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Foragers

A 50-year legacy is certainly something to write home about, and as Claas' Jaguar celebrates this particular milestone, *CPM* speaks to one farmer who's been loyal to this machine for almost three decades.

By Melanie Jenkins

Claas first launched the Jaguar 60SF selfpropelled forage harvester 50 years ago, and since then the machine has become world renowned with more than 45,000 units manufactured.

The Jaguar's journey to success began in the 1970s, with the increasing cultivation of maize and a move away from trailed foragers. Claas entered the market in 1973 with the 120hp Jaguar 60SF, which drew on key components from the trailed Jaguar 60. By 2001, the Jaguar 900 series boasted 600hp while now the current top-of-therange Jaguar 980 produces 925hp.

As Claas celebrates 50 years since it first launched the Jaguar 60SF,

one farmer looks back on his longstanding experience with the brand.

Around 28 years ago, Brian Dawe took the plunge into silage making on his Hampshire farm. Starting out with a nine-year-old Jaguar 690SL, he chopped more than 200ha of grass and a further 200ha of maize in his first season. While it might sound a modest amount by today's standards, at the time it was considered quite an achievement with a second-hand 300hp machine, he says.

Building business

"The workload grew steadily but the old forager seemed to take it in its stride," continues Brian. "However, with three seasons under our belt I felt we'd proved the business was sound and could justify a change of machine.

"I looked around at other colours but it was pretty clear the Jaguar was still the machine to have so I put my name down for a brand new Jaguar 820. That coincided with another local contractor retiring and suddenly we were looking at chopping 690ha of maize."

Brian says although it felt like a long season, they proved it was possible – it just meant some long nights in the seat. "The biggest difference with the switch from the Jaguar 690 to the 820 was the move from a longitudinally mounted V8 to a transverse V6. This change did away with the 90° gearbox which had a huge impact on efficiency.

Chopping champs

"We immediately saw a 20% increase in output even though the engine had only an extra 20hp – the simpler driveline was just sucking less power," he explains.

"From an operator's point of view it was the cab that really made the difference – it was so much quieter and



Around 28 years ago Brian Dawe took the plunge into silage making on his Hampshire farm, starting out with a nine-year-old Claas Jaguar 690SL.

Foragers

New Holland UltraFeed

New Holland has introduced a renewed version of its grass pick-up, the UltraFeed, on its refreshed FR forage harvester range for 2024. Presented in 3.0m, 3.5m and 4.0m working widths, the pick-up is designed to enhance crop flow to allow each FR forage harvester model to handle the largest crop volumes and exploit the full capacity of the chopping cylinder and engine.

"We've used our experience in all kinds of swathed crops to design this new grass pickup," says New Holland's Henrik Aaskov Hansen. "Our engineers' aim was to perfect the crop flow, with an even, direct feed to the forage harvester, for greater throughput and more productivity." A new auger design with a belt driven, heavy-

simple things like the positioning and action of the hydrostat lever meant you weren't leant over all day and aching the next. And having all of the functions grouped on the stick rather than a series of levers and pedals meant you were able to respond that much quicker."

With four years' work under its belt, the 820 was replaced by another of the same which did a similar stint. It was at this point that an opportunity arose that would see the forager's working window stretched by some margin.

"In the early 2000s, I was approached by United Oilseeds to see if I'd have the capacity to pick up their morphine poppies," says Brian. "With poppy harvest generally taking place through August – typically a quieter time for grass harvesting in Hampshire – I could see an opportunity to extend our acreage without piling up more work at busy times.

"While it was initially very manageable, the demand for the crop grew massively and pretty quickly we were looking at clearing 1010-1215ha within a couple of weeks. Having a bigger machine was never really an option as invariably we'd have to be in two places at once, so we went all out and bought a second 830."

Some of the steep rolling ground on the farm would see the Jaguars scrabbling, so Brian's next machines were ordered with 4WD. "With increasingly challenging weather throughout the season becoming the norm – whether in grass or maize – it's cheap insurance knowing we won't get stuck and we'd never not have 4WD now. It also means we're not wearing out tyres unnecessarily on some of the flinty ground that Hampshire is famous for." duty driveline matches the capacity and reduced maintenance requirements while minimising risk of crop wrapping. Other advantages include reduced maintenance, longer service life and greater operator comfort during long days, from the even crop flow when chopping, he explains.

A single large roller windguard provides swath pre-compression for even feeding in light crops and helping avoid bulldozing in dense swaths. It opens up to 160cm for easy access to the header if necessary. A seethrough mesh provides a clear view of crop flow into the header, and LEDs illuminate the auger and feed rolls in low light conditions.

Upgraded hardware on the new cam-track pick-up reel eases replacement tine installation,



New Holland has introduced a renewed version of its grass pick-up, the UltraFeed, on its refreshed FR forage harvester range for 2024.

cutting replacement time to just 90 seconds. A more compact reel gearbox provides a 25% increase in reel speed where required, matching the pick-up's higher capacity.



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Foragers

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A move in poppy growing and processing to other parts of the world saw the United Oilseeds workload diminish to the point when in 2016, only a single forager was required. "By then an 840 was the smallest model in the range which was capable of comfortably managing our grass and maize single-handedly."

It also had a trick hidden up its sleeve, notes Brian. "If the metal detector kicked in it'd stop the transmission dead. It's a brilliant feature, but during the first season striking out in maize one of our trailer drivers was a bit close to the back of the new machine, the forager stopped all of a sudden and he carried on. It cost us the rear corner panel but has repeatedly saved us swallowing anything nasty – I wouldn't be without it now."

Several years after purchasing the first 840, Brian invested in a second. "With its new joystick, armrest controls and touchscreen, the 2019 machine was



The latest machine to join the Brian Dawe's line-up is a Jaguar 840, which is equipped with GPS autosteering and Quantimeter yield recording.

Fendt Katana

Fendt launched the Katana 850 in 2022 with the first machines arriving to the UK for the 2023 season. The latest model features a revised crop flow, reversible fan with variable fan blade pitch technology, and a new 12-row header.

The 850 has an in-line six-cylinder engine which provides 847hp and has been engineered to optimise torque characteristics while reducing maintenance costs. This is partly achieved through Eco Mode, a fuel-saving system which maintains the running speed of the chopping cylinder at a reduced engine speed, explains Fendt's Ed Dennett.

"The Katana also features a seven-step engine speed control to further reduce fuel consumption. Operators can choose between 1600rpm and 1900rpm in 50rpm increments. Four different torque curves are stored in the machine, each optimally designed for the selected engine speed."



The latest Fendt Katana 850 model features a revised crop flow, reversible fan with variable fan blade pitch technology, and a new 12-row header.

Like the smaller Katana 650, the 850 can be specified with a reversible fan to enable the pitch adjustment of the individual fan blades for efficient cooling, he says. "This is managed automatically and any residual fan power is fed into the rest of the machine. The reversing function on the fan also cleans the cooling package of debris and fine dust."

In 2023, a new generation of pro maize headers from Kemper was made available to lower cob and harvest losses, improve performance and optimise crop flow.

Chop quality and length are handled by six pre-compression rollers on the feed intake which ensure optimum forage pre-compression. Metal and stone detectors on the first pre-compression rollers prevent damage to the chopping cylinder. In the rear area of the feed intake, the crop volume is recorded via a sensor allowing this data to be available for yield monitoring and documentation.

The Katana features a revised discharge chute that blows the crop into the trailer to minimise losses. The loading height of up to 6.20m also enables accurate crop transfer, even with large trailers, adds Ed.

Fendt also offers an optional silage additive system which is fully integrated into the vehicle and has a tank capacity of 215 litres. "For those looking to manage forage quality on the move there's also an optional NIR sensor which analyses the dry matter content of the crop," he concludes.

Foragers

Krone updates

Krone has introduced a number of new tools to its foragers including a sharpening stone. This sharpens the blades on the chopping drum and stands out for a longer maintenance interval, high operator comfort and less abrasion. The new sharpener carries out 2200 grinding cycles without requiring manual readjustment.

Additionally a new dual-purpose NIR Control sensor, which helps to measure and record nutrient levels in grass, maize and whole crop silage as these crops are being harvested, has been introduced.

The firm's new EasyLoad auto-filling system fills trailers automatically by controlling the spout. The technology behind it consists of a system of cameras that mount on the spout and a software that detects the trailer contours and controls the spout accordingly. At the same time, the software also detects the current fill level so the spout continues filling all the way up to the trailer's capacity

The final addition to its forager range, the XtraPower assistance system is unique and according to Krone, a world-first innovation. This feature



Krone has introduced a number of new tools to its foragers including a sharpening stone, a new dual-purpose NIR Control sensor and the EasyLoad auto-filling system.

is designed to bring maximum flexibility and extra engine power into the machine depending on requirements and local harvest conditions. After the purchased machine is registered, the extra power is immediately enabled at mykrone.green and ready for retrieval whenever necessary.

another step on again. It was so much more driver-friendly with electronically selected gears and the ability to sharpen up and adjust the shear-bar from the cab."

GPS steering

The latest machine to join the lineup is a 2023-plate 840, which is equipped with GPS auto-steering and Quantimeter yield recording. "Going to GPS steering has made life that little bit easier, especially when we're chopping maize that's been sown with a cereal drill," acknowledges Brian.

"I don't have to concentrate so hard meaning I'm less tired coming off the forager. It also links well with yield mapping – I can now email customers maps to show them how their crops have performed and which areas could do with a bit of help."

In time, Brian says he can see yield mapping becoming a useful tool in moving to a charging system that's fairer on both the farmer and contractor. "By recording exactly what tonnage of crop has gone through the machine we can give growers a precise picture of what's in the clamp and bill accordingly. That way they only pay for what they're getting, and if they choose to prioritise high quality multi-cut grass, they're not getting penalised. Likewise, we're paid fairly for every tonne we've processed.

"Even though the very first Jaguar I bought was nine years old, it was a solid, reliable machine. And every one we've had since then – nine in total – has proved to be the same. We've tried other makes during this time, but nothing matches a Claas." ■



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