper combination seed drill was the focus for Sulky UK, with the latest launch being shown for the first time at this year’s LAMMA.

According to the French firm, the new Progress drill boasts a high work output

Innovation in the spotlight

One of the new features of this year’s LAMMA was the introduction of the Farming 4.0 zone — a dedicated area to showcase new technology, digital platforms, robotics and the role such innovation can play in sustainability.

Among the speakers was Jack Wrangham, founder of Drone Ag, who spoke to visitors about the value of scouting with drones and how this is now achievable with the firm’s crop-scouting tool — Skippy Scout.

If you’re yet to come across it, Skippy Scout is a crop-monitoring app that uses drones to automatically capture images which are analysed by artificial intelligence to offer arable farmers broadacre crop insight.

The phone-based app uses GPS and mapping software to fly a drone to points in a field selected by the farmer. The images taken by the drone are interpreted by the app to provide an accurate green area index and count emerging plants. The quality of image collected can also identify weeds and is accurate enough to capture insect damage on a single leaf.

The app is the brainchild of Jack and his team at Drone Ag who’ve spent the past 18 months developing and trialling the software. “Farmers have always walked their crops. However, the time available to do this in the traditional way is diminishing.

“As farm sizes increase and labour units per ha decline, the risk of losing crops because a problem has not been identified quickly enough will increase. Skippy Scout offers every farmer the chance to see and evaluate crops easily and efficiently using just a phone and a drone.”

Though to some, optimising drone technology seems like a far off fantasy, Jack believes they are vital tools than can be used today. “Technology isn’t a threat to farming, it’s an aid that can save time and money.

“Adapting farming methods to make use of technology like Skippy is crucial if agriculture is going to provide for the world’s ever-growing population. We’ve involved hundreds of farmers as trialists and many more are waiting to use Skippy in 2020.



Skippy Scout offers farmers the chance to see and evaluate crops easily and efficiently using just a phone and a drone.

“We’re arable farmers and we’ve developed Skippy at our own farm in Northumberland. This software is genuinely easy to use and is priced to be affordable to every arable farmer. We believe drones can help and we’ve developed this software to be accessible to everyone who wants to embrace change and adopt new farming practices.”

and proven planting accuracy and has been designed to further enable farmers to optimise yields and reduce costs — with the flexibility to drill in all conditions.

So how does it work? Up to three independent hoppers — driven from a single interface — can be used to place seeds from different crop varieties or plant species, and granular fertiliser at once, says Sulky UK's managing director, Rob Thurkettle.

"The multiple hopper configuration of the Progress drill will provide farmers with

flexibility. They can choose to drill just one crop, or drill a companion crop or second variety alongside their main crop, and if they wish, add granular fertiliser at the point of sowing.

"The benefits of using a one-pass combination drill include savings in time, money, and fuel, while the reduced number of passes reduces potential soil damage especially when drilling in less-than-ideal conditions. We know that many farmers struggled to get crops drilled this season after a very wet autumn, so this is where a ▶

Three words that could save a life

Farm safety was a strong theme across many exhibitor stands at this year's event, with lots of gadgets and campaigns pioneering the move towards a safer work environment.

But it was perhaps one of the smallest things at the show that could make the biggest difference to farm safety — particularly for lone workers in remote areas.

The tech savvy in the industry will have heard of the app 'What Three Words' as it has, in fact, been around since 2013.

However, after a string of life-saving successes, it's now being adopted by those working in the agriculture sector.

So how does it work? Instead of using long 16-digit coordinates to describe specific locations, the founders of What Three Words have split the world map up into 3m x 3m squares and assigned each a unique 'address' made up of a random combination of three words, taken from the dictionary.

To put this into practical terms for farmers, having access to the app effectively means that they are able to pinpoint their precise location at any time, and it doesn't require data connectivity (e.g. WiFi, 4G or signal) to function.

In an everyday situation, this could be used to direct



The "What Three Words" app is now being adopted by agriculture after a string of life-saving successes.

contractors or workers to specific areas of fields or to direct deliveries to a particular farm entrance, for example. In extreme cases, the three-word coding is accepted by a large number of emergency services and so has the potential to get help to your exact location very quickly and easily.

It's free to download, and really could save a life.

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Opico have worked with HE-VA to design a brand new ultra-low disturbance subsoiler, specifically for the UK market.



A new multi-hopper combination seed drill was the focus for Sulky UK.

► combination drill like the Progress can help.”

With time of the essence for many, the universal metering unit of the drill allows all sizes of seed to be placed — from rapeseed to field beans — without the

Award winning tech

Scoping three silver medals in the LAMMA innovation awards, Kuhn really did deliver with an impressive display of cutting edge kit.

Most relevant to arable growers was probably the awards for Arable Innovation and Future Innovation.

In the arable category, Kuhn brought home the silverware with its Twinpact double plunger system which allows up to 25% higher square bale density without the need for greater tractor power.

The plunger operates with split impact, in which the bottom half of the plunger hits the bale first followed by the top half — using the full force available on each impact.

According to Kuhn, this eliminates the need for an oversized driveline, flywheel or mainframe.

Success in the Future Innovation category came with the silver award for the Kuhn I-Spray — a development in spot spraying technology that is claimed to allow targeted



Scoping three silver medals in the LAMMA innovation awards, Kuhn really did deliver with an impressive display of cutting edge kit, including the I-Spray.

application of herbicides.

The lovechild of collaborative work with artificial intelligence company Carbon Bee, the I-Spray concept has shown the potential in earlier development work to reduce herbicide use by as much as 80%, says a spokesperson for the firm. “I-Spray creates the potential to address some significant environmental and weed resistance challenges facing modern arable farming.”

need to change the metering wheel, he adds.

The Progress drill is available in three versions, each with different coulter units to meet specific requirements, according to soil type and drilling schedule. ■

Dates for your diary

LAMMA is set to return to the NEC once again next year, but with a slightly later date of 12-13 Jan 2021.



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