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‘High fives’ for grower’s new high clearance tractor working in quality vegetable crops

The first example of a new generation of high clearance tractors has been put to work by a Worcestershire grower to provide increased capacity for spraying and other operations across more than 1000 acres of vegetable crops.

It is the second Landini high clearance tractor working at D Southall & Sons, Norchard Farm near Stourporton-Severn, where brothers Paul and Michael Southall run a business in partnership with their father Donald that was established more than 100 years ago.

“A new railway station at Hartlebury was the key to my grandfather Matthew Southall buying the farm in 1907,” says Paul. “It meant fruit and vegetables could be transported quickly and efficiently to his greengrocery shops in the heart of the industrial Black Country.

“Now, of course, it all goes by lorry,” he adds. “But we still put an emphasis on low food miles and continue to pick by hand in the traditional manner to achieve the best possible quality.”

Today, Norchard Farm’s 1000+ acres are typically filled with asparagus, runner, broad and French beans, courgettes, pumpkins and purple sprouting broccoli, the majority grown for UK supermarkets but also to supply the wholesale and catering sectors.

The business is audited to a range of protocols, including Red Tractor, LEAF and BRC, and the partners are committed to farming ethically, looking after their employees and customers, as well as the local natural environment.

Adding a second Landini high clearance tractor to the machinery fleet was prompted by a need for increased spraying capacity to help improve application timeliness in a narrow spraying window.

“We considered a purpose-built self-propelled sprayer but concluded the tractor made more sense because of its versatility,” says Paul.

The farm already runs a Landini Powerfarm HC, which has performed well; the new acquisition supplied by Richard Tooby Farm Services at Putley near Ledbury, is an improved version of this tractor. The Landini 5-110D HC has a compact four-cylinder engine of 102hp output that consumes less fuel and emits less in the way of harmful emissions.

There are additional control features in the refreshed cab, such as electronic rather than manual engagement of four-wheel drive and diff locks. But underbelly clearance of 680mm is achieved in the same way – by rotating the bull gear final drive units at the rear and fitting 42in diameter rims on both axles, shod with 230/95R42 radial row-crop tyres.

“Despite the smarter cab interior and additional features, this is still a simple tractor that’s easy to drive,” says Paul. “The extra clearance over a standard tractor is invaluable for many of our field operations.”

Spraying is the tractor’s main task; it handles a heavier-duty 1000-litre mounted sprayer with an 18m boom giving more coverage than the 12m model used previously.

“Fungicides go on to asparagus at the fern stage when the crop is at its tallest, courgettes grow with a bulky foliage, and even dwarf and fine beans end up quite tall in a good growing season,” Paul points out. “The tractors’ greater clearance avoids any physical damage when spraying or applying fertiliser.

“And we can use them for other tasks, such as operating a polythene laying machine to create low polytunnels because the tractor easily clears the hoops,” he points out. “We couldn’t do that with a self-propelled sprayer or any of the other jobs the new tractor will handle.”

Ends



Landini 5-110D HC 005

Paul Southall: “We considered a self-propelled sprayer for increased capacity and improved timeliness but the Landini tractor is more versatile.”



Landini 5-110D HC 012

For crop protection work, the new Landini 5-110D HC operates a 1000-litre mounted sprayer with 18m boom.



Landini 5-110D HC 036a

Increased underbelly and under axle clearance is achieved by rotating the rear final drive units and fitted 42in row crop rims and tyres all round.

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