

# Birmingham ablaze for the biggest LAMMA yet



*“Does the industry need to be less Anglo-Saxon in its instinct to own everything?”*

WILL FOYLE

With over 800 stands and more than 45,000 visitors, this year’s LAMMA event has been hailed as the biggest yet. But what had visitors talking in the halls of the NEC? CPM was there to report back...

By Charlotte Cunningham

**F**rom the moment the doors opened, it was clear LAMMA 2026 was operating on a different scale.

The familiar walk between halls at the NEC stretched further than usual, footfall was heavier throughout the two days, and the show floor felt consistently busy. Co-located with CropTec and the Low Carbon Agriculture Show, LAMMA spread across more than 12 halls, making it the largest event the show has staged in physical terms.

More than 800 exhibitors were on site, and visitor numbers surpassed 45,000, reflecting both the breadth of the combined shows and the

continued draw of a winter machinery event rooted in practical farming.

With major machinery launches, technology updates and a full seminar programme running in parallel, the expanded format created a show that was as much about discussion and decision-making as it was about new kit.

But while walking the halls at LAMMA, surrounded by millions of pounds’ worth of shiny new kit, it can feel almost heretical to talk about restraint. Yet if there was one message cutting through the noise at a booming event, it was this: discipline, not desire, will define the most resilient farm businesses during the next cycle.



## Understanding fixed costs

When looking at potential machinery budgets, Hutchinsons’ Will Foyle said having a concrete understanding of fixed costs is vital.

A seminar session on fixed costs and machinery policy brought together Matt Ryan of Oxbury Bank, Matt Redman, chair of the NAAC, and Will Foyle of Hutchinsons' farm business consultancy team to delve deeper into the fundamentals of spending. Between them, they painted a clear picture of an industry operating in mixed conditions – strong in some sectors, subdued in others – but united by one challenge – rising costs that refuse to flex when output or prices fall.

Matt Ryan set the scene from a lender's perspective. Across Oxbury's 10,000-plus farming customers, there are few signs of distress, but plenty of variability, he said. "Farming is cyclical and it's governed by forces largely outside our control.

"What we're seeing is a fairly mixed bag. Some sectors are having a very good year, others are coming off the back of a tougher period – but there are no real signs of distress. People are getting on."

Matt Ryan noted that this reality makes understanding cost structures, particularly fixed costs, more important than ever. And yet, as both other panellists acknowledged, many businesses still struggle to define what those fixed costs actually are.

Will challenged the assumption that fixed costs are immovable. He raised that while they may not change directly with scale, they can – and should – be actively managed. Instead, he suggested the problem is visibility. "A lot of farmers don't really know what their fixed costs are," he said. "And that can be a little alarming."

Variable costs are relatively easy – seed, fertiliser and sprays arrive neatly packaged on invoices and can be divided



### A more cost-effective option?

**NAAC's Matt Redman raised the debate of whether it's more cost-effective to use a contractor over owning machinery and advised that this should be considered on a per-machine basis.**



### Biggest ever LAMMA

**It was the biggest ever LAMMA, with over 800 exhibitors and more than 45,000 visitors to the NEC over the two-day event.**

by hectares at the click of a button, he continued. Machinery, however, is another matter entirely. True machinery costs sit across depreciation, finance, insurance, servicing and repairs, fuel use, labour and utilisation – and they rarely reveal themselves in one place.

Will explained that to understand the real cost of a single operation, such as drilling, requires breaking those elements down in detail: how many hours a tractor works across the year; how much value it loses annually; what it costs to maintain; how many hectares the drill actually covers; and what work rates are realistically achieved. Only then can a meaningful cost per hectare be calculated, he said.

Do that properly, and the result can be sobering, warned Will. He then gave an example of a drilling cost of £153/ha, which concealed an uncomfortable truth: around half of that figure was depreciation – a cost that remains largely invisible until a machine is traded years later.

"This is where the industry gets caught out," he stressed. "We don't feel depreciation day-to-day, but it's very real."

A further complication is that machinery budgets often fail to match the time horizon of the commitment. Hire purchase agreements may run for 3-5 years, warranties for 5-7, yet many businesses still budget on a single-year basis. "People will happily sign a three- or five-year HP agreement," said Will. "But they don't always have a budget that looks forward for the same length of time."

Without a forward-looking view, it becomes impossible to judge whether those commitments remain affordable if cropping changes, margins tighten or support payments fall, he added. That realism must also extend to

yield assumptions. "Be realistic is the starting point," stressed Will. "Nowhere grows 10t/ha wheat every year. If you can only grow eight, make sure your budgets work at eight."

His parting provocation resonated strongly in a machinery-focused room: does the industry need to be less Anglo-Saxon in its instinct to own everything?

Matt Redman then picked up the theme by examining machinery strategy through a practical lens: do you actually need to own the machine in question?

Using a 400ha arable business as an example, he compared the cost of owning a used combine with employing a contractor. Factoring in depreciation, interest, insurance, labour, fuel and repairs, owning the machine came out at around £164/ha. A contractor, using NAAC pricing survey figures, delivered the same operation for approximately £132/ha.

The difference – £32/ha – equates to a £12,788 saving across the farm. Perhaps more importantly, it removes risk. "Using a contractor makes it far easier to budget," explained Matt Redman. "There are no hidden costs – no surprise repairs, no depreciation risk, no labour issues."

If cropped area reduces, for example through SFI participation, contractor costs fall accordingly, while ownership costs don't.

That's not to say contractors are always the answer. Matt Redman was careful to stress that flexibility, timeliness and labour utilisation still matter. In tight harvest years, control has a value of its own, and relationships with contractors need to be built, not bought. "We all know how tight labour is," he added. "Finding someone who can operate that level of technology properly isn't easy."

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## To spend, or not to spend?

In a seminar session, panellists explored in depth the key considerations when it comes to investing in machinery. L-R: Matt Redman (NAAC), Matt Ryan (Oxbury Bank) and Will Foyle (Hutchinsons).

But from a fixed-cost perspective, contracting offers something many businesses sorely need – certainty.

There's also the wider issue of capital employed. With machinery prices continuing to rise, generating an acceptable return on large sums tied up in iron is becoming increasingly difficult.

"We're seeing businesses with millions of pounds of capital employed," said Will. "In some cases, the same work could be done for the same cost without carrying that level of risk."

The discussion also moved beyond machinery to the broader point that

## Machinery decisions: questions to ask before you buy

- What's the true cost per hectare or per hour once depreciation, finance, labour and repairs are included?
- Does the budget cover the full life of the agreement, not just the next 12 months?
- How sensitive is this cost to changes in cropped area or workload?
- What return is the business making on the capital tied up in machinery?
- Could the same output be achieved through contracting, collaboration or joint ownership with less risk?
- Is this purchase driven by operational demand, or by convenience, habit or timing?
- If margins tighten in year three or four, does the decision still stack up?

cost control isn't simply about cutting back. Will argued that productivity is the biggest diluter of fixed costs available – a 25% yield increase spreads the same machinery, labour and finance costs over far more output.

"If you produce more tonnes per hectare, those fixed costs fall very quickly," he added.

That principle applies equally to variable inputs. Blanket approaches to fertiliser rates, for example, risk spending money for yield that may never materialise. "A lot of people say, 'I'm growing 10t/ha wheat, so it requires 220kgN/ha,'" said Will. "But the question is – have you ever actually grown 10t/ha wheat?"

The panel concluded by stating that the challenge now is to run farming as the business it is: knowing true costs of production, hedging risk, planning machinery investment over 5-7 years, and resisting the temptation to make capital-heavy decisions for emotional rather than economic reasons.

LAMMA will always be a shop window, and rightly so. Innovation matters and it's what keeps the sector moving and progressing. But as this discussion made clear, the most important machinery decision many businesses will make this year may be deciding not to buy at all – or at least not until the numbers, not the paintwork, stack up. ●

## Innovators wanted...

**W**ith no shortage of new launches on the show floor, LAMMA also prompted discussion around how innovation is accessed, trialled and adopted on farm.

Across both the exhibition halls and the seminar programme, there was a recurring focus on practical routes that allow growers to engage with new ideas, technologies and approaches without taking on unnecessary risk.

That theme came through clearly in two very different sessions: the launch of Techneat Engineering's new hire scheme, and an update on ADOPT, the farmer-led funding stream within Defra's Farming Innovation Programme.

Launched at the show, Techneat Hire is intended to give farmers and growers access to the company's precision application equipment without the capital cost or long-term commitment of ownership. The scheme covers Techneat's full range, allowing machinery to be hired for a specific part of the season or to trial newer developments

such as optical spot spraying or precision nutrient placement.

For time-sensitive operations, the attraction is having equipment available when conditions are right, rather than waiting on contractors, while also avoiding the cost of owning kit that may only be used occasionally.

It's a model that reflects both tighter margins and increasingly flexible cropping plans, says the firm, but also the reality that many technologies need to be seen working on farm before confidence builds.

A similar emphasis on accessibility ran through a seminar updating growers on ADOPT, which is now a year into its three-year programme. ADOPT is designed specifically to support farmer-led innovation, funding practical trials and demonstrations based on growers' own ideas.

Grants are relatively modest, typically £50,000-£100,000, and projects run for six months to two years, encouraging focused, field-scale testing rather than longer-term research. Two types

of funding are available, including facilitated support grants aimed at farmers with little prior experience of innovation funding, pairing them with a project facilitator to help develop and manage applications.

Examples shared at the seminar highlighted the diversity of work being supported. Projects include the use of biochar in drainage systems on rewetted peatland, on-farm production of live insect protein for poultry using waste streams, large-scale trials of virus-tolerant sugar beet, and investigations into alternative biomass crops for peat replacement. While the topics vary, the common thread is that all are being tested at a scale and in a context that reflects commercial farming conditions.

Taken together, the hire scheme and the ADOPT programme point to a broader shift in how innovation is being approached. Rather than requiring full commitment up front, both offer ways for growers to try new ideas, gather evidence and decide what fits their business before taking the next step.

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## New year, new launches

With more than 800 stands, here's a look at just some of the new launches from this year's LAMMA event

### JCB

The JCB stand always draws a crowd at LAMMA and this year was no different, with new launches spawning right across the stand. However, the real stand-out of this year was the firm's all new Fastrac 6000 Series, with the flagship Fastrac 6300 taking centre stage and being awarded Gold in the Machine of the Year category at the show's innovation awards – a nod from the judges to its combination of power, capability and operator-focused engineering.

Built around a 6.7-litre, six-cylinder FPT engine developing 335hp and up to 1400Nm of torque, the 6300 brings updated powertrain and control systems to the iconic high-speed Fastrac line.

With a ZF continuous transmission offering speeds up to 66kph and multi-mode advanced four-wheel steering, it's engineered to balance field performance with safe, comfortable roading and headland work.

Hydraulics on the 6300 are rated to 205 l/min, with an option to increase flow for demanding implements, while rear linkage lift capacity is rated at 11,000kg and an optional 5000kg front hitch broadens implement flexibility.

Cab features include an intuitive iCON control system, integrated guidance



capabilities and a spacious, configurable environment designed to support long days in the seat, while the available central tyre inflation system helps optimise traction and efficiency across work cycles. Learn more about this new machine in next month's *CPM* (March).

### NEW HOLLAND

New Holland used LAMMA 2026 to showcase a refreshed and expanded machinery line-up, led by the new T7 Standard Wheelbase (SWB) tractors in the 180-225hp segment.

Positioned as a step change for the range, the latest T7 SWB models place a strong emphasis on efficiency, manoeuvrability and operator comfort. A redesigned front axle delivers a 17% tighter turning circle than previous models, improving performance in confined yards while also contributing to a smoother ride on the road and in the field.

The updated Horizon cab introduces improved materials, greater storage and revised control layouts, alongside enhanced climate control, suspension options and roof configurations to support long working days.

Transmission choice remains central to the offering, with Auto Command CVT available from launch, joined later by Dynamic Command and Range Command semi-powershift options.

Fuel efficiency has also been a development focus, with the T7.225 Dynamic Command already setting new DLG PowerMix benchmarks in its power class.

Alongside the T7 launch, New Holland also highlighted the W170D+ Forage Power wheel loader, which recently won the Farm Machine 2026 award for material handling at Agritechnica, underlining the brand's broader focus on productivity, comfort and specialist performance across its range.

### FIELDBEE VISION



And it wasn't just all about four wheels... digital technology was also firmly in the spotlight at LAMMA, with FieldBee Vision taking Gold in the Digital Technology Innovation of the Year category.

Designed as a retrofit solution for small to medium-sized farms and contractors, FieldBee Vision combines centimetre-level RTK guidance, AI-powered crop sensing and visual odometry within a single modular platform.

The system is built around two core functions: VisionSteer, which delivers automatic and accurate steering in challenging environments such as orchards, vineyards and uneven fields where GNSS alone can struggle; and VisionPro, which uses real-time crop analysis to support variable-rate fertiliser and pesticide applications.

By integrating multispectral cameras, AI processing and RTK correction, the system is intended to reduce operator fatigue while improving accuracy and input efficiency. Development has been guided by farmer feedback and agronomy expertise, with a clear focus on practicality and ease of installation rather than bespoke machinery.

The judges highlighted FieldBee Vision's ability to make advanced precision farming technologies more accessible and affordable, particularly for growers looking to improve productivity and sustainability without investing in new tractors or specialist equipment.