

Gearing up for Hanover



"If you stop capital expenditure dead in the water on machinery policy it becomes very hard to start again."

JAMES WEBSTER-RUSK

As Agritechnica prepares to open its doors to international visitors once again next month, *CPM* takes a look at what's new and how growers can be strategic with their future kit purchases.

By Charlotte Cunningham

With margins still tight, weather windows ever narrower and political uncertainty hanging heavy over British agriculture, there's a tangible appetite for solutions rather than slogans.

That's the backdrop as Agritechnica throws open its doors once again this November, promising a showcase not just of shiny new kit, but of ideas designed to make farm businesses more resilient.

Under the guiding theme of 'Touch

Smart Efficiency,' the Hanover halls will bring together more than 2700 exhibitors and a packed programme which aims to give visitors direct access to innovative agricultural systems that use digital technologies to increase efficiency, sustainability and productivity.

For UK growers navigating the twin pressures of compliance and competitiveness, the timing feels apt. Whether it's tractors fuelled by methane, combines that think for

themselves or cultivators that promise to balance blackgrass control with timeliness, this year's launches are rooted in real on-farm challenges.

The question is, which of these innovations will genuinely earn their place in the yard, and which remain solutions in search of a problem?

Of course, it has to be noted that after a difficult season for many growers, it may seem in poor taste to even float the idea of spending out thousands of pounds on new kit. Yields have been well below par, and – perhaps more unusually – hugely variable from farm to farm, explains James Webster-Rusk, senior agribusiness analyst at The Andersons Centre.

"It's been a challenging harvest in the context of volumes produced and prices received, rather than conditions

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► at harvest. The yield picture for many isn't pretty – against the five-year average, which itself contains some outlier seasons like 2020 and 2024, this year still looks poor."

The price outlook only compounds the challenge, he continues. "November wheat futures are sitting at around £165/t – a far cry from the values seen during the market volatility of 2022, and a drop compared with where prices were even as recently as at planting. Businesses have come out of harvest with less in the barn and a weaker return for it.

"That means replanning on cashflow, and in some cases, conversations around overdrafts. For those looking at machinery replacement, it's undoubtedly a difficult year."

Perhaps unsurprisingly, many arable businesses are already shifting their approach. Replacement cycles are being stretched, service agreements extended, and machines kept running for longer.

But James urges caution over pulling up the handbrake altogether, and instead advises growers heading out to Agritechnica to take a strategic approach to any potential purchases. "Yes it's tempting to rein in spending, but if you stop capital expenditure dead in the water on machinery policy it becomes very hard to start again.

"The key is being strategic. Every pound spent has to work – whether that's through labour savings, efficiency improvements, or productivity gains – and the payback period has to stack up under realistic market conditions."

That realism is essential, particularly as budgets suggest 2026 could be another lean year, he warns. "We can't

benchmark investments against what payback might have looked like two or three years ago. The Russia-Ukraine market spike was an exception.

"Now it's about looking hard at the fine detail – if a drill claims to save fuel, how much will it actually save on your farm? If a sprayer promises fewer passes, does the data support it, and how quickly will it pay back?

"With Agritechnica about to open its doors, attention will inevitably turn to the latest launches, but for farmers in the UK the question shouldn't be so much 'what's new?' but instead, what truly pays?"

AGRITECHNICA 2025 LAUNCHES

Ahead of the event, here's a flavour of what visitors can expect.

One of the clearest threads through this year's launches is how manufacturers are pushing the envelope in tillage – from going shallower and gentler, to delving deeper where soil structure demands it.

Amazon's Catros+ 12003-2TX expects to take centre stage – a 12m trailed compact disc harrow, with a stronger folding frame and refined chassis. What makes it more than just wide is its design for controlled traffic farming (CTF) – longer disc arms, rear packers, the intention to let growers follow fixed tracks and leave the rest of the soil undisturbed.

For those UK farmers experimenting or already running CTF, the Catros+ 12003-2TX could reduce compaction, traffic damage, and so preserve moisture and structure in those parts of the field that matter.

At the deeper end, however, Lemken's Onyx subsoiler is among



Strategic shopping

With margins likely tight after a disappointing season, Andersons' James Webster-Rusk says machinery purchases should be strategic, with a justified return on investment.

those making headlines. It goes well beyond shallow mixing or loosening; it offers versions that reach 60cm, with options for mixing or loosening shares, wings, and reconsolidating rollers. Particularly for farms on heavy clay, or those that have suffered from repeated compaction, this is the kind of kit that could restore infiltration and root penetration.

If soil is the foundation, the nervous system of modern farming are sensors, data and autonomy, and Agritechnica 2025 is placing several new such tools in the limelight, many with clear benefits for UK growers.

One of the new focuses announced is on (semi-)autonomous fieldwork, with machines that reduce human driver load but retain control and supervision. For UK farms this may mean better consistency in operations like spraying or tillage, especially when skilled labour is scarce.

Technologies like AutoLane on Amazon's Catros-2TX, that guide implements along pre-defined A-B lines or contours stand to reduce overlap, avoid damage to sensitive field edges, and improve uniformity. The less obvious benefit is saved fuel, fewer soil disturbances from rework, and better finish for following operations like drilling.

WEED MAPPING

Weed mapping could also be about to move to a new level with the launch of ►



New options from Amazone

Amazon's Catros+ 12003-2TX expects to take centre stage – a 12m trailed compact disc harrow, with a stronger folding frame and refined chassis.



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WE WILL FIND A WAY

- ▶ Zoneye, an artificial intelligence system from Czech ag-tech firm Skymaps, due to debut at Agritechnica 2025.

Zoneye is embedded within the company's CultiWise prescription-map platform and uses high-resolution drone imagery to distinguish between crops and 37 common weeds across a range of species including cereals, sugar beet, oilseed rape and potatoes. Crucially, growers can also 'train' the system to recognise regional variants by uploading their own images, creating a field-specific dataset.

Drones equipped with RGB cameras fly at heights of 40-120m depending on weed size. Images are uploaded to the cloud where AI analyses them and delivers maps within minutes. These maps detail weed location, density and species, and can be exported directly to sprayer terminals, guiding spot applications or variable-rate treatments. Unlike conventional 'green-on-brown' tools, Zoneye can differentiate crops and weeds even under full canopy conditions.

According to Skymaps, the technology can cut herbicide use by up to 50% while boosting yields by 20% through reduced crop stress and more targeted control.

SEEDBED PREPARATION

When thinking about driving efficiency, drilling and seedbed preparation are areas where timing and accuracy are everything.

One of the products grabbing attention is Horsch's Avatar 12 LC – a large 12m drill with a triple tank, high capacity, multiple product capability and capable of combining seed, fertiliser, cover mixes or companion crops. For growers who want to



Deep cultivation innovation

For those seeking deeper cultivation, Lemken's Onyx subsoiler is among those making headlines. It goes well beyond shallow mixing or loosening, offering versions that reach 60cm, with options for mixing or loosening shares, wings, and reconsolidating rollers.



Eyes in the sky

Weed mapping could also be about to move to a new level with the launch of Zoneye, an artificial intelligence system from Czech ag-tech firm Skymaps, due to debut at Agritechnica 2025.

reduce the number of passes, or do smart combinations such as seed and starter fertiliser, or seed and cover crop, flexibility should be attractive.

Amazon's Cirrus 8004-2C Grand continues this combinational trend, featuring 8m working width and a three-chamber hopper. It's designed for speed and flexibility, especially for those who want to sow multiple components simultaneously. For UK farms with medium-size tractors, this could reduce the gap between

high output and soil risk, with fewer passes and better establishment.

While the glitz and glam of the new, shiny kit is often a draw to Agritechnica 2025, at its core, all of this new innovation is based around efficiency and integration to drive better production. For UK arable farms squeezed between regulatory demands, environmental expectations and the ever-present need to get a return, the new tools may offer more leverage than ever before. ●

New features: streamlining a super show

Anyone who's visited Agritechnica before will know walking the halls is a test of stamina. So in a new twist for 2025, Agritechnica has introduced a '7 days-7 topics' format, which aims to make navigating 23 halls of kit and concepts a little less daunting. Each day has its own theme, giving visitors the chance to home in on what's most relevant to them.

The week kicks off on Sunday (9 November) with an 'innovation and press day' – an early look at the latest launches and award-winning technologies, mainly for contractors, decision-makers and the media. Monday and Tuesday are billed as 'agribusiness days', tailored towards dealers, large-scale farms and contractors, with investment planning and networking front and centre.

Mid-week, on Wednesday (12 November), the spotlight shifts to the global sphere, with an 'international farmers day' focusing on France, Canada and the Czech Republic. Then, Thursday is 'digital farm day' – where robotics, automation and AI take over the agenda, and visitors can expect a heavy dose of smart farming solutions in action.

Friday is reserved for the next generation, with the 'young professionals day', offering sessions on careers, succession and a chance for younger visitors to connect – rounded off by the 'young farmers party'. Finally, Saturday closes the show on a high with 'celebrate farming' – a nod to the industry's achievements and a chance to take stock before the doors shut.

Going for gold (and silver)

For many manufacturers, a major highlight of Agritechnica is the possibility of being crowned a winner of the show's Innovation Awards – with both gold and silver medals up for grabs



The award is made on the basis of an innovation which demonstrates a new concept where the functionality has changed decisively and gives rise to a new process/marks a substantial improvement to an existing process. It has to be practical at a farm level and demonstrate both financial and environmental benefits, among other criteria.

Organisers say they received more than 250 entries this year, with two new launches taking gold and a further 22 receiving a silver medal.

Ahead of this year's Agritechnica, here's a look at some of the winners:

1. CLAAS'S OVERALL CONCEPT OF A 70t BALER

Claas took one of the two gold medals for what might at first glance appear to be a refinement rather than a revolution – a next-generation 70t square baler. Yet under the skin, it's a radical rethink.

The concept is aimed at merging ultra-high throughput and consistent bale density with reliable binding. To that end, Claas places a main gearbox inside the frame to enable a linear power path, slimmer drawbar, and shorter prop shaft. Two large flywheels (202kg each) spin longitudinally to act as energy buffers, and are engaged sequentially to reduce torque shock at start-up.

The drivetrain consists entirely of enclosed gearboxes and power bands and maintenance is minimal. Sensors continually monitor torque on the rotor and rake, shutting down feed when overload is imminent. A TIM (Tractor Implement Management) interface lets the operator select a strategy, such as max throughput or high density, and the system adapts tractor speed based on load.

Another AI-driven assist regulates bale length and weight in real time without needing a weigh cell. The knotter introduces a double knot based on the McCormick principle to retain 70% of yarn tensile strength, enabling greater yarn economy or more knots per metre for the same stability. ▶



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2. DEUTZ-FAHR'S TRACTOR ASSISTED GUIDANCE SYSTEM (TAGS)

Bringing driver assistance into tractors is a stepping stone toward more autonomous machines, and Deutz-Fahr's TAGS (Tractor Assisted Guidance System) is one of the silver-level innovations the show has honoured this year.

TAGS offers a more sophisticated layer of safety and assistance by leaning on systems more typically seen in cars. It integrates electronic detection, lane keeping, object/person detection, and sensor-based control – akin to adaptive cruise – into a farm context. In practical terms, this means TAGS can help maintain straight-line travel, warn of obstacles, and reduce operator error in difficult terrains or headland work.



3. LEMKEN'S IQBLUE FAN AUTOMATION AND AUTOMATED FAN CONTROL

Lemken's iQblue Fan Automation earned a silver medal for bringing sensor feedback into pneumatic seeding in a new way. Conventional drills set airflow by fan speed, based on conservative manufacturer guidelines, with little adjustment if lines block, so fault detection is limited. iQblue instead measures intake air volume via a differential pressure sensor, relates it to calibrated vacuum, and adjusts fan speed in real time to seed/fertiliser flow and forward speed. This enables adaptive regulation, even in multi-fan systems or varied layouts. Clogging or leaks trigger anomaly detection. The modular system ranges from display to full ISOBUS/iQblue Connect control, ensuring precision airflow, reduced losses, better accuracy, and earlier fault detection.



4. HORSCH'S PROACTIVE BOOMCONTROL

Horsch's Proactive BoomControl earned a silver medal for introducing radar-based proactive height control in spraying booms – a refinement that can make or break spray consistency across variable terrain. Instead of reactive correction, it employs 3D radar sensors ahead of the boom to anticipate ground changes. Boom height is adjusted pre-emptively, keeping nozzles at the target distance from the crop. On uneven fields or rolling terrain, this ensures even coverage, reduces drift, and maintains efficacy across the span. In practice, it delivers fewer height jumps, smoother boom motion, and closer adherence to spray geometry. For high-speed spraying and large booms, anticipation improves uniformity and reduces chemical waste, crucial when margins are tight or drift risks high.

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