

Norfolk farming family celebrate successful year

Profitable farming and good management go hand in hand for L F Papworth Ltd.

It's been a busy year for award winning contract farmers L F Papworth Ltd, which culminated in another championship in the Norfolk County Farms Competition.

A mixed farm contracting company that manages over 1,600ha (4,000 acres) of farmland for over 20 different landowners between Wroxham and Dereham, L F Papworth encompasses a huge range of arable crops, and livestock enterprises across a range of soil types.

Combinable crops include seed and feed wheat, Concerto and Flagon malting barley for local maltsters and oilseed rape for seed and oil. Peas are grown for Bird's Eye and supermarket own-brand labels. Dwarf beans are grown for freezing.

Beef and lamb are produced for sister businesses J&D Papworth and Papworth Farms. In addition, the company oversees the management of more than 200ha (500 acres) of Environmentally Sensitive Areas.

Potato production and marketing is managed by Tim, who sits on the board of the British Potato Council and the NFU Horticultural Board. The business grows 10 varieties of potatoes, for salads, processing, crisping and chipping, on 450 acres and a further 150 acres are lifted under contract. Potatoes are produced for many well-known brands, including McCain, Kettle and Walkers. Tim also looks after the beef production and marketing.

Kit, meanwhile, specialises in combinable crops, agronomy, crop recording and the sheep enterprise.

He is also Chairman of buying group Anglia Farmers.

"We specialise in contract farming arable land, using our experience, marketing skill and enthusiasm to provide good returns for our landowners," he says. "The aim is to manage a profitable farming business while caring for our environment."

It's a philosophy that has stood the company in good stead. It has won the Norfolk County Farms Supreme Championship eight times – more than any other business.

The past decade has also seen L F Papworth win the Royal Agricultural Society of England Excellence in Practical Farming award (2002) and the Environment Agency's Water Efficiency Award (2004

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PROFILE

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and 2007). As well as numerous awards at the local Stalham Farmers Club, of which Tim is a past Chairman.

The other main root crop is sugar beet. The business is a founder and organiser of the White Cross Sugar Beet Harvesting Syndicate – the largest sugar beet harvesting and haulage group delivering to the Cantley sugar beet factory.

A Holmer Terrados T3 harvester lifts over 800ha (2000 acres) of beet every year. A CTM9001s sugar beet cleaner, complete with a JCB 416, loads in excess of 100,000 tonnes of sugar beet throughout the season. Harvest 2013 also sees the purchase of a Claas Lexion 760 TT on tracks to accompany the existing 570 TT.

Water is utilised efficiently using a field inspection programme to identify earth compaction and schedule repairs more quickly. This enables crops to root more deeply and have better access to water. Scheduling is then used to programme the irrigation.

Efficient use of irrigation equipment, with the help of the Broadland Agriculture Water Abstractors Group (BAWAG), of which Tim is a past chairman, has helped to increase yields while re-

ducing abstraction – even in hot and dry years.

Better irrigation management – including more accurate water application equipment and the increased use of computer technology – has also resulted in significant savings in electricity, gas and oil consumption.

All this couldn't be achieved without a team of dedicated staff "We couldn't do it without them," says Kit. "Our challenge is to invest in young people to give us our skilled operators of the future."

An external health and safety officer works with management and staff. He conducts spot check and regular audits, as well as completing the statutory paperwork.

The cousins take their responsibilities to the wider community seriously too. The farm hosts visits from local school children to show children where their food comes from and to highlight the link between farming and the countryside.

This year it has welcomed children from the local pre-school groups, along with their Brightstart Nursery, and pupils from Norwich School, Colby Primary and Thorpe House to name a few.



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