

PROFS



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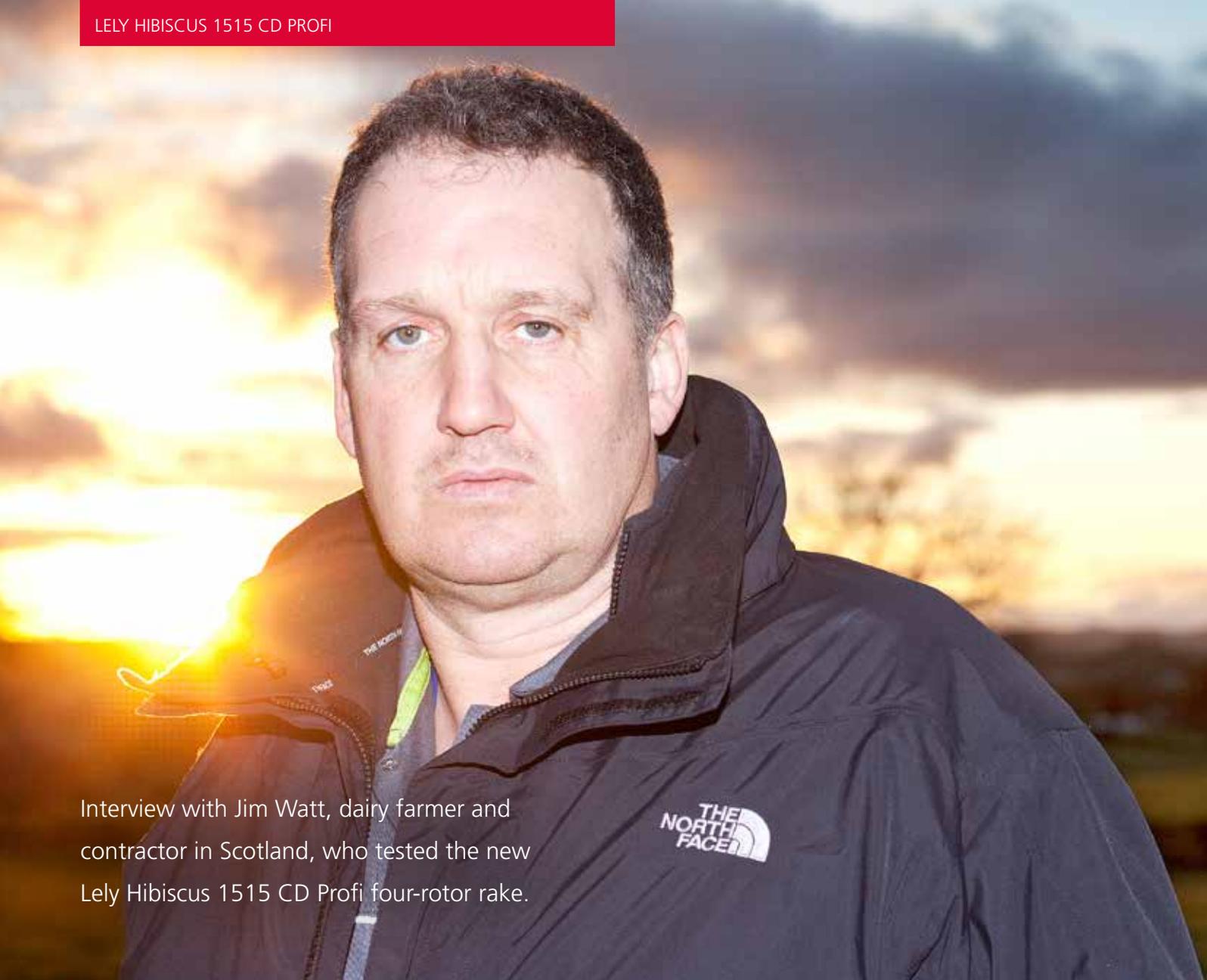
BEFORE A NEW PRODUCT ENTERS THE MARKET

Testing new
machines all over
the world



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innovators in agriculture



Interview with Jim Watt, dairy farmer and contractor in Scotland, who tested the new Lely Hibiscus 1515 CD Profi four-rotor rake.

'If it works here,
it will work
anywhere'



BIOGRAPHY

Jim Watt is a 5th generation dairy farmer, running a farm with 120 milking cows in in East Kilbride, a small village in the hilly landscape underneath Glasgow. In 1991 the on-going decrease in milk prices called for compensation in income and Jim started his own contracting business. The demand for contractors is increasing as machines become too expensive for single farmers and employees for field work are hard to find. Nowadays he is assisted by four fulltime workers and hires additional workers for the peaks in the harvesting season between May and August. Jim and his staff do the harvesting for about 40 farmers.

The introduction of a new model does not make the Lely machine available for commercial purposes right away. The first limited series leaving the factory, the so-called zero series, are thoroughly tested by a selected group of farmers in various conditions. Lely monitors these evaluations intensively to optimise their products before marketing them.

Jim, a Scottish dairy farmer and contractor, was asked to evaluate the performance of the new Lely four-rotor rake, the Hibiscus 1515 CD Profi, this summer. The frequent rain showers led to heavy grass conditions, challenging the rake to the extreme. Nevertheless Jim is very pleased with the overall performance of the four-rotor rake. 'I got the machine halfway through the first cut in the beginning of June. It performed very well and I was able to use it for the second cut as well, raking around 1,200 hectares. For the third cut in September I had to use a twin rotor rake while the weather conditions had made the ground very soft and the four-rotor rake weighed too heavy.'

WHAT DID YOU LIKE ABOUT THE LELY FOUR-ROTOR RAKE?

'I was especially pleased with the functionality and the stability of this four-rotor rake. We have a hilly landscape here. The rake proved to be very stable, following the ground easily and making perfect swaths. Despite the heavy grass conditions I was able to rake more volume with the Lely Hibiscus 1515 CD Profi than I normally rake with my own four-rotor rake while travelling with the same forward speed as when I would be making the swaths with my own rake. In addition it was quite easy to manoeuvre the rake through gateways and on narrow roads, it followed the line of the tractor very well.'

WHAT CAN STILL BE IMPROVED?

'When you work with these expensive machines you want operators with experience. But for these mainly elderly workers I think the computer control system is quite complicated. I would prefer it to be more simple and user-friendly.'

WHY SHOULD YOU TEST THE RAKE?

'I think you should never bring a machine into the market before having tried and tested it in various conditions. The thoroughness in the development process is characteristic for the Lely organisation and the high quality machinery they want to deliver. In my opinion Lely is doing a very good job by moving forward from lightweight machines to heavier machines that are suitable for farmers as well as contractors.'

WHY DID LELY ASK YOU TO TEST THIS RAKE?

'I have always been very interested in machinery, a kind of pioneer when it comes to new ideas and new equipment. I was one of the first farmers here to buy a Lely tedder, many other farmers and contractors would follow in the years after. I am also a "heavy user" working as a contractor for about 40 farmers in the neighbourhood. And last but not least, I believe that all forage machines should be tested in Ireland and Scotland because of the weather conditions that thicken the grass and soften the soil in which it grows.'

IS THIS THE FIRST LELY MACHINE YOU HAVE TESTED?

'No, I have tested the Lely Lotus 1500 tedder in the spring of 2009.'

WHEN DID YOU FIRST LEARN ABOUT THE NEW HIBISCUS FOUR-ROTOR RAKE?

'John McAuley, a Product Specialist from Lely UK, invited me to a customer focus session in Germany in the summer of 2010. They demonstrated a prototype of the rake and we could try it out ourselves.'

WHAT WAS YOUR FIRST IMPRESSION?

'My first impression was, I am sorry to say, not good. It was rattling and banging and I came home very negative.'

WHY DID YOU DECIDE TO EVALUATE IT ANYWAY?

'At the second customer focus session in the summer of 2011 the rake was looking much more finished. I was able to make lovely swaths with it. That second impression gave me enough confidence to have it come over to my farm and test it in practice.'

HOW DID LELY SUPPORT YOU DURING TESTING?

'John McAuley and Martin Arnold, Team Manager Engineering Forage Solutions at Wolfenbüttel in Germany, where the Lely Hibiscus four-rotor rake is developed, were monitoring my experiences all the time. They came to visit me five times during the evaluation period. They fixed some problems right away and listened to my doubts about the safety guarding, the fragile hook and some electrical and software issues. Now they have taken the machine back to Germany to modify it and do some more testing.' ■

