



H. Cooke & Son Farms Ltd of Bratton Hall Farm, Bratton, Admaston, Telford, farm a total of 800 acres, 550 acres of which is cereals, mainly winter wheat. The remaining acreage is down to oil seed rape, sugar beet and potatoes.

There are three farm units - two at Telford two miles apart and a third at Shrewsbury, 10 miles away. "Our existing dryers (Master grain dryer and a continuous flow grain dryer) couldn't keep up with the combine and we were bringing the corn in faster than we could dry it," said Tim Cooke, who farms in partnership with his father. "What we wanted was one dryer that could run between the farms and keep up with the combine, which is capable of cutting 50 acres per day."

In July they replaced their existing two dryers (Master grain dryer and a continuous flow grain dryer) with a new mobile OPICO Magna diesel batch dryer that provided the ideal solution. With its 10 tons per hour drying capacity, and 20 ton holding capacity, the dryer was able to keep up with the combine and could be trailed easily between the Telford and Shrewsbury farms.

"We grow about the same quantity of wheat at each farm," explained Tim. "At Telford we dry into a grain store and at Shrewsbury we dry it and sell it off the floor at harvest, with any left over going back to Telford."

They reckon to have dried between 12 and 1500 tons this Harvest, with the Magna's performance judged as "very good".

"If the dryer did fall behind the combine, it quickly caught up on the occasional wet day. We were drying about four loads a day, five loads if we were lucky."

A home-made grain hopper, which holds three tons and is filled with a telescopic loader, was used to fill the dryer - a process that takes about nine minutes. The drying cycle was about an hour and 40 minutes, reducing the moisture content from 17/18% to 14.5%.

"Operating costs are a lot lower because the OPICO machine has replaced the two dryers (Master grain dryer and a continuous flow grain dryer) we had previously and out performs them both," said Tim.

His experience is that the OPICO machine will dry 20 tonnes easily in two hours, taking out 4-5% moisture. It runs at approximately 70 amps/hour, drying 80 tonnes a day on 4.5 litres of fuel per tonne.

The continuous flow grain dryer it replaced would dry 6-8 tonnes in two hours, taking out 4-5% moisture and drying approximately 30 tonnes a day. It ran with an old-fashioned diesel burner and drew 59 amps/hour.

The OPICO grain dryer replaced a 12 tonne Master grain dryer that would dry 12 tonnes in two hours taking out 4-5% moisture. This was tractor PTO driven and also ran with a diesel burner and would dry approximately 50 tonnes per day.

"Our operating costs for drying corn have virtually halved," said Tim. "We have one dryer running in one place, drying easily the same amount of grain in the day as the other two (Master grain dryer and a continuous flow grain dryer). It is running more efficiently, costing less with only one diesel burner, one fan, and one team running it."

Reliability is another major factor. Says Tim: "I wanted a dryer that I was able to set running and leave without worrying. With all the dryers we had before, you daren't leave them out of earshot. This year, when the combine was working in fields away from the farm, the dryer was running back in the yard with no problems."