

No more chasing around



"With a chaser bin it can help trim down on trailers, redistribute staff and increase the productivity of combines."

MARTIN JENSON

There's hardly enough time, hands or weather windows during harvest to go around, meaning everything can become rather stretched. *CPM* explores how investing in a chaser bin could improve timeliness, staff distribution and help consolidate capital expenditure as this busy season approaches.

By Melanie Jenkins

It may only be spring now, but it won't be long before fields are full of combines and the roads are busy with the cycle of tractors carting grain. But what if operations could be streamlined via one simple addition to the farm's machinery line-up?

Chaser bins may not be a regular sight on UK farms, but their popularity is increasing as the benefits they can bring to busy operations are realised. After buying a Kobzarenko chaser bin for his operations a few years back and seeing how useful it was to his own business, Martin Jensen has now expanded into importing them to sell in England.

"The direction UK farming is headed means there are increasingly larger farms or contracting businesses," he says. "Although farms in England aren't

large-scale in the way some are in other parts of the world, the expansion here means travelling greater distances to transport grain with tractors and trailers.

"But it's not always feasible to transport grain with a tractor and trailer, which combined, could cost £100,000. But with a chaser bin, this offers another leg to operations that can help businesses to trim down on trailers, redistribute staff and increase the productivity of their combines," he explains.

BUSINESS VENTURE

Martin operates several farms with one based in Norfolk, another in Cambridgeshire and a third in Ukraine. His latest venture into chaser bins includes importing and selling them, as well as providing the option to rent

at a day rate, for a season or a year.

"Not only did I see the scope of use, I also felt they were likely to become a necessity for some farmers, especially those operating across more than 1500ha. Chaser bins are here to stay and I think we'll see more of them on UK farms every year.

"For us, adding a chaser bin to our system was the first step towards introducing controlled traffic farming (CTF). Although we aren't fully CTF across the



Informed investment

After researching chaser bins, Martin Jensen (right) invested in one for his own business and now imports them for sale, working with his sales manager, Latham Geer (left).

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Bought at first sight

How a single day using a chaser bin persuaded one farmer to invest

Situated a short distance away from Martin Jenson's farm in Norfolk, Rick Perry-Warnes, at JW Perry-Warnes and Sons, was immediately convinced of the advantages a chaser bin would add to the farming operation at Pages Farm, Wood Dalling.

Working in partnership with his dad Peter, uncle Tom and mum Anne, Rick farms 1900ha of the family's own land, works across four contract farms and is a tenant on a large estate. As well as this, Rick has an agreement with neighbouring farmer Ben Plumb who operates Tipple Farm and Orchard Farm, where machinery is shared between him and J W Perry and Sons.

"It's an informal set up but we've been friends all our lives," says Rick. "It makes things simple for both of us, and prevents Ben from having to invest in machinery."

"We have our own grain store on the farm and have usually worked in close proximity to it, but during the past four years we've expanded a lot and are now operating further away from base," adds Rick. "Plus, a local contractor has built a 5000t wheat store where we now send a lot of crops using lorries. We find using lorries is great because it keeps our trailers off the roads, but to load a lorry properly requires a chaser bin."

Although Rick had seen a number of chaser bins before, it was only when one appeared on Martin's yard and when he saw it demoed at the Royal Norfolk Show that he realised the potential of having one of his own.

As a result, he decided to demo Martin's chaser bin on farm and subsequently decided to purchase it.



The ideal fit

The benefits of using a chaser bin at W J Perry and Sons became apparent on the first day of demoing one.

"It didn't take us long to realise how much of an asset it was – after day one Ben and I looked at one another and said, 'that was awesome'."

"Having the chaser bin at harvest really opens your eyes because it's always with the combine. We used to fill the combine tank and would have to wait for a trailer but now the chaser is always there, it buys you so much more time, as well as removing the fatigue from the trailer drivers."

The farm has its own combine but hires a neighbour contractor who brings in a second combine to cover at least 300ha each harvest. Rick says one form of measuring the benefits of having a chaser bin has been assessing the capacity of the combines per hour and looking at how having a chaser bin would impact this hourly output. "In the past the combine could be sat still for 40 minutes waiting for a trailer, but we hardly had to stop for a moment since using the chaser bin."

Ben operates the chaser bin and is mindful to keep the combines empty.

"It's meant a lot more communication between combine operators and myself but it made such a difference to productivity immediately."

For anyone operating a chaser bin, they have to be switched on, but that's what makes it a game changer."

Before running a chaser bin, there could be as many as five trailers being used for one field, but now there's only 1-2 lorries and one trailer, explains Rick. "Plus, when we're using lorries these aren't operated by our staff, so it means members of our team can be doing other jobs such as cultivating fields for the next crop."

Whereas previously the harvest team could be made up of as many as nine people, it's now around 3-4 in-house staff. "It certainly works out more economical to use lorries because they carry more and can travel faster than a tractor and trailer outfit."

"We used to struggle to find enough staff and would often have to stop cultivating during harvest in order to complete combining jobs but using the chaser bin, and therefore freeing up staff, has meant we've invested in a muck spreader and now have the ability



Working together

Friends and neighbours, Rick Perry-Warnes and Ben Plumb, have an informal arrangement to share machinery.

and manpower to do this ourselves rather than contracting it out."

Fortunately, A and B Clark haulage is situated only a few miles up the road from Pages Farm, which Rick works closely with to coordinate jobs. However, he says it can be a case of having to estimate how much haulage is required which isn't always an exact figure.

Another key factor at play for Rick is minimising compaction across the

farm, with the system planned to help protect soils as far as is possible. "We aren't able to run a full controlled traffic farming system but the combines are on tracks so it's nearly always the trailers

"After day one Ben and I looked at one another and said, 'that was awesome'."

which do the most damage. Now we have the chaser bin it always stays on the tramlines and is running on such large tyres this minimises damage."

Although the chaser bin is being run on its original tyres, Rick is hoping to fit even larger tyres. He runs it behind a 300hp Case Optum but has also pulled it with a John Deere 6250 and believes 200hp would be sufficient.

As far as suitability goes, Rick has found the 24t chaser bin to be an ideal fit with the system. "It's certainly value for money when we compared it with other brands and is perfectly suited to our requirements. One thing it didn't have was cameras, but this is something Martin is going to arrange for us."

He estimates that for J W Perry and Sons the chaser bin will produce a return on investment within around three years. "Plus, it's helped to minimise compaction, allowed us to redistribute labour and to save money by not having to employ as many extra hands at harvest."

holdings, we've gone into it by degrees and are at the point where we've renewed our entire cultivation fleet to tie it all up – but we've had to do this incrementally because of the costs involved.”

OPERATIONAL SAVINGS

The decision to go in this direction was made to reduce compaction and improve operational savings. “We'd studied chaser bins operating on other farms before investing ourselves, and having looked at all the different manufacturers available throughout Europe, we settled on Kobzarenko. Now having run one myself, I can vouch for the quality of the equipment.”

Kobzarenko has the widest range of chaser bins in Europe – from 9-50m³ / 7-40t – with the smallest even likely to appeal to pig farmers for moving feed. “The range on offer was something that I really liked,” says Martin. “Not just the quality of the products but the volume of machines the firm manufactures, as well as the price point. For example, the 24t machine is on the market for £30,000 less than a competitor's equivalent.”

For those familiar with chaser bins, most manufacturers offer similar features



Multiple benefits

Chaser bins can allow businesses to trim down on trailers, redistribute staff and increase the productivity of combines.

across the board, such as the option of cell weighing, but Kobzarenko's machines have hydraulic sliding gates which open at the bottom and feed grain into the auger, and the feed can be adjusted when loading seeding machines. It's also possible to fit several magnetic cameras onto the body of the machine to aid with health and safety.

“One thing I like about Kobzarenko's chaser bins is that they have the added

advantage of an auger extension – up to 5.5m – giving it capacity for a wider range of uses,” says Martin. “The extended length means the chaser bin has further use in the autumn and spring because it can empty into seed drills in bulk.

“Rather than having to load 12t of seed into a trailer and move this with a telehandler or tractor, you can just empty 18t of seed directly into the drill. Alternatively, the extended augers could

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MACHINERY Chaser bins

► be used for bulk fertiliser which helps reduce handling. Whereas a chaser bin could spend nine out of 12 months in the shed, this opens up the possibilities for using it throughout the year.”

Plus, the range of crops that it can handle works for any system, highlights Martin, having used his chaser bin for a wide variety including maize. “I don’t think there’s anything I’m aware of that it couldn’t handle.”

He recommends they’re stored indoors and notes it’s pertinent to wash them out after they’ve finished being used for a specific purpose, especially if it’s had fertiliser through it. “It’s not high maintenance but it’s advisable to wash it out, removing grit from bearing areas and using a knapsack system to thinly spray oil on the turning parts.”

Additionally, before delivery, all Kobzarenko machines are sent to a local firm for brake

testing to ensure they’re safely operational ahead of use. And for those who prefer a colour-coordinated fleet, the chaser bins can be specified in any colour.

When making the decision on whether to invest in a chaser bin, Martin believes it’s down to the amalgamation of benefits. “They can help reduce soil compaction, saving on cultivation costs; can help limit capital expenditure; provide diversified usage and increase the operational capacity of combines. If you could increase your combine’s productivity by 10-15% then this equals a huge saving in capital expenditure and operational savings.

“For those looking to hire a machine, this can be a stepping-stone to determine how one might fit into your business. Most people who hire one come to the conclusion that they can’t manage without one,” he concludes. ●



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