



## **Automation Makes Grain Drying A Flexible Operation in Cumbria.**

Labour has been freed up to get on with other vital tasks such as bailing, while the mobile grain dryer's quiet operation enables drying to continue during the night if necessary.

The family farming partnership of J & J & D Taylor, English Town Farm, Longtown, Carlisle, purchased an OPICO 600QF mobile grain dryer in time for the 2004 harvest and two seasons' use has convinced them that they made the right decision.

James Taylor, who farms with his brother John and wife Doreen, estimates that the dryer handles about 700 tons of grain a year.

"We had an OPICO mobile grain dryer previously and one of the reasons for getting another one was its mobility," explained Mr Taylor. "This allows us to move it about if we change our storage and drying policy. We did this with the previous mobile grain dryer, which gave us some flexibility."

However, compared to their previous mobile grain dryer, which was tractor-driven and manually operated, the new automatic model is much easier to control, said Mr Taylor. "It does precisely what you ask of it. It's allowed us to dry more batches in a day because we've more control over the whole operation."

Of the farm's 660 acres, some 300 acres are arable - mainly spring barley, plus winter triticale and some oil seed rape. The remaining acreage is grassland supporting suckler cows and sheep. The soil type varies, from light land with sand and gravel, to heavy clay and peat moss.

A plus factor for buying the OPICO mobile grain dryer was the trade in price Mr Taylor received for the old model. "A mobile grain dryer has a far higher second-hand value than a static system, simply because there is no installation involved," he said.

There was another major consideration at the time of purchase, he added. "We only have single-phase electricity here. So at harvest time we hire a self-contained diesel generator from a local plant hire company to drive the mobile grain dryer. We would have had to do the same with a static system, but with this machine it's just one cable into a generator and away you go. You could virtually dry in the middle of a field if you had to."



The first season they had the mobile grain dryer, they hired a generator for four weeks. "In 2005 we tried to save on hire charges and managed to condense it into two weeks. Partly this was because the harvest was a bit drier, so the mobile grain dryer didn't need to do so much work."

"We also put in three or four days combining before we started to dry to reduce the generator hire period. We were finished by the end of August."

The mobile grain dryer is housed under cover in the grain store, and its quiet operation is an asset. "The grain store is in close proximity to the house, but it doesn't cause any problems."

"With it being electric and automatic, it allows us to dry a lot more at night when the temperature is cooler."

Just to the side of the mobile grain dryer is a holding bin with a capacity of 14-15 tons, equipped with a telescopic loader. "It's a tidy compact outfit, totally self-contained, with the minimum of conveying," said Mr Taylor. "Whenever there's someone in with a load of grain off the combine, we just keep topping it up."

"It's important to have a holding bin so that as soon as the mobile grain dryer has discharged the dried grain, it goes on to fill itself again."

Some of the grain is for home consumption, while the balance is sold through local farmers' co-operative, Northern Grain.

As far as the finished product is concerned, Mr Taylor is impressed with the mobile grain dryer. "The grain sample is significantly improved through the polishing effect of continuous recirculation", he said. "We use the screen in the auger like a pre-cleaner and it's amazing the amount of lights and small grains that are cleaned out of the system."

