



Five bespoke seed drills set the pace for SFI sowing



A five-strong fleet of customised seed drills is helping a Cheshire contractor gear up for sowing SFI mixes. **James Andrews** finds out where each fits in

Variable seed sizes, different sowing depths and the need for cost-effective establishment make environmental mixes tricky to get right.

But thanks to their five modified seed drills, each of which is tailored to different crops and conditions, Cheshire contractors Ross

and Tom Yarwood have got most eventualities covered.

Although the Sustainable Farming Incentive has only come to the fore this year, crop establishment has long been one of the father-and-son team's fortes.

So, by adding one extra machine and

making some subtle tweaks to others, they now have options for most combinations of seeds, land type and budget.

It might seem extravagant to have this many seeding options in the arsenal, but costs have been kept in check by running tidy older kit that is fastidiously maintained. ■

3M SIMBA DTX WITH STOCKS TURBO JET SEEDER

A particularly versatile tool is a mid-2000s Simba DTX fitted with a Stocks Turbo Jet pneumatic small seeds applicator (pictured above).

Originally, this was made as a one-pass tool for establishing kale, stubble turnips and mustard. But it works well for any concoctions of small seeds, including clover-based legume fallows, grass margins, and pollen and nectar mixes.

Seeders such as the Turbo Jet are often teamed with a set of discs for these tasks, but the addition of the DTX front legs gives more consistent results, says Ross. "We usually work at an angle to the tramlines and find that the legs level the ground, remove compaction and give better establishment."

The machine's adjustable disc angle is

also a useful feature, he adds. "They're great as we can vary the amount of soil we move depending on the conditions and how fast we're able to work."

On average, forward speed is about 11-12kph, which means they can cover the ground relatively quickly. The only downside is that the tool makes their 210hp Steinbauer-chipped John Deere 6155R quaff large quantities of diesel.

The Yarwoods married the cultivator and seeder unit together themselves, with a little help from local engineer Andrew Gate of G8 Fabrication.

This involved building a central frame to hold the seeder, support bars for the eight pipes and their spreader plates behind the DD packer, and a home-made rear following harrow.

Typically, they like their drills simple

and use land metering wheels, but to keep the setup neat the Turbo Jet seeder works off a radar speed sensor.

"I wasn't sure how accurate or reliable it would be, but it's turned out to be brilliant," says Ross. "At about £5,000 I initially thought the Turbo Jet was pricey for what it was, but when you start using it you realise that it's a surprisingly sophisticated piece of kit."

For added convenience when swapping between seed types they've recently invested in a second metering cartridge, so one can run large flutes and the other small.

Finishing touches to the drill included a step, a weld-mesh platform for safer filling, and work lights. The metalwork was also galvanised to make it last.