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2026

KRONE

XtraBlatt

Forage quality

Cover story

The Helthuis family
Sensor-controlled

Grassland management
Substantial reserves

Maschinenfabrik KRONE
Switch settings

KRONE recently unveiled the new Swativo T 1040 Pro pickup rake, adding another device to its extensive range of harvesting technology and thus emphasising its position as the only actual forage system provider that operates “from the field to the cow”.

Dear readers,

By the time you are holding this issue of XtraBlatt, there will have been more than four years of war in Ukraine, 18 months of unpredictable US customs policies and four months of war in Iran, during which time energy costs have soared around the world. This has had huge economic consequences for all of us resulting in high additional costs and volatile markets. As farmers, this has affected you twofold due to higher costs for mineral fertilisers and diesel, for example, and on the other hand, due to decreasing revenue. Although milk prices have not fallen as sharply as those for corn, there are also no signs of euphoria in this sector at the moment. What makes this situation particularly difficult is the fact that, as food producers, you are unable to pass on your additional costs to the food industry or retail market. We feel the same way, as we cannot pass on our additional costs in full to our retailers and end customers, as highlighted by the example of US customs duties.

However, as I stated in the previous issue of XtraBlatt: difficult times can also serve as an incentive to breathe new life into existing systems or to seek out alternative solutions. For us at KRONE, this means our top priority will continue to be the development of high-performance technology that enables you, as contractors and farmers, to harvest forage as efficiently as possible. KRONE is the only actual full-range supplier in the forage harvesting sector worldwide – and you can benefit from this too. This is not just about technology – more than ever before, we are considering things from the cow’s perspective and the entire process chain, from the field to the cow’s stomach. Our joint project with Siloking and smaXtec provides the milk production process with the boost farmers like you have been looking for. You can read more about this in two articles in this issue.

Bernard Krone is the Chairman of the Supervisory Board of the Krone Group.

However, digitalisation and AI also offer us manufacturers new opportunities, when it comes to developing our products to provide new added value or, for example, our internal processes, such as production control. Volatile markets call for significantly greater flexibility at every level, as well as leaner structures and processes. In this issue, you will also find out more about the direction these concepts and ideas are taking in an interview with Donna Höving and Jens Moormann-Schmitz, the new team managing our agricultural machinery division.

I wish you and your families strength and resilience during these difficult times, creativity as you continue to develop your businesses, and a successful harvest in the coming weeks – stay healthy and remain optimistic.

Regards, Bernard Krone

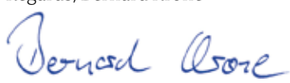

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Photo: Velmans

VELMANS AGRICULTURAL CONTRACTORS IN KEVELAER

Making a good impression with a short cut

High-quality forage is becoming an increasingly crucial factor when it comes to the success of dairy farming. Contractor and farmer Johannes Velmans is aware of this too. Since spring 2025, he has been using a KRONE CombiPack HDP for the grass silage harvest with resounding success.

The second week of April has only just begun and the first mowers and rakes are already out in force in the Lower Rhine region. 'They're cutting early in the season' I think to myself as I park my car on the grounds of the Velmans farm in Kevelaer, Germany, where I am greeted by Johannes Velmans and his daughter Julia. She is a qualified and trained farmer in charge of the dairy farm, which has 330 cows with an average milk yield of 11,000 litres and six milking robots. She knows a lot about the requirements of forage quality.

> The grass silage is eaten and not left on the feed trough. That's what we like to see.
>
> **Julia Velmans – farmer**

Johannes Velmans with his daughter Julia, who manages the farm, and his son Simon, who is currently training to become a farmer.

First cut in early April

"We are in one of the earliest harvesting regions in Germany when it comes to grass silage," the contractor explains greeting me and adding: "There is relatively little permanent grassland around here. Most of it is field grass. This is harvested as early as possible, so that the land can be prepared and ploughed immediately afterwards to sow maize. That is why the harvest is already getting underway here, whereas in other parts of Germany it could be another four weeks."

To get the most out of the KRONE Combi-Pack HDP 41-blade cutting unit, contractor Velmans uses a 300 hp tractor to pull it along.

Johannes Velmans reports that 80% of the contractor's agricultural customers are dairy farms with herds of between 100 and 300 cows. In addition, there are a number of pig farmers and a biogas plant. Most of the business is completed within a 15 km radius. "It's only during the beet harvest, when we use both of our harvesters, that we operate within a 50 km radius. However, I do not think it makes sense to travel any further for other service sectors, especially as the competitive pressure is much greater," he points out.

Although, his service business has changed over the years. For example, in the past, the two mower combinations were used more frequently. "Over the past two years, farmers have earned good money from milk. As a result, some have reinvested in their own powerful mowing and rotor rake technology. We have lost some revenue as a result," the contractor points out. However, among the services offered in the forage harvesting sector, there is a real glimmer of hope at Velmans – and this is linked to the new KRONE CombiPack HDP combination baler and wrapper. "This technology has opened up a whole new market for us," explains Johannes Velmans with conviction, adding: "This takes round baling to a whole new level. Once we have used this machine for a customer, they do not want anything else. The short cut produced by the 41-blade cutting unit, with a theoretical cutting length of 27 mm combined with the baling density – is what farmers love."

The cutting quality of the KRONE Combi-Pack HDP is impressive. The 41 blades achieve a cutting length of 27 mm.

The grass silage harvest plays a key role for contractor Velmans and this is where the service provider's expertise comes into its own. Johannes Velmans believes: "When it comes to the maize harvest, you can always juggle the timing by a day or two. That does not work with grass silage. The cutting time, control of the dry matter content and optimum harvest date, all have to be right so that the end result is of a high quality." The trend among customers is towards short cuts. This applies to harvesting with both of the KRONE BiG X harvesters, that currently cut grass silage to a length of between 8 and 10 mm for most customers, as well as to the CombiPack HDP round baler. "For dairy farmers, the main concerns are compactibility, increased forage intake and better and faster mixing," adds Julia Velmans.

HDP round bales

The KRONE CombiPack HDP has been used at the Velmans site since spring 2025. In its first year, it was still flying under the radar, without any branding. "This was only added in the 2026 season." In addition, a few areas of the KRONE baler were converted to bring it up to the production standard. Last year, we were one of the first customers to be allowed to use a machine of this kind well before its launch at the Agritechnica trade fair. "It was really exciting for us to work with technology that is not yet available no the market," recalls the contractor.

And yes, the baler and above all the bales they produce, impressed Johann Velmans so much that he purchased the baler at the start of the year.

"We have received a great deal of positive feedback from our customers about CombiPack HDP round bales. One thing that stands out is how well the bale spreads out once the film is cut open," explains Johannes Velmans. It really does make a big difference whether the silage is cut with 26 or 41 blades. "As the bales practically fall apart in the mixer wagon, the mixing process takes a lot less time to produce an evenly mixed forage. This in turn saves fuel," he goes on to explain, and his daughter adds: "The animals can no longer pick and choose from the mixed feed." We see that in our own barn. The grass silage is eaten and not left on the feed trough. "That is what we like to see." There are customers who are so convinced of this that they now have all their grass silage compressed into HDP round bales.

The wrapping is always completed in eight layers, even when baling with peripheral film. "We play it safe, there is nothing worse than complaints about the film. That is why I think it is great that we can switch between peripheral film and net wrap at the touch of a button on the new baler. In extreme conditions, it can sometimes be a good idea to switch to net wrap. The driver no longer has to get out of the cab to switch. We want to avoid any downtimes," explains the contractor. However, the trend is clearly moving towards wrapping film. Customers appreciate the fact that they no longer have to separate the films and nets once the bales have been opened. Furthermore, the bales no longer spread out as much when they are transferred from the bale chamber to the wrapping table. "The film-wrapped bales are better at retaining their shape. This also means that less air penetrates the bale when it is transferred. This guarantees the highest forage quality."

Up to 25% increase in performance

Contractor Velmans compresses around 10,000 wrapped bales per year – 8,000 of which are produced mainly for dairy farms using the CombiPack HDP. The KRONE Comprima, which contractor Velmans also uses, is generally used at equestrian centres or for customers who prefer a slightly longer cut. "CombiPack HDP gives us a great deal of flexibility. Firstly, regarding the bale diameter, which can be adjusted between 100 to 165 cm. On the other hand, the baler is also excellent for baling hay and straw," explains Johannes Velmans, who is very impressed with the machine. Silage bales with a diameter of 1.3 m are usually compressed to a density of 100%. "This allows us to pack around 15% more material into a bale compared to Comprima. Overall, however, the higher throughput offered by CombiPack HDP is more important to us. A 20 to 25 per cent increase can definitely be achieved, provided the right tractor is attached to the baler," he adds. KRONE states that the minimum power output is 150 hp. Contractor Velmans usually attaches a 300 hp tractor. "That is about right if you really want a top performance using 41 blades," he explains, adding: "However, that is not the power limit – it could easily handle another 40 hp. That's an enormous amount for a round baler." If the field and swath are just right, the CombiPack HDP produces a bale every 45 seconds.

Once the film is removed, the HDP round bale practically falls apart on its own. This also means it dissolves more quickly and evenly in the mixer wagon.

As a contractor, another thing he really likes about the new baler is that it requires very little maintenance. Finally, he says: "The main drive is powered by an enclosed gearbox. Apart from a few grease nipples that need greasing every now and then, the baler itself requires no maintenance on a day-to-day basis. Everything is designed and secured in such a way that nothing can really get broken. That is what I like to see, as a service provider who counts on reliable technology to make a living. I believe the CombiPack HDP marks a milestone in the development of combination balers and wrappers." ❝

> We have received a great deal of positive feedback from our customers about CombiPack HDP round bales.
>
> **Johannes Velmans – contractor**

CONTRACTOR HENKE, WAGENFELD; GERMANY

Short and uniform

The loading and forage transport wagon is enjoying a resurgence for a variety of reasons. Its efficiency, flexibility, consistent conditioning and very short cutting lengths make it a key component of many harvesting chains, right through to the CTF process. That is why contractor Henke has invested in three ZX series short-cut loading and forage transport wagons.

The requirements for forage harvesting are changing. New farming methods, such as Controlled Traffic Farming (CTF), are also becoming established on some grassland farms. However, such methods also require a rethink of the technology used and harvesting processes. Since being founded in 1970, the agricultural contractor Henke, based in Wagenfeld-Ströhen in the district of Diepholz in Germany, has always responded to its customers' needs and has consistently invested in modern technology.

This year, contractor Henke will once again be completing the forage harvest for a customer who relies on CTF. Our staff and equipment are all set to go. The first cut is no longer a hectic rush for contractor Henke. Tight schedules are part of everyday business for this service provider. One of the challenges, if any, is unfavourable weather, which can make harvesting forage particularly difficult in the region's numerous moorland areas.

The structural shift, with its trend towards fewer but larger farms, is also reflected in the machinery used for forage harvesting by the contracting firm managed by the second generation of the family – Maren and Jörg Henke. At its peak, the contractor had up to twelve loading and forage transport wagons in operation during the forage harvest, for example. The number has now been reduced to five loading and forage transport wagons. However, in terms of performance potential, they are far superior to models from previous generations.

The contractor is prepared for all eventualities and customer requests. Jörg Henke and his 35-strong team offer customers both considerable levels of efficiency and the ability to deliver innovative agricultural services. The fleet includes, among other things, five KRONE BiG X series forage harvesters, one BiG M and the five loading and forage transport wagons mentioned above.

High-quality forage

The latter play a key role in the forage harvest for customers who manage their land using the CTF method. What has long been implemented successfully in arable farming was also adopted and implemented by the first grassland farms a few years ago. The aim is to produce a high-quality feed for dairy cows using grasses and meadow herbs. On the one hand, this should maximise milk yield from the forage and, on the other, ensure animal health by minimising feed contamination, for example. KRONE loading and forage transport wagons have not only been delivering the shortest cutting lengths and consistent forage conditioning for several years now, but also offer exceptional efficiency and flexibility. Especially when it comes to CTF, the loading and forage transport wagon is the only option.

Ideal for forage harvesting under CTF conditions – KRONE ZX series short-cut loading and forage transport wagons.

Optional feature: the 200 l silage additives tank.

For service providers who are commissioned to harvest or collect forage by applying this procedure, this means a radical new approach. When using the CTF method, all work carried out on grassland must only be carried out from existing tracks. This ensures soil compaction outside these tracks is avoided completely and promotes the growth of grasses and herbs. According to Jörg Henke, the past two years have also highlighted that implementing the CTF concept has significantly reduced the risks associated with forage contamination.

In total, the contractor has invested in three ZX series short-cut loading and forage transport wagons.

Clear tracks

To be able to work exclusively from the tracks, machinery that is designed to meet these specific requirements is necessary. On the one hand, this applies to the working width during the mowing and swathing process, on the other to forage collection. Contractor Henke has been gradually expanded the fleet of machinery to include equipment capable of meeting the requirements of this farming approach in the fields. In terms of mowing technology, these are KRONE butterfly mowers with the appropriate working width. The Swadro series rakes that are used, are also capable of meeting this requirement.

Whilst the working width is 12 m, loading and forage transport wagons are used to collect the forage. The option of using forage harvesters and transport trailers is not available with the CTF method. “Only using the designated tracks prevents loads being transferred to vehicles travelling alongside them,” explains Jörg Henke. Modern loading and forage transport wagons are perfectly suited to fill this gap in the harvesting chain.

To ensure maximum efficiency and high-quality forage, contractor Henke relies on KRONE technology. This spring, the contractor invested in three new high-performance loading and forage transport wagons from the ZX series. A key factor in deciding to invest was the OptiGrass system. “Using this technology, we can achieve a cutting length of 28 mm,” emphasises Jörg Henke. This means that the cutting length is very similar to that of a forage harvester. Most customers who book loading and forage transport wagons to collect the forage specify that the forage should be cut short. This is because the various forage components need to be mixed in the feed mixer to form a uniform basic forage. This, in turn, is important to ensure that the animals cannot pick and choose which feed components to eat and these are converted into milk yield as effectively as possible. In the past, excess lengths could be a problem, particularly at the edges of the crop flow. A problem that has been resolved thanks to the KRONE SplitCut edge-cutting system. Thanks to the side divider walls, uncut forage can no longer enter the loading space, thus preventing excess lengths. The end result is that the cow eats more forage, produces more milk and there is less forage waste that needs to be swept up.

Relying on KRONE technology: contractor Jörg Henke from Wagenfeld-Ströhen, Germany.

Innovative technology

To ensure that the harvested grass is reliably cut to a short length, KRONE has invested highly in the development of its short-cut loading and forage transport wagons. This particularly applies to the EasyFlow pick-up and OptiGrass cutting rotor. The aim was to ensure an even distribution of the crops to the blades across the entire working width whilst avoiding excess lengths. To ensure this, all of the system components must work together seamlessly. The pick-up is driven hydraulically independently of the cutting and feed rotors. This is made possible by the 2.12 m working width and the option of manual or automatic adjustment of the speed to suit the relevant conditions.

The centrepiece of the OptiGrass cutting unit is the generously sized integral rotor, which plays a key role in the performance of the loading and forage transport wagon. To ensure optimal crop flow, screw elements are fitted at both ends of the rotor. The crops are pre-compressed in the rotor’s feed pockets before finally being cut by the 54 blades. The integral rotor is driven by a KRONE PowerBelt. It ensures high driving speeds and maximum throughput. At the same time, it helps to absorb short-term load peaks, such as those caused by uneven swaths, and prevents the overload protection from being triggered. “A drive concept that plays a key role in ensuring fault-free operation,” explains Jörg Henke.

Technology and experience

The contractor considers the SpeedSharp blade grinding system, a 200-litre silage additives tank and the associated dosing system to be further key features of the new short-cut loading and forage transport wagon. “Eighty per cent of our customers now prefer to harvest forage using silage additives,” Jörg Henke continues. He also opted for the GD variant with discharge rollers for his ZX loading and forage transport wagons, which have a loading capacity of 47 m³.

However, technology alone is just one of the factors when it comes to successful forage harvesting. It must also be managed effectively, which means that experienced operators are required. This is particularly important when swathing. This process plays a crucial role in ensuring that the benefits of forage harvesting using a loading and forage transport wagon are fully realised. In any case, Jörg Henke believes that his technology ensures he is perfectly equipped for even the most demanding requirements: “We can harvest all types of high-quality silage using our technology and thus meet the diverse needs of our customers.”

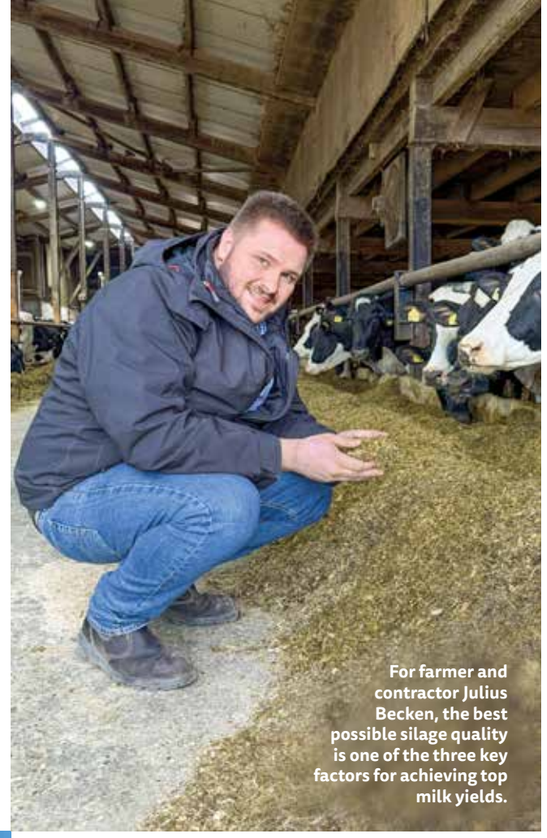
Centrepiece of the OptiGrass cutting unit: the integral rotor and SplitCut edge-cutting system ensure an even distribution in front of the blades and prevent excess lengths.

THE BECKEN FAMILY, HETTHORN, GERMANY

Milk trio

Photo: Becken-Agrar / Eike Tiedemann

The genetics, feeding and housing must be optimal to achieve an average herd yield of 14,000 kg of milk per animal per year. XtraBlatt spoke to junior manager, Julius Becken, to find out what changes the Becken family is making to achieve this.



For farmer and contractor Julius Becken, the best possible silage quality is one of the three key factors for achieving top milk yields.

The new barn almost looks like a cathedral for cows: a 286 m long sandwich roof, 180 fans to ensure the best possible barn climate, space for just under 1,200 animals, a 50-stall milking carousel and various architectural features designed to ensure the best possible comfort for the cows. It is early April when we visit the Becken family farm in the village of Hetthorn within the parish of Loxstedt, Germany. Junior manager, Julius Becken, shows us around the farm, that in addition to dairy farming, also includes a contractor and biogas plant. The existing barn, which can accommodate around 600 cows, is literally showing its age – and as he points out has now become the biggest limiting factor in achieving an optimum milk yield. "Ultimately, there are three key areas that need to be optimised: genetics, forage and feeding practices, and housing." In itself, this is not a new insight; however, it is crucial to ensure that various individual aspects are addressed. And he is convinced there is definitely still potential.

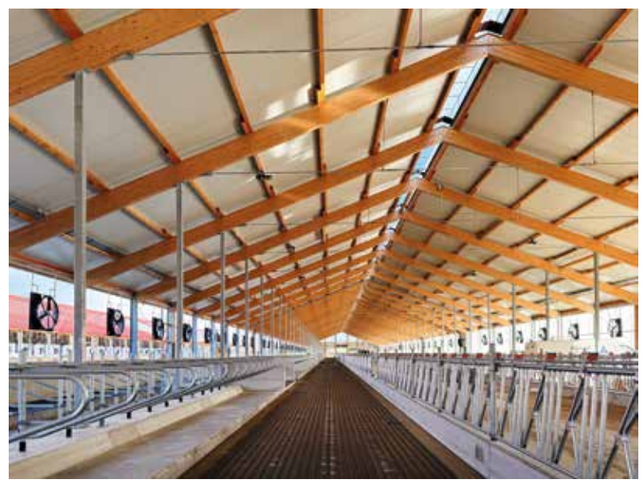
The young entrepreneur, who manages the group of companies, which includes several subsidiaries, together with his parents, Dagmar and Karl Becken, explains this using milk production as an example. The herd average at both sites currently stands at around 11,000 kg and 12,000 kg per animal per year respectively – which are not bad figures in themselves. However, the target is clear – to achieve at least 14,000 kg, and the daily peak milk yield is set to rise from the current 36 kg (at the Hetthorn site) to 48 kg in the medium-term thanks to the new barn.

> Only optimum monitoring and machine settings will ensure that the forage in the silo is ultimately of the quality we need.
>
> **Julius Becken, farmer and contractor**

"As far as the genetics are concerned, I believe we are already very well positioned with our 100% Holstein-Friesian herd, although this breed still has potential for further improvement. But we are on top of that." The farmer and contractor also considers the quality of the forage to be very good – but more on that later. The greatest potential for improvement is thus the new barn and the many small adjustments that only a trained eye would notice, and which Julius Becken explains with palpable enthusiasm during the tour.

A comfortable barn

The air flow, space, optimum layout and high levels of animal comfort are particularly important. "If a cow is to perform at its best, it needs an environment where it feels completely at ease." "Our plans focused on ensuring animals could eat forage without wasting time picking and choosing, and that they could spend as much time as possible lying down," he continues.



A cathedral for cows – during the farm visit, the two buildings for the new barn, which will accommodate just under 1,200 cows, were still under construction. Moving and settling in were planned for June.

Photo: Becken Agrar / Eike Tiedemann

Every cut of the entire grass harvest is distributed between two bunker silos designated for this purpose, using the sandwich method. This ensures that the quality of the final forage mix remains consistent.

A 1% increase in crude ash means around 0.1 megajoules less energy.

Julius Becken, farmer and contractor

As one of many examples, he highlights the design, size and positioning of the stalls. Designed as deep-bedded stalls that are longer than usual, and featuring concrete 'headrests', the cows can lie down comfortably and look at one another. Each animal has its own stall, and all of the animals can eat at the same time. A continuous rubber surface – a single rolled sheet per aisle running the entire length of the barn – ensures safety while walking and keeps hoof claws dry. The list of benefits could go on but the farmer sums it up as follows: "We believe the higher costs associated with animal welfare standards are entirely justified, because every hour the cows spend lying down is an extra hour of milk production."

Each of the five milking groups has its own selection area. There are no plans to change groups during lactation, as experience by the Becken family has shown that this can result in a drop in performance lasting up to ten days. All lactating cows are fed the same rations: grass and maize silage, rapeseed meal, maize meal and mineral feed, mixed with sodium bicarbonate and feed fat. At the moment, they are fed once a day, but in the new barn, each group will be given a smaller portion several times a day. And in future, the herd will be monitored using smaXtec sensors, which primarily record health and oestrus data. The farming family had tested various systems beforehand, but concluded that smaXtec is currently the best solution.

70% grass

As for the third success factors mentioned at the outset – the basic forage – the Beckens are already very well positioned. In total, they farm around 1,200 hectares. The young cattle are reared by an external farm based in the Altmark (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany) for the Becken family. The calves remain in Hetthorn until they are four months old and return as pregnant heifers around four weeks before calving.

Of the land along the lower section of the river Weser, around 800 hectares are contiguous plots situated around the main farm. The remaining 400 hectares are partially contiguous. The land in Hetthorn is divided equally between intensive grassland and arable land. As far as soil types are concerned, 'heterogeneous' is an accurate term. The spectrum ranges from moorland to sandy soil on the Geest, right through to 4 m thick marsh soil with moorland beneath. The grassland management and harvesting conditions and timings are correspondingly ambitious. However, even on the arable land, the possibilities are not unlimited. As such 180 hectares is positioned in the middle of the marshlands, of which 100 hectares are unsuitable for growing silage maize.

The purchase of maize to feed the dairy herd and the farm's own large biogas plant, with a capacity of around 570 KW (rated capacity), are therefore essential. As a consequence, the cow's feed has a relatively high proportion of grass of currently around 70%, while the aim is to achieve the best possible quality – highly digestible, protein-rich forage with a high proportion of stalks, at least in the first cuts. Here, too, there is a triad of key factors at play, in this case comprising pasture management and fertilisation, the timing and method of harvesting, and the actual silage process.

High, early and short

The first step involves maintaining the meadows and applying fertiliser. The aim is to complete six cuts per year, which given the annual amount of rainfall of between 700 and 1,000 mm, is usually not a problem. However, accessibility does become an issue during wetter periods due to the marshy and boggy soil. Although it is permanent grassland, the plan is to plough the land every five years and reseed it with German ryegrass and a little clover. According to Julius Becken, policy has so far allowed ploughing to take place. "This is essential for our region and to maintain dairy farming at such a high standard. Otherwise, in our experience, the crops become overmature despite regular reseeding, and the quality plummets," he says justifying the process. Fertiliser is applied after the first, second and fourth cuts using digestate from the biogas plant. The farm's slurry is currently utilised in full to generate electricity, and in future will predominantly produce methane.

When it comes to the harvest, the Becken family also has clear ideas. When it comes to cutting heights, standard recommendations are generally 7-8 cm for grass and around 25-30 cm for silage maize, however, the minimum cutting heights in Hetthorn are 10 cm and 45-50 cm respectively. "This helps us avoid unnecessary contamination of the forage and improves digestibility. I just want to harvest the high-energy grass, not the fibres at the bottom. "And a 1% increase in crude ash means around 0.1 megajoules less energy," states Julius Becken explaining his motives.

Shaker box is a must

The actual harvesting chain starts with a 10 m mower combination. This system is deliberately operated without a conditioner, as Julius Becken believes that this unnecessarily drives up costs due to higher diesel consumption and is also not necessary as the grass is mainly soft. If necessary, they implement a single cycle with the tedder. During the swathing process, he relies on fully hydraulically relieved devices with a large contact area to compensate for uneven ground. Three 16 m KRONE TC 1570 rakes are used. "They are one of the most important factors that affect feed contamination and their settings must be adjusted for every new soil type," he clarifies.

Grass is generally harvested using harvesters. Julius Becken believes that his ideas regarding cutting length and quality, as well as work efficiency, cannot be achieved in any other way. A total of five BiG X machines are used by their own contracting business. During the harvest, the boss keeps a close eye on the chop lengths, setting them to 5-8 mm for the first two cuts of grass and 8-14 mm for all subsequent cuts. For silage maize, he aims for 6-10 mm. Two 160 m bunker silos are provided for the grass silage in Hetthorn. They are filled simultaneously and in layers during each harvest, using the sandwich method. The reasoning is that this ensures the feed quality remains consistent all year round. The shaker box is an essential piece of kit during the harvest, even when harvesting grass. The quality checks are also completed by the boss. "The operators of the harvester and roller simply do not have the time to keep a close eye on this. However, only optimum monitoring and machine settings will ensure that the forage in the silo is ultimately of the quality we need," he emphasises.

Photo: Becken Agrar / Joris Burfeind

Silage maize and grass are only harvested using harvesters. A total of five BiG X 1180s are in use at their own contracting business, which mainly works for third-party clients in the region.

The aim is to have a dry matter content of between 33% and 38%, for both grass and maize.

Corn silage processing score over 80

Julius Becken currently estimates the milk yield from the forage to be around 5,500 to 6,000 kg – a respectable figure, he believes, given that grass makes up 70% of the ration. However, he thinks that in the medium term it will be necessary to increase the maize content to around 45%, as the high proportion of grass limits the starch content of the ration, despite all efforts to ensure the quality. The current figure is around 19%, while the aim is to exceed 24%. His intended objective for the forage yield is 7,000 kg, or ideally even 8,000 kg of milk per cow.

The corn conditioner is operated with all five harvesters fitted with 305 mm rollers, 150 to 175 teeth, a speed difference of 50%, and are generally set to the stop or a 1 mm gap. "It is not just conditioning the grains that matters, but also shredding plants," he explains. He is sceptical about the friction base: "I only increase my yield by 5% to 10% using a friction base, but it uses more diesel and causes additional wear. By running the corn conditioner at full capacity, I achieve maximum efficiency – and by using silage additives, I improve digestibility without increasing the amount of wear."

The benchmark for the Corn Silage Processing Score (CSPS) is over 80% and in practice, figures of up to 87% are achieved on a regular basis. Julius Becken estimates the annual average feed conversion ratio at 1.3 to 1.35 kg of milk per kilogramme of dry forage matter – a respectable figure, in his view. "But of course, there is always room for improvement." We are confident that can be achieved. And once the cows have moved into the new barn at the start of June, the intended increase in milk yield will follow quickly once they have settled in," he concludes.

Overview of the Becken Group

Location: Main farm in Hetthorn within the parish of Loxstedt, south of Cuxhaven, Germany; a second farm with 210 dairy cows is 6 km away; a young stock rearing farm in located the Altmark region (Saxony-Anhalt, Germany)

Farm area: approx. 1,200 ha, comprising 500 ha each of arable land and intensively farmed grassland, and 200 ha of organic grassland

Livestock: currently approx. 600 cows at the main site, to be increased to 1,400 following construction of the new barn (including the second site); offspring: approx. 600 animals

Staff: 15 in the livestock division, 45 across the entire Becken Group

Farm average: currently 11,000-12,000 kg with neutral ingredients; the target is 14,000 kg

The new management duo at the helm of KRONE Agriculture: as the CFO, Donna Höving will focus on financial control and the cross-departmental coordination of design, production and quality. As the CSO, Jens Moormann-Schmitz will be responsible for all market- and customer-related activities from now on.

KRONE AGRICULTURE

"We are the only system provider in the forage harvesting sector."

In the spring, KRONE Agriculture restructured its management team: Donna Höving is responsible for commercial control, whilst Jens Moormann-Schmitz is in charge of all market- and customer-related activities. What are the reasons for and objectives of the restructure? XtraBlatt went to find out.

XtraBlatt: ***1 April 2026 is the launch date for the new organisational structure. What prompted this restructure?***
Donna Höving (Chief Financial Officer, or CFO for short): As the KRONE Group, and consequently its agricultural machinery division, has continued to grow, the demands placed on collaboration and control have evolved steadily. This not only applies to our internal processes, but also to our product range. KRONE is now the only actual system provider in the forage harvesting sector worldwide. With a range of 260 models, we operate in more than 60 countries and our export share now stands at 74%. But most importantly, we offer solutions that cover the entire process from the field to the cow's stomach, going far beyond mere harvesting technology. This expertise, combined with that of our retail and service partners, is unique.

Accordingly, the structures have been, and will continue to be, adapted step-by-step to align with the growing international focus and complexity, for example. Recent years in particular have shown just how important it is to make quick decisions, have clear chains of responsibility and ensure close cross-departmental coordination. This effect has become particularly noticeable over the past six years, for example starting with supply chain issues during the COVID-19 pandemic, compounded by ongoing global upheavals such as the wars in Ukraine and Iran, and US tariff policies. With this adapted structure, we aim to once again place greater emphasis on what we refer to as the DNA of the KRONE brand – not just quality and reliability, but also being at the cutting edge in terms of flexibility and customer focus. We must admit, in all honesty, that in the past this has not always been ideal, particularly with regard to on-time delivery. This makes it all the more important for us to take the right steps to ensure we are better at meeting the needs of our customers than any other provider. The guiding principle implemented on a global scale must be: "As decentralised as possible, as centralised as necessary". To achieve this, we aim to streamline our structures, speed up decision-making and ensure we are more in touch with the market.

The export share at KRONE is 74%. As a result of the US tariff policy, other markets, such as South America, are increasingly taking centre stage.

About the person: Jens Moormann-Schmitz

Jens Moormann-Schmitz has been the Chief Sales Officer (CSO) of the KRONE Agricultural Machinery Group since April 2026 and is responsible for all market- and customer-related areas, including sales, marketing, after-sales and product management. The graduate industrial engineer has many years of experience across the entire agricultural machinery value chain. These included, among others, positions in the service and parts departments, as well as on international projects, including SAP rollouts in Europe and the USA. This was followed by management roles in the spare parts sector, as well as positions as managing director in the agricultural machinery trade sector and as a manager of commercial operations.

Reliability and approachability, as well as quality and sustainability, are deeply ingrained in the DNA of KRONE.

Jens Moormann-Schmitz, CSO at KRONE Agriculture

XtraBlatt: ***What does that actually mean – apart from you two becoming the new management duo at KRONE Agriculture?***
Jens Moormann-Schmitz (Chief Sales Officer, or CSO for short): We now report directly to the Board of Directors. The holding company has been significantly streamlined. The key point is that responsibilities have been transferred back to the sub-group – in our case, KRONE Agriculture SE, or, as we refer to it internally, to the 'green' side of the business.

XtraBlatt: ***How does this affect decision-making processes?***
Moormann-Schmitz: The big difference is the consolidation. Previously, the machinery sales department was organisationally separated from the spare parts and service division. However, this resulted in inefficiencies that are unacceptable to dealers, end customers and us. A dealer selling a machine always needs the service department as a back-up – and this process has to be seamless. By combining all of this, I can make decisions that are more customer-focused, respond more quickly and integrate our digital services more effectively. That was not the case before. Overall, I am now responsible for national and international sales, marketing, spare parts management, service and product management. At the same time, Donna Höving oversees the commercial departments, such as Controlling and Human Resources, and coordinates Purchasing, Design & Development and the production network. Jan Horstmann (Design & Development), Thomas Veismann (Production Network) and Heiner Brüning (Spare Parts and Service) will continue to contribute their operational expertise and many years of experience to the management of the company in their roles as managing directors of Maschinenfabrik KRONE GmbH & Co. KG.

As a full-range supplier in the forage harvesting sector, KRONE provides suitable solutions for all types and sizes of farms.

About the person: Donna Höving

Donna Höving has been Chief Financial Officer (CFO) of the KRONE Agricultural Machinery Group since April 2026 and is responsible for financial control as well as central administrative and cross-functional roles. She has been working for KRONE for over 20 years. Her career has taken her from a work-study programme and various roles in finance and accounting to senior management positions, most recently as Commercial Director of Maschinenfabrik Bernard KRONE and LVD Bernard KRONE GmbH. Prior to this, she headed up central financial management at KRONE Holding for many years and has extensive experience in finance, controlling and international corporate management.

XtraBlatt: ***You have both been working at KRONE for many years, albeit in different departments and roles. What initial goals have you set yourselves as a management duo?***
Höving: The challenges mentioned are complex and cannot be resolved with the proverbial 100-day plan. But we are all on the same page about the direction we should take. The first steps have been implemented and the team is doing a brilliant job.

Moormann-Schmitz: This process of change is here to stay and will not be completed on a specific date. After all, it is not about ready-made solutions, but about the ability to act flexibly. This is all the more important given that we must expect higher market volatility and an increasingly uncertain political environment, meaning that, in the long term, we need to be able to respond quickly and appropriately. And we will implement targeted countermeasures in the markets, for example.

XtraBlatt: ***Such as?***
Moormann-Schmitz: By rapidly stepping up our efforts to target and serve markets that we believe have significant potential, such as South America or India. The free trade agreements that were recently concluded between the EU and these continents provide the ideal conditions for this.

We offer solutions that cover the entire process from the field to the cow's stomach, going far beyond mere harvesting technology.

Donna Höving, CFO at KRONE Agriculture

XtraBlatt: ***Which external factors have caused the most pressure recently?***
Höving: International supply chains are a key issue – this was clearly evident during the 2008/2009 financial crisis and in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, and is currently becoming an important issue again. Added to this are geopolitical developments. Examples include the Iran conflict and the defence sector, which is driving up the cost of resources and intermediate goods and, in some cases, causing shortages. As an internationally active manufacturer, we too are integrated in global supply and procurement networks. What has stood the test of time during the crisis years is a partnership-based relationship with suppliers. We do not switch to the cheapest supplier every year. If you have a long-standing relationship with a supplier, you can always pick up the phone in times of crisis and work out a solution together.

XtraBlatt: ***In your view, what are the key areas in production that need to be addressed to improve response times?***
Höving: We are not a contract manufacturer like those in the commercial vehicle sector, where customers configure their products and accept certain lead times before delivery. Farmers and contractors prefer to receive their machines in the spring at the start of the season, rather than in September and October.

Donna Höving and Jens Moormann-Schmitz aim to streamline structures and speed up decision-making within the company, while ensuring it is more in touch with the market.

That does not work from a production point of view. We have to keep producing all year round and already start preparing for the next season in the autumn.

It is thus essential to organise our planning, control and production processes as a whole in such a way that we can reliably meet these seasonal demands. This means we need to be flexible enough to respond to changes and make adaptations at short notice. This is an issue we need to address in the short and medium term.

XtraBlatt: ***Can artificial intelligence help with this issue? Algorithm-based predictive models used for the failure probability of vehicle components could also be useful for market forecasts and production planning …***
Höving: In this respect, too, there are exciting digital solutions that we are optimising and implementing where they make sense. However, when it comes to digitalisation, we want – and must – take a holistic approach, rather than focusing solely on sales and production management. This offers enormous potential to increase efficiency, but also presents significant challenges in terms of implementation. Ultimately, the solutions must be tailor-made and offer genuine added value for both our own processes and our customers. It will not be possible – nor desirable – to fully automate these areas. After all, it is people who have a feel for the market. Especially as the direct link between our customers and our team must remain an essential part of the KRONE brand.

XtraBlatt: ***So no chatbot or ticketing system as a solution for overloaded telephone hotlines?***
Moormann-Schmitz: Certainly not, personal contact is and always will be very important to us. This does not rule out using AI as a helpful tool, for example, by recording a conversation and immediately turning it into an internal ticket, so that the technician does not have to spend a long time typing it into the system afterwards. It would take on a supporting role and not be a replacement. That is precisely the direction we are heading in – using AI as a tool, not as a substitute for personal contact.

XtraBlatt: ***Speaking of the brand: you claim to be the only genuine system provider in the forage harvesting sector worldwide. What is this statement based on? And what are the limitations of this claim?***
Moormann-Schmitz: We are now able to provide a complete harvesting solution. Mowers, rakes, loading and forage transport wagons, round balers, harvesters, transport logistics – we cover it all under one roof. We offer our customers the best possible support and advice on matters such as efficiency and cost optimisation on a scale that, I believe, no other competitor is able to achieve.

Höving: And we no longer think in terms of individual product ranges, but in terms of processes. The topic of control traffic farming is a good example: mowing, swathing, harvesting – all on a single track. That is now possible using KRONE technology.

Moormann-Schmitz: And the implications go even further. We take a holistic approach, from the start of the harvest right through to the performance data of cows, for example. Our project with smaXtec and Siloking clearly illustrates the possibilities *(Editor's note: You can read more about this collaboration in this issue from page 52. A practical example of this can be found in the feature on the Helthuis farm from page 48)*. This is still a long way off in some respects, but the general direction of thought is clear. From the blade of grass to the cow's stomach – we will go through this value chain step by step. In this respect, the term 'system provider' takes on a whole new dimension, one that many customers today can scarcely imagine. But at KRONE, the future has already arrived.

XtraBlatt: ***That sounds very enthusiastic. What aspects of digitalisation are already a reality for the majority of customers today?***
Moormann-Schmitz: mykrone.green is a platform that attracts a lot of visitors. Our aim is to develop this platform in a modular way. It is important to note that there are various modules available for different purposes, and that additional modules can be added. This includes service, spare parts, machine settings and fault diagnosis, but in future will also include scheduling or a resource planning function for contractors,

The management team at KRONE Agriculture (from left to right): Thomas Veismann (Managing Director of Production), Jan Horstmann (Managing Director of Design & Development), Donna Höving (Chief Financial Officer), Jens Moormann-Schmitz (Chief Sales Officer) and Heiner Brüning (Managing Director of Service & Spare Parts)

for example. The key to the last suggestion is our software product, AgForce, into which we have put a great deal of effort to develop it further. And we are not opposed to interfaces via Agrirouter; on the contrary: for the last 20 years, KRONE has been a major driver and strong advocate of open interfaces. This is the only way customers can take full advantage of the digitalisation of agricultural technology.

A key element will be the further expansion of our remote diagnostics and remote maintenance solutions. Problems can thus be identified at an early stage and service work will be better prepared. The aim is to ensure that the right spare part is available in advance to reduce machine downtimes and further improve reliability for dealers and end customers.

XtraBlatt: ***How do smaller farms, or even those run as a sideline, fit into this scheme?***
Moormann-Schmitz: We will continue to structure our product range in such a way that there is something for everyone and that everyone can find a way to work with us – from part-time farmers to large dairy farms and contractors. To reiterate: We are the only system provider in the forage harvesting sector for all customer segments and in every country worldwide.

XtraBlatt: ***Specialist retailers are a key part of remaining in contact with customers at KRONE – will they be able to fully embrace these developments?***
Moormann-Schmitz: Given my professional background in the specialised trade sector, I do not believe this will be an issue. We want to grow together as partners when it comes to used machinery, financing, service and in digitalisation too.

Höving: The core strengths of KRONE not only include the most innovative technology enabling farmers and contractors around the world to produce forage in the most cost-effective way. Our aim is to also provide a service concept that delights end customers – because it ensures that wherever milk is produced, the right partner is on hand: accessible, responsive, reliable and knowledgeable. We do not roll out a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach, but instead provide the best local solution – whether that be a regional specialist retailer, importer or competence centre. What matters is always the same – the success of the end customer's business.

Moormann-Schmitz: That is my personal aim as well. Reliability and approachability, as well as quality and sustainability, are deeply ingrained in the DNA of KRONE. This is precisely what must continue to be evident to the end customer throughout the entire supply chain – whether it is the office-based contact person, the service technician on the phone or the local dealer. After all, at the end of the day, every decision is driven by the same objective to establish customer trust and satisfaction. Our promise to our customers – from part-time farmers to contractors – we are your local partner who can provide the right solutions for all your needs during the demanding peak forage harvesting season. Better and faster than anyone else. ««

KRONE aims to make its planning, control and production processes even more flexible to reliably meet seasonal demands.

Germany remains in the lead, while others are catching up

Europe continues to make rapid progress in the field of biogas, particularly biomethane. Germany clearly remains one of the most important markets, but France, Italy and Denmark have caught up significantly in terms of infrastructure expansion and biomethane supply.

In the first quarter of 2025, there were 1,678 biomethane plants in Europe, 1,620 of which were in the EU-27. The European Biogas Association (EBA) surveyed 25 countries. Germany remains a major player in the market, although France, Italy and Denmark are catching up in terms of supply and the proportion of biomethane.

According to industry figures published by the German Biogas Association, there were 9,605 biogas plants in operation in Germany in 2025, of which 9,315 were on-site power generation plants and 290 were biomethane plants. Germany has assumed a unique position in Europe because its biogas plant infrastructure was implemented at an early stage and on a large scale. Germany still has the largest and most developed biogas market in Europe. At the same time, although the number of plants in Germany has remained stable for years, there has been no significant growth.

Neighbours are catching up

Compared with other European countries, France has seen the strongest growth when it comes to supply. The figures for 31 March 2025 indicate 753 supply system with a combined annual capacity of 14.292 TWh. This makes France one of the most dynamic biomethane markets in Europe.

Italy particularly stands out for its pipeline of expansion projects. The report lists 560 new approved projects and sets a policy target of 5.7 billion m³ per year by 2030. Although that is likely to be more of a strategic target.

The Netherlands and Sweden are also major production hubs. Both countries are among key European locations, where the focus in each case is shifting towards biomethane rather than conventional on-site power generation.

Denmark is the most compelling positive example because its policy objectives, funding criteria and practical implementation are all well aligned. Denmark is particularly strong when it comes to the share of biomethane – it already accounts for around 40% of gas consumption there, and in 2021, 26 PJ of biomethane, or around 7.2 TWh, was recorded. That is a remarkable feat for a small country with limited land.

Learning from neighbours

The Danish approach is particularly interesting because it does not focus on volume but on system integration. Slurry and agricultural residues play a key role, the network supply is well established, and the agricultural sector is closely involved. It is precisely this combination that makes Denmark a country which not only produces biomethane but actually uses it as part of its energy supply.

Germany could adopt three key aspects from the Danish model. Firstly, there is a need for greater predictability and a long-term policy framework to ensure that biomethane does not just remain a niche solution. Secondly, Denmark demonstrates how important it is to focus clearly on residual materials, slurry and efficient logistics. Thirdly, the country has highlighted that connection and supply to the network should not be seen as an obstacle, but as the very heart of the model. This would be particularly relevant for Germany, as the existing infrastructure is already in place. Therefore, the question is not so much whether biogas works, but rather how it can be integrated more effectively into a flexible, climate-neutral energy system in the future.

When compared directly to other European countries, Germany appears significantly larger, but also more cumbersome. The German market has developed over time and is heavily characterised by on-site power generation, making it structurally more complex than the Danish model. Denmark has been able to focus the market more specifically on biomethane, supply and gas substitution.

France and Italy also demonstrate that European competition is no longer solely about existing capacity, but about new plants, supply capacities and policy objectives. «

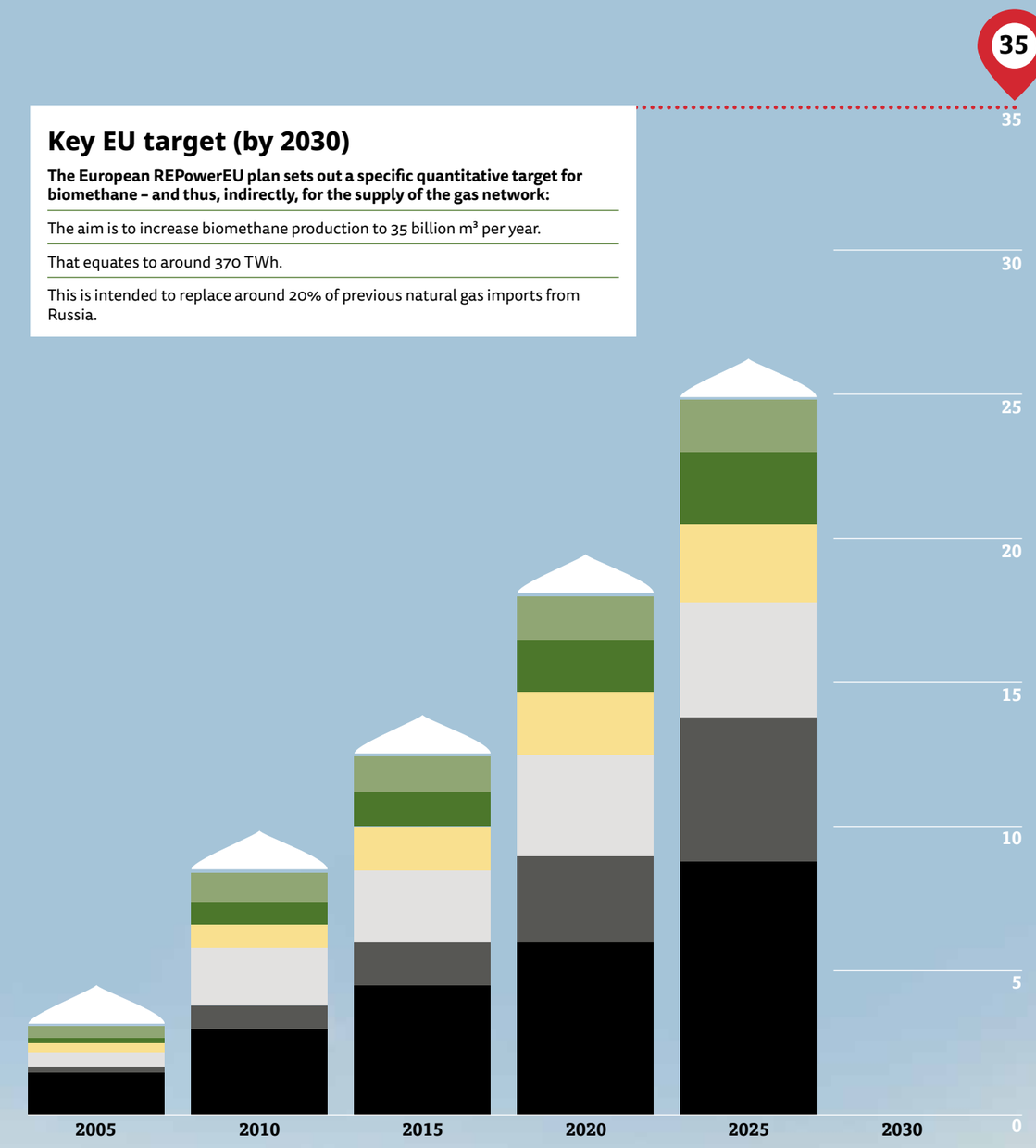
Key EU target (by 2030)

The European REPowerEU plan sets out a specific quantitative target for biomethane – and thus, indirectly, for the supply of the gas network:

The aim is to increase biomethane production to 35 billion m³ per year.

That equates to around 370 TWh.

This is intended to replace around 20% of previous natural gas imports from Russia.



Development of biogas production (in billion m³)

Year	Germany	France	Italy	Denmark	Netherlands	Sweden
2005	1.5	0.2	0.5	0.3	0.2	0.4
2010	3.0	0.8	2.0	0.8	0.8	1.0
2015	4.5	1.5	2.5	1.5	1.2	1.2
2020	6.0	3.0	3.5	2.2	1.8	1.5
2025	8.8	5.0	4.0	2.7	2.5	1.8

GRASSLAND MANAGEMENT

The main factor

Those who consistently manage their grassland not only harvest better forage – they also save on concentrated feed, improve animal health and significantly increase the profitability of the entire farm. Grassland expert Hans Koch explains which measures are the most effective.

Highly digestible, protein-rich forage is essential for cost-effective milk production and good animal health.

Farmer and grassland consultant Hans Koch usually gets straight to the point when talking about grassland management. For him, feed quality is not a secondary consideration, but the main factor that drives the profitability of a dairy farm. “If the quality of the forage is better, your cell counts will go down, among other things,” he emphasises. That may sound simple, but it has far-reaching consequences: lower cell counts mean better udder health, lower veterinary costs and a higher milk quality, which in turn leads to better prices. “Once you understand the link between grassland management and livestock performance and put it into practice consistently, you no longer see management measures as a tiresome extra chore or a burdensome cost, but as an important investment with measurable benefits,” he believes. What's more: “If the basic forage is of a higher quality, the farmer also achieves a better replacement rate for the cows.” In practice, this can reduce breeding costs per cow by several hundred euros a year – an effect that is often underestimated when accounting for farm costs, he emphasises.

Controlling grass weeds

A key focus of Hans Koch’s advice is the targeted control of grass weeds, especially rough meadow-grass. According to him, this type of grass crowds out valuable forage grasses, is significantly less digestible and noticeably reduces the energy content of the forage. The consultant explains that many farms underestimate the spread of rough meadow-grass for a long time as visually it still appears to be dense. “The problem is that from the outside, you often cannot tell how far the rough meadow-grass has already spread,” he explains. Only a detailed assessment of the current situation, ideally using a sample of fresh grass or silage, will reveal the true state of affairs.

In his view, mechanical cultivation using a harrow is the most effective way of suppressing grass weeds and opening up the crop. He advises that this measure is as old and effective as it is practical, yet is neglected in practice. The harrow removes dead plant material and promotes the tillering of valuable grasses. Hans Koch recommends using the harrow as early as possible in the spring, as soon as the ground is firm enough to support the machine. Practical experience has shown that consistent harrowing in conjunction with targeted reseeding can significantly increase the proportion of valuable forage grasses within two to three years of use.

> If farmers do not apply lime, they are throwing away nutrients they have already paid for.
>
> **Hans Koch, grassland consultant**

Photo: Hufgard

The importance of liming grassland for nutrient availability, plant growth and animal health is very often underestimated.

Limescale: a key factor

Another key element of Koch's advice is regular liming. According to him, the pH level of the soil plays a decisive role in determining how effectively plants can absorb nutrients from slurry and mineral fertilisers. He points out that depending on supply levels, light sandy soils may require liming at least every three to four years, or better still, in small quantities annually up to 300-400 kg of CaO/ha, whilst heavy clay soils require 400-600 kg of CaO/ha. In the case of soils with a severe calcium deficiency, it may also be necessary to apply a substantial initial liming treatment. "As a general rule, if farmers do not apply lime, they are throwing away nutrients they have already paid for," explains Hans Koch. The cost of liming is generally between €80 and €150 per hectare, depending on the application rate and transport distance. This is a manageable amount compared to the yield losses caused by a pH level that is too low.

Calcium not only plays a role as a pH buffer, but is also important as a direct nutrient for plant development and forage quality. The farmer adds that ensuring the feed contains sufficient calcium has a positive effect on the fertility of animals and helps prevent milk fever. For him, the interplay between soil chemistry, plant quality and animal health is a common thread that runs through the entire grassland management process.

In addition to liming, Koch recommends the targeted use of Kainit, a potassium-rich mineral fertiliser containing additional magnesium and sulphur. He believes that potassium is a key element for grassland: it regulates the plant's water consumption, influences cell stability and has a direct impact on the energy content of the forage. "Potassium is the limiting factor on many grassland areas, without farmers even realising it," explains Koch. Particularly on land with high slurry application rates (where the nitrogen/potassium ratio exceeds 1:1.2), the potassium-to-sodium ratio can become unbalanced, which impairs the absorption of magnesium by the animals and increases the risk of grass tetany.

In addition to potassium, Kainit also supplies sodium, sulphur and magnesium in a form that is readily available to grassland plants. Koch estimates the recommended application rate at 200 to 400 kg/ha based on the soil analysis, which incurs costs of around €40 to €80 per hectare. Given the benefits of better feed quality, higher digestibility and more stable animal health, he considers this investment to be economically sound.

> If you know what you are harvesting, your feed can be more effective.
>
> **Hans Koch, grassland consultant**

Measure – do not estimate

Phosphor is another nutrient that Hans Koch discusses regularly. As he points out, whilst the supply of phosphor on many grassland areas is generally assured by long-term application of slurry, its availability depends heavily on the pH level and calcium content. If the pH level is too low, phosphor is bound in the soil and is not available to the plants; the same applies to pH levels above 8 – although in practice this is almost never the case. This is yet another reason why he regards liming as the foundation of all other measures.

The consultant recommends carrying out soil analyses using electro-ultrafiltration (EUF) at least every four to six years and to consistently incorporate the results into the fertilisation plans. Farmers who apply fertiliser based on analytical data can avoid both over- and under-fertilisation and optimise fertiliser costs in a targeted manner. In practice, it has been shown that farms which carry out systematic soil analysis can reduce their fertiliser costs by 15 to 25 per cent without any loss of yield.

One area that Hans Koch considers to be of growing importance is the data-driven assessment of forage quality directly at the time of harvest. Modern harvesters can be fitted with NIR sensors that measure the dry matter content, energy density and crude protein content of the crops in real time. The grassland expert sees this as an opportunity to manage the harvest more effectively and to determine the best possible time for mowing more accurately. "If you know what you are harvesting, your feed can be more effective," he says. He also recommends taking samples of fresh grass before the first cut, to assess the actual development stage of crops and to not just base the cutting date on the calendar.

Photo: Koch

Photo: Güttler GmbH

Rough meadow-grass can become a serious problem, but it can be controlled with intensive harrowing. As in this serious case, the raked material is then swathed and removed.

Excuses do not count

Hans Koch is known for not accepting any excuses when he is providing advice. He believes the weather, time constraints and limited resources are simply circumstances, not excuses for failing to carry out maintenance work. "If you take the easy way out or fail to take a particular step, you will simply reduce your return on investment, but you cannot blame anyone else for it," he makes absolutely clear.

According to Hans Koch, however, farmers who consistently implement all these measures – harrowing, liming, targeted fertilisation and data-driven harvesting – can increase the energy content of the forage by 0.5 to 1.0 MJ of net energy for lactation per kilogramme of dry matter. That may sound like a small figure, but it has significant implications, which he illustrates with a simple calculation: "If I can reduce the concentrated feed intake by 100 g/kg of milk to 190-200 g/kg, with a herd average of 12,000 kg of milk per animal per year, this equates to a concentrated feed saving of 1,200 kg. At a price of 35 €/dt for concentrated feed, this reduces costs by €420 per cow, or €42,000 for a herd of 100 cows – simply by providing a higher quality forage," explains Hans Koch.

If we then consider other factors, such as an average of 1.4 inseminations per cow instead of 2.2 or an increase in the number of lactations from 3.0 to 3.5, for example, all because of a higher quality of forage, when assessed in financial terms this highlights the potential savings optimum forage can achieve even more clearly. But there is another factor to consider when assessing economic viability: the lower carbon footprint resulting, among other things, from the reduced consumption of concentrated feed – a factor that remains very appealing to many farmers. Some dairies are already rewarding lower CO_2 emissions per litre of milk by paying a premium on top of the standard milk price. "Of course, there are many ways to reduce this figure. However, increasing the proportion of milk yield derived from forage and thus the professional grassland management have a direct impact on this and improve the profitability of dairy farmers. I believe professional grassland management is a main factor," states Hans Koch emphasising his guiding set of principles.

Brief summary

- Better forage improves, among other things, the energy content of the feed, milk yield, udder health, the number of lactations and, consequently, profitability.
- Soil assessment, harrowing, reseeding and liming should be carried out regularly.
- Controlling grassweeds (particularly rough meadow-grass) is crucial for forage quality.
- Regular soil and forage analyses help to fine-tune fertilisation and feeding.

KRONE

THE HORSTMANN AND BORCHELT FAMILIES

Double tandem

Two families, two sisters and two farms make for a successful partnership: The Horstmann and Borchelt families both run bull fattening operations and in 2025 they invested in two new KRONE tandem-axle silage trailers at the same time. A visit to two fascinating farms.

Family photo with the new TX forage transport wagon: Lisa Horstmann (third from left) with her son Johann and father Martin (second from left), Alina Borchelt with her husband Albert (second from right) and his father Ludger Borchelt (right). On the left of the picture: Dr Josef Horstmann, former Head of Design and Development at KRONE.

The Horstmann family in Hopsten runs their farm with 200 stalls for fattening bulls and 70 hectares of land as a sideline.

Farming is a great job – but for many, it is also a calling and passion. The same applies to sisters Lisa Horstmann and Alina Borchelt (née Horstmann). Their parents' farm is based in Hopsten in the northern Tecklenburger Land – a region characterised by arable farming and animal husbandry, situated between Ibbenbüren and Lingen in Germany. The farm specialises in fattening 200 bulls and arable farming. In total, around 70 hectares of agricultural land are farmed, comprising 60 hectares of arable land and 10 hectares of permanent grassland. The latter is currently used by eight suckler cows, but is primarily used to produce grass silage from three to four cuts per year.

However, maize silage forms the main component of the feed ration. The arable land is therefore mainly used to grow silage maize, as well as winter barley and some arable grass. Winter barley is not just used to rotate the crop and provide the necessary straw for bedding, but is also considered to be relatively drought-tolerant on light soils. The soil fertility ranges from 18 to 40 points, and there is no possibility of irrigation systems.

It is all in the mix

What makes this farm special is not so much its size as the fact that it is run as a sideline. The farm is managed by Martin Horstmann and his wife, Marianne Bresch-Horstmann. They are supported by their daughter Lisa, her husband Mario and their son Johann, who will be taking over the business in the future. Lisa Horstmann first completed an apprenticeship as a farmer and then attended the Technical College for Agricultural Economics in Münster-Wolbeck, Germany, graduating with a degree in agricultural business management. She has been working in the sales department of a software company since 2017 and is currently on maternity leave. Her husband Mario also works there as the head of the development department and an authorised officer.

Up until June 2025, Martin Horstmann worked for the agricultural contractor Büscher-Seifert in Mettingen, Germany, for around 40 years. Following a serious accident at work on his own premises, he is still taking time to fully recover. However, there is still plenty to do on the farm every day: "After all, the animals do not know when it is time to finish work," he says with a smile. He has not lost his sense of humour along the way.

During the silage harvest, the tractor and forage transport wagon from the Horstmann (pictured) and Borchelt families join forces. The chopping is carried out by contractor Büscher-Seifert.

Three generations with a passion for farming (from right): Martin, Lisa and Johann Horstmann.

Good revenue – high rent

Fleckvieh bulls are fattened at the "Hof Horstmann" farm – as the lettering on the front side of the fattening barn, built in 2014, reads. The animals arrive at the farm weighing around 200 kg and are sold with an average live weight of 750 to 800 kg. With a dressing percentage of around 58% and slaughter prices at times reaching up to €7.20 per kilogramme of carcass weight in autumn 2025, a respectable operating profit was achieved, reports Martin Horstmann.

"Bull fattening has become more profitable again in recent years. At the same time, however, businesses here are under considerable cost pressure," explains Lisa Horstmann. Competition for land in the northern Münsterland region is fierce – and lease prices have risen accordingly. Against this backdrop, the family finally invested in a KRONE TX 460 D forage transport wagon last year, purchased from specialist dealer LVD KRONE. "Having a good range of our own farm machinery has always been a top priority on our farm – something my father worked hard to achieve over many years," says Lisa Horstmann.

At the same time, the business benefits from Martin Horstmann's many years of experience working for contractor Büscher-Seifert. As he is very familiar with all the machines and work processes, individual tasks such as the grain harvest, slurry spreading or the maize harvest can be organised and carried out efficiently. If it were just for our own business, it would be difficult to justify purchasing the TX. However, it particularly makes sense because of the close collaboration with Lisa's sister Alina and her husband Albert Borchelt. "During busy harvest periods, we like to lend each other a helping hand. It's obviously an advantage if every business can provide its own team," explains Lisa Horstmann.

The Borchelt farm is located in Mettingen, some 18 km east of Hopsten, and also specialises in bull fattening – although on a full-time basis. The scale of the operation is correspondingly larger: 1,150 livestock units and around 350 hectares of farmland, of which approximately 70 hectares are grassland. The Borchelt family also invested in a new TX forage transport wagon of the same design in 2025. Together with the company's existing transport technology, this means that harvest logistics can predominantly be organised in-house.

High-quality silage is particularly important to the family. The farm also relies heavily on its own resources for silo compacting: it uses two of its own roller combinations, each consisting of a tractor and wheel loader, supplemented by an additional combination provided by contractor Schwanke. "Otherwise, we would only have ourselves to blame if the compaction and feed quality are not right," says senior partner Ludger Borchelt with a smile. Albert Borchelt takes a similar view: "We chop the maize to a relatively short length of around 9 mm to 12 mm and then compact it thoroughly. This does mean additional work for the contractors involved, but the silage quality is our top priority."

Especially when it comes to feeding the animals every day, father and daughter are a well-coordinated team. Once a day, a basic forage mix consisting of approximately 70% maize and 30% grass silage, as well as concentrated feed, is provided. The grass is not stored in a bunker silo, but is preserved as round or square bales of silage. The family cites the quality of the feed as the main reason. "Grass tends to be a limiting factor for us. As there is very little permanent grassland in the region that could be leased, we have to harvest the existing forage to the highest possible standard," explains Martin Horstmann. In the family's experience, this can be achieved more cleanly and to a higher standard using bale silage.

Lisa Horstmann adds: "A relatively high dry matter content of around 40 to 45 per cent is also important to use, as the grass silage to a certain extent counterbalances the maize silage in the ration. This dry matter content can be achieved much more reliably in the bale shape than in a bunker silo." This means that there is no need to add additional straw to the ration. In addition, a bunker silo would not be very cost-effective given the relatively small quantities involved.

'Young farmer' Johann Horstmann respects, but is not afraid of large animals.

When it comes to fattening bulls, the Borchelt family relies on the Fleckvieh, Charolais, Limousin and Uckermärker breeds.

A fresh start in 2021

One thing that stands out at the Borchelt farm is that all the livestock buildings are new constructions. This is because of a terrible tragedy: in 2018, the old farm burned to the ground – a life's work built up over decades was destroyed in a matter of hours. Over the years, Ludger Borchelt and his wife Marie-Theres had built up the farm from humble beginnings – with just a few hectares of land and ten sows – to a herd of 720 breeding sows. It only gradually became clear that the future would include the construction of new buildings, further business growth and the addition of bull fattening as another line of business. The younger generation played a key role in these decisions – not only had Albert Borchelt become particularly interested in bull fattening during his apprenticeship, but his wife Alina was also already very familiar with this business sector from her parents' farm. That is why, in 2024, she also completed a farming apprenticeship at evening classes alongside her main job as an industrial clerk.

> Having a good range of our own farm machinery has always been a top priority on our farm.
>
> **Lisa Horstmann, farmer**

The new bunker silos were completed back in 2020, followed by the first four fattening barns at the end of 2021. Shortly after St Nicholas' Day that same year, the first calves, with an average age of six months, arrived at the farm. This system continues to be implemented by the family to this day. They prefer the Fleckvieh breed from southern Germany and weaning calves from the Charolais, Limousin and Uckermärker breeds from eastern Germany. »»

Following the major fire at the Borchelt farm in 2018, the business switched from sow rearing to bull fattening, and new facilities were built to accommodate 1,150 animals, a machine and straw storage building, and bunker silos.

Ludger, Alina and Albert Borchelt (from right) are delighted that, following the devastating fire in 2018, the farm has not only been rebuilt but has also been able to shift its business focus towards bull fattening.

Other key figures include a fattening period of around twelve months, a live weight of approximately 800 kg at slaughter, and a dressing percentage of around 57 to 59 per cent. The animals are exclusively marketed through Farming Method 3 schemes, including the North Rhine-Westphalia scheme 'BauernLiebe'. They also started using the fifth barn in 2024.

"The stalls are consistently occupied using the in/out system, so that the stalls can be thoroughly cleaned between animals passing through. This makes it easier to manage workloads and reduces the incidence of disease among the cattle," explains Alina Borchelt. The bulls are kept on straw. "This does result in higher energy requirements than rearing on slatted floors, which we need to take into consideration when determining the rations. We believe animal welfare and hoof claw health are significantly better as a result," explains Albert Borchelt. "Furthermore, the agricultural sector must continue to evolve and meet society's expectations regarding modern and animal-friendly farming practices."

As all the bulls are kept on straw, the Borchelt family needs around 3,700 square bales a year.

He estimates the annual straw consumption at around 3,700 square bales, or approximately 1.5 tonnes per fattening bull. We bale the straw ourselves and only store it under a roof to ensure the quality. Around half comes from our own harvest, while the rest is sourced from other suppliers. The farm also relies on purchasing silage maize. In 2025, a dedicated weighbridge was also placed into operation. On the one hand, this serves to record the performance of the bull fattening process and, on the other ensures fair deals when purchasing straw and forage. The farm's own 140 hectares of silage maize are not quite enough as the basic feed ration. Nevertheless, maize should no longer account for more than about half of the total 280 hectares of arable land – not least when considering crop rotation and the promotion of soil life. When it comes to cereal crops, the family therefore focuses primarily on wheat and rye.

> The agricultural sector must continue to evolve and meet society's expectations regarding modern and animal-friendly farming practices.
>
> **Albert Borchelt, farmer**

Lots to transport

However, logistics at the Borchelt farm do not just play an important roll during the forage harvest. In addition to maize and grass silage (80:20), the ration also consists of concentrated feed and finely chopped straw. As a result, lorries delivering feed arrive at the farm on a regular basis. Although the family did try using hay as a structural component in 2024, the concept did not prove commercially viable. The feed straw is deliberately ground to a fine consistency to achieve the most uniform mixture possible. This largely eliminates the need to arrange the animals at the feeding trough.

Recovery of the generated solid and sloped-floor manure also involves a considerable logistical effort. All of it is transported to a biomethane plant near the Rheine, which involves between six and eight loads a week. The transport is handled by haulage contractors. Any remaining fermentation residue is then spread in full across the fields around Mettingen.

Speaking of land: unlike the Horstmann farm, the land owned by the Borchelt family is divided into much smaller sections. The approximately 350 hectares of farmland are split across more than 100 individual fields. This structure poses a constant logistical challenge, especially during the maize harvest. The two TX tandem axle forage transport wagons already proved to be a great help during the 2025 harvest, reports Albert Borchelt. "Just like the Horstmann family, we too have made a conscious decision to rely heavily on our own machinery. This flexibility is very important to us in our day-to-day operations," concludes Albert Borchelt. ««

Swadro TC 1250 Pro

Swathing with even greater comfort

KRONE is expanding its range with the Swadro TC 1250 Pro, taking the compact four-rotor rake centre delivery to new levels of comfort and efficiency. Equipped with state-of-the-art on-board electronics, an ISOBUS operation device and Load Sensing hydraulics, the Pro variant offers a wide range of automatic functions to assist the driver. With a transport length of just 8.25 m, the machine remains compact and manoeuvrable, whilst the working width of 9.80 to 12.50 m ensures a high acreage output. The tried-and-tested EasyLine drive concept ensures a consistent forage flow and optimum swaths. To ensure clean forage intake, the Swadro TC 1250 Pro features hydraulic rotor relief and an automated soft-down lowering system that protects both the ground and crops. An integrated vibration damper also increases the quiet running at the headland. Automatic and assistance functions, such as the single-rotor lifting mechanism, adjustable automatic lift and optional Section Control boost efficiency, particularly on uneven terrain. The automatic lifting of the rotors during reverse travel also protects the machine and sward. It is operated via on-board electronics 2.0 with a clear display on the terminal. Conclusion: The Swadro TC 1250 Pro combines a compact design, intelligent technology and excellent operator comfort to create a high-performance solution for professional forage production operations.

Swativo T 1040 Pro

The first KRONE pickup rake

With the Swativo T 1040 Pro, KRONE is launching its first pickup rake and is specifically expanding its range to include a particularly gentle swathing system. The new machine really comes into its own when working with leafy crops, such as lucerne or clover, as it picks up and transports the crops with minimal wastage, thus significantly improving forage quality. The centrepiece of the system is the OptiSwath concept, in which all of the components are designed to work together seamlessly. The EasyFlow pick-up, with its five rows of tines, ensures a clean pick-up and adapts flexibly to the ground thanks to its split design and guide rolls. In combination with the FlexFlow feed rotor, the crops are transferred in a controlled manner onto the 1.20 m wide conveyor belt, which also handles large volumes reliably and forms even swaths. With a working width of up to 10.40 m, the Swativo T 1040 Pro achieves a high acreage output. At the same time, telescopic units and variable belt directions allow for flexible swathing from centre to side swaths. It is operated via the ISOBUS, supplemented by automatic functions. Forced steering ensures excellent manoeuvrability, whilst the simple folding mechanism for the units makes road transport easier. Conclusion: The Swativo T 1040 Pro offers gentle forage handling, versatile applications and a high level of user comfort.

SILAGE/MAIZE HARVEST

Two in one

The two-part XCollect maize header, featuring the integrated RotoChop mulching system, combines harvesting and stubble chopping in a single process. This improves field hygiene and also saves time and money.

Less time and effort required: With the RotoChop mulching system, you can achieve 50% more stubble that would otherwise be pressed into the ground when harvesting.

Shredded and chopped: the two-part RotoChop maize header improves field hygiene in a single process.

The 2025 maize harvest: a KRONE forage harvester fitted with the XCollect 750-2 RotoChop mulching attachment is ready to start at the edge of the field. Once the tractor/wagon combination is on site, the driver will start harvesting. Daniel Büter, Head of Product Marketing at KRONE and product specialist for forage harvesters and headers is standing a few metres further along. He is talking to Reinhard Wiggenhorn, a crop protection adviser at the North Rhine-Westphalia Chamber of Agriculture (LWK). "With the two-part maize header and integrated mulching system, we have created a solution for maize harvesting that combines two processes into one," explains Daniel Büter, going on to discuss stubble shredding during harvesting: "The plants are cut off to include the first joint, shredded and broken down."

Improving field hygiene

Before going into detail, the driver starts up the forage harvester and gets to work. The attachment, with a working width of 7.50 m, has been available on the market since Agritechnica 2025 trade fair. This was preceded by four to five years of development. "We have positioned the flails on the mulching system so that they shred the stubble immediately after it has been cut, without it being pressed into the ground by the tyres of the forage harvester," he continues. On the one hand, this makes it easier to prepare the soil for subsequent sowing, and, on the other, it improves field hygiene by reducing the risk of disease and pest infestation, such as the European corn borer.

Reinhard Wiggenhorn explains the life cycle of the European corn borer: "The larvae of the European corn borer (Ostrinia nubilalis) hibernate in the stubble. The moth lays some of its eggs on the underside of the maize leaves, which makes chemical control difficult. The larvae eventually burrow into the stems." However, shredding or chopping them up with the RotoChop mulcher speeds up the decomposition process and the larvae lose their winter habitats.

Effective measure

According to the crop production expert from the Chamber of Agriculture, the material is left in a state enabling soil organisms to help it decompose it quickly. The corn borer larvae are nestled deep inside the stalk – protected from frost, moisture and physical damage as long as the plant remains intact. Crushing the stalks interrupts the life cycle of the pests and reduces the population size and incidence of disease. "I believe, the maize header with integrated mulching system is a particularly effective way of improving field hygiene. The big advantage is that it can be implemented directly during the harvest and can significantly reduce the infestation rate the following year," emphasises the adviser from the Chamber of Agriculture.

He sees this in his day-to-day work: "Farms that consistently rely on mechanical stubble shredding report a noticeable reduction in corn borer infestation – without the need for additional pesticides." And compared to previous mulching systems, which are usually operated in a separate process after the harvest and are significantly less effective, the RotoChop produces particularly fine material. This means that the larvae simply have nowhere left to hide, and the infestation rate could be reduced even further.

The flails on the mulching system are positioned so that they shred the stubble immediately after it has been cut.

All of this also applies to a possible Fusarium fungi infestation. “Due to climate change, which has led to less rainfall, traditional tillage methods are being used significantly less frequently,” the crop production expert goes on to explain. “Depending on the crop rotation, if we cultivate cereal with insufficiently chopped maize stubble, a Fusarium infestation is quite likely, depending on the weather conditions.” Fusarium species also survive in the stubble material, where they form spores that become infectious again the following year. “The spores are also broken down quickly, along with the plant material,” he adds.

More stubble

Daniel Büter emphasises: “With the RotoChop mulching system, you can achieve 50% more stubble that would otherwise be pressed into the ground when harvesting.” This results in a better outcome with less time and energy required.

He sums up the benefits in terms of cost-effectiveness. “We expect the RotoChop to reduce overall costs by 10% compared to conventional methods, as it eliminates the need for a second process to cultivate the stubble.” This second process, using a tractor with a mounted mulcher, is also significantly more energy-intensive, as the mulcher has to be set lower to break up all the flattened stubble.

For contractors, this means that – depending on the region and ground conditions – they will need to charge around €40 to €50 more per hectare for integrated stubble cultivation. This means that the investment in the header pays for itself. At the same time, their customers also benefit financially, as there is no longer any need to use a mulcher after the harvest, and they add value in terms of crop management thanks to the superior performance of the RotoChop.

Well-designed technology

The individual RotoChop mulching units can be moved hydraulically from the cabin. “If the mulcher is overloaded by foreign objects, for example, the corresponding mulching units can be raised briefly and then lowered again,” explains Daniel Büter. The driver can set how far the units are lowered, or how deep the mulching should be. “We do not want to destroy the root in the ground, but as I have just mentioned, the aim is to disintegrate the stem, including the first joint, above the surface of the soil,” he adds. When using the mulcher, the forage harvester averages a higher power requirement of around 50 to 60 horsepower.

However, not every customer wants to mulch at the same time as chopping maize. “That is why we have installed a shut-off function,” explains the KRONE expert. “In just a few simple steps, the mulching system can be deactivated and raised completely using the hydraulics, so that chopping can also be completed without mulching.” This flexibility, which no other manufacturer currently offers, is particularly important for contractors who have to cater to a variety of customer requirements.

Convenient and easy to maintain

Daniel Büter continues to explain that the maize header, including all of the protective equipment, can be folded away vertically. The header therefore only has a single transport width of just 3 m. The mulching units are positioned by the intelligent folding mechanism so that their narrow sides face the driver, ensuring the driver always has a clear view even when they are folded in when travelling on the road.

The agricultural machinery manufacturer offers an optional fully integrated hydraulic transport chassis for the XCollect. This is raised hydraulically during field work and can remain attached to the header. “This means there is no need to park a transport wagon. This takes the weight off the front axle of the harvester, making it easier to obtain road approval and improving driving comfort,” emphasises Daniel Büter.

About the person

Daniel Büter is Head of Product Marketing at KRONE and a product specialist for forage harvesters and headers.

Photo: Chamber of Agriculture – North Rhine-Westphalia

RotoChop (right) eliminates the need for a second process to cultivate the stubble reducing overall costs by 10% compared to conventional methods (left).

“A fully integrated comfort front guard with lighting is also available as an optional accessory,” he points out. “This ensures you are always safe on the road, which accelerates the process of moving between plots.” Another general advantage of the XCollect is that the maize header is very easy to maintain, as large, easy-to-open covers provide excellent access. The RotoChop mulching tools can be replaced easily and conveniently whenever required.

Complete solution

According to Daniel Büter, the header is a investment in the future for farmers and contractors alike. “From an agricultural perspective, stubble cultivation during the maize harvest is becoming increasingly necessary,” he argues. And service providers can use the XCollect RotoChop to expand their range of services and create an additional business segment.

Daniel Büter and Reinhard Wiggenhorn agree that field hygiene is becoming an increasingly important issue, particularly with regard to the European corn borer and other pests. Anyone investing in field hygiene today will save on tillage and crop protection tomorrow and will safeguard their crops. ‹‹‹

Corn borer infestation

According to estimates by the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), corn borer caterpillars destroy 4% of the global maize harvest every year. That equates to the food requirements of 60 million people. According to the Bavarian State Research Centre for Agriculture (LfL), the European corn borer first appeared in southern Germany in the late 1970s and has since gradually spread north. Reinhard Wiggenhorn from the Chamber of Agriculture for North Rhine-Westphalia reports on the main areas affected by the European corn borer in North Rhine-Westphalia, specifically in the areas around Delbrück and Enningerloh. The crop expert estimates that, whilst the severity of the pest infestation is declining slightly in some areas, the number of affected areas is increasing. The extent of the infestation and the number of affected areas have increased by around 10% over the past ten years, or by 1% per year.

Photo: Wiggenhorn

About the person

Reinhard Wiggenhorn a crop protection adviser at the North Rhine-Westphalia Chamber of Agriculture.

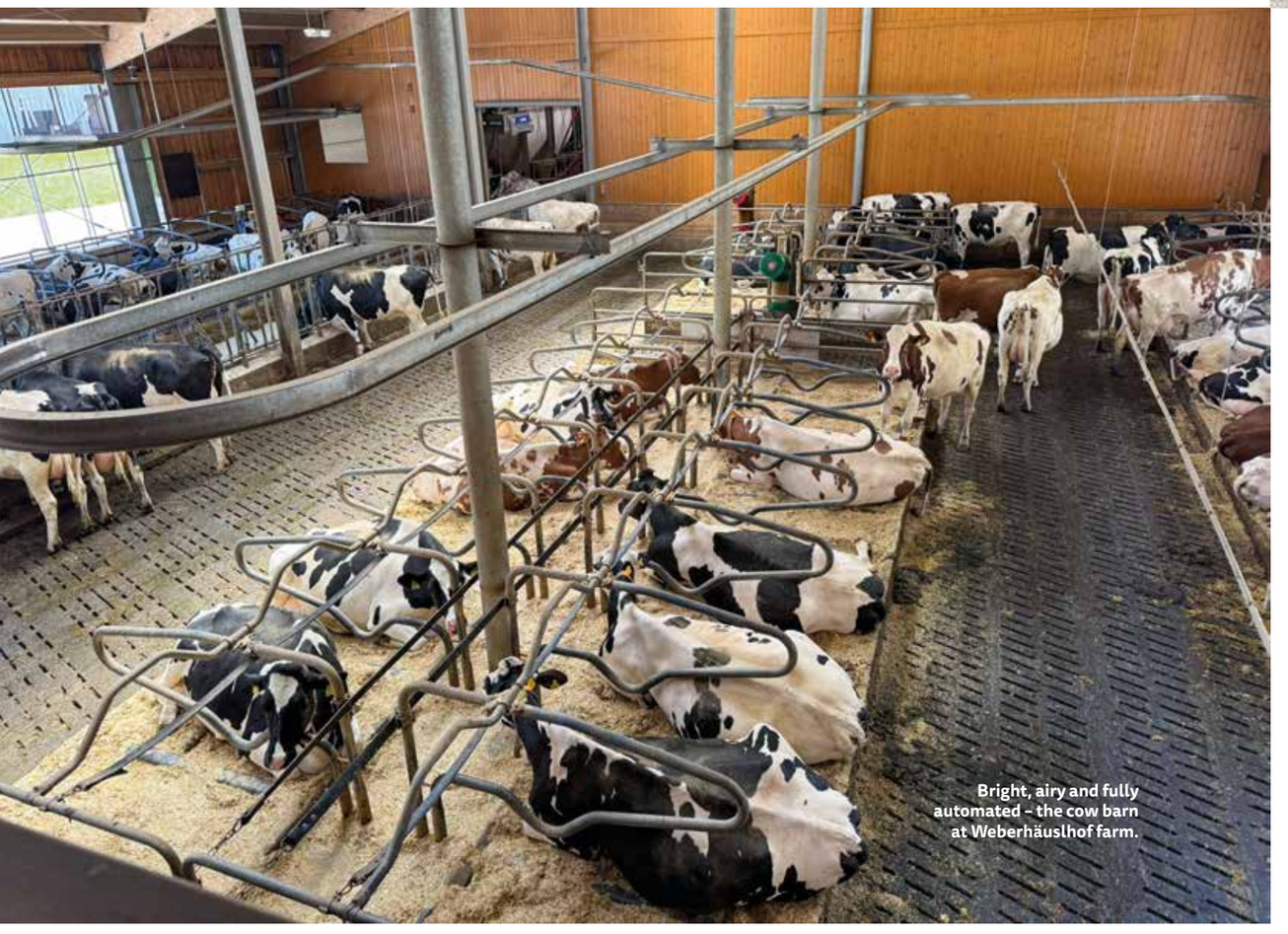
THE HETZENAUER FAMILY IN LANGKAMPFEN (AUSTRIA)

High-tech at Weberhäuslhof farm

Automated cattle feeding not only saves labour time – providing fresh forage several times a day also benefits the digestive health. The Hetzenauer family in Langkampfen, Austria, fully implements this process in their own barn. They also manufacture the technology for this in-house.

Father and son Hetzenauer from the Weberhäuslhof farm.

> The welfare of the cows is at the heart of everything we do.
>
> **Josef Hetzenauer senior**



Bright, airy and fully automated – the cow barn at Weberhäuslhof farm.

A spring day in Langkampfen, near Kufstein (Tyrol, Austria). We are standing in a modern cow barn: bright, airy, with medium-high stalls neatly lined with bedding and milking is carried out by a robot. However, it is only at second glance that we realise just how modern the barn really is. After all, the total mixed ration (TMR) is also fed automatically, there is a cattle shower, rails for the bedding robot are attached to the beams, and a manure scraper runs along the slatted floor with rubber pads. The system clearly works. The type and frame of the Holstein Frisian (HF) cows (which have a high proportion of Red Holstein) are neither too extreme, have excellent udders and are remarkably clean. Almost all the cows are lying in their stalls, chewing the cud and producing milk.

All that technology did not just appear out of nowhere. After all the barn belongs to the Hetzenauer family. Father and son – both called Josef – welcome us to the farm. Josef senior is the founder of Hetwin, a company specialising in the automation of the cattle industry. Josef junior is also involved in the business and is the person primarily responsible for the farm.

From farmers to mechanical engineers

"Our farm is the foundation of the Hetwin company," Josef Hetzenauer senior goes on to explain. "Although being a farmer has always been my dream job, based on my parents' advice I completed an apprenticeship as a mechanical engineer first, then I passed the exams to become qualified and worked for an energy supplier. When I took over the farm, 30 cows were being milked here. My parents were very innovative. As a sideline, my father processed and sold ready-to-burn beech wood from his own woodland, for example. Thirty five years ago, he was already artificially inseminating his own herd. It was then that he began to cross Red Holstein genetics into the existing Fleckvieh herd.

The machines used to harvest the forage are supplied by KRONE.

The boxes containing the feed ingredients are loaded using a wheel loader.

The performance of the herd was very high for its time. However, I found it rather cumbersome feeding the concentrated feed out of the wheelbarrow twice a day. That is why I came up with the idea of constructing a concentrated feed dispenser for tie-stall barns. This meant that the cows were automatically fed exactly the right amount of concentrated feed several times a day. Not only does this reduce the amount of work, it also makes more sense from a physiological point of view. The prototype for my own barn worked really well, so I built a second one and took it to the Rieder trade fair – one of the largest agricultural trade fairs in Austria. As there was a lot of interest at the trade fair, I decided shortly afterwards to resign from my main job."

Focus on innovation

The business was launched in 2004 in a 6×10 m machine shed on his parents' farm. "At some point, we had five employees and moved to the industrial estate," recalls Josef Hetzenauer senior. "Five years ago, we moved into a brand-new building. Hetwin now employs 50 people in its final production and development departments, and we work with many local suppliers. Our products are exported to around 20 countries. Our focus is on innovation: we introduce new technology every couple of years."

"The welfare of the cows is at the heart of everything we do," says Josef Hetzenauer senior. After all, only then are the animals able to provide the corresponding performance. At Weberhäuslhof farm, we have 60 milking cows, plus calves and dry cows. The milk yield averages a good 11,000 kg per year, with a 4.20% fat and 3.65% protein content.

Hetwin innovations:

22 years ago – concentrated feed stations and concentrated feed dispensers for tethered housing

18 years ago – the first rail-guided feeding robot

15 years ago – an autonomous feed pusher

13 years ago – a bedding robot

Ten years ago – the second generation of the feeding robot

Six years ago – the autonomous feeding robot

Extensive forage production

Across the approximately 40 hectares of agricultural land, the focus is clearly on arable forage production: around 40% of the land is cultivated with clover grass and ryegrass mixtures, whilst only 20% is used as permanent grassland. The system is supplemented by another approx. 40% of silage maize, with a regular change in the type of perennial forage used (every two to five years). The land is situated at an altitude of around 500 m above sea level in a region with high rainfall (approx. 1,400 mm per year), which means that drought stress is hardly a factor. The soil is considered to be very fertile, even though vole infestations can be a problem in the region. However, this problem can be limited by regular ploughing during forage cultivation.

Farm fertiliser forms the basic part of the fertilisation, supplemented by targeted compensatory fertilisation based on soil analyses carried out every two years. The grassland is regularly reseeded to ensure crops healthy and of a high density.

The animals are only fed on silage and roughage; no fresh forage is provided. Up to six cuts are carried out on the land each year, while the main focus is on the first three to four growth cycles. The final cut is often preserved as bale silage for the young cattle.

Harvesting chain must be right

Josef Hetzenauer pays particular attention to the harvesting chain: "Mowing should take place in dry weather whenever possible, preferably in the evening, to ensure optimum sugar content. Conditioners are deliberately not used. Tedding is carried out once or twice; in the case of field forage, it is usually completed twice, depending on the temperature and weather conditions. The aim is to leave the cut forage in the field for less than 24 hours to avoid any loss of quality. The aim of the swathing process is to generate large, uniform swaths, which significantly improves the cutting quality in the loading and forage transport wagon." Technically, the farm relies on high-performance, perfectly coordinated harvesting equipment – almost 100% of which is supplied by KRONE. "In addition to the quality of the machines, it was mainly our local dealer – Hauser Landtechnik based in Hopfgarten, Austria – that was ultimately the reason for this," explains Josef Hetzenauer. "Service and the supply of spare parts, in particular, are becoming increasingly important and are both provided by this dealer. We switched to KRONE 13 years ago, when we built the new barn. The first product was a front mounted mower. We now have a front-rear combination, a trailed tine conditioner and a side rotor rake from KRONE.

We have achieved good results by increasing the mowing frequency. To obtain more milk from the basic forage, the crude ash content must be reduced. Our new rake is also a great help for this, as its guide wheels adapt perfectly to the ground. This means that far less soil ends up in the feed."

Transporting the harvest with the loading and forage transport wagon

After a period during which the basic forage was chopped, six years ago the farm switched back to using a loading and forage transport wagon to transport the harvest. The main reasons for this include the greater flexibility regarding harvest timing and logistics, not having to rely on contractors, and the assurance that crops would be in silos on the same day. "It is our policy that the silo is covered on the same day," emphasises Josef Hetzenauer senior. A short-cut loading and forage transport wagon with a rotor and a theoretical cutting length of around 35 mm is used for this purpose. Sharp blades are particularly important: these are turned over roughly halfway through the harvesting area to ensure a consistently high cutting quality. "We also apply a biological silage additive using the loading and forage transport wagon. An even distribution and thorough compaction are very important to us. The sandwich silage method is usually used in a combination with maize silage, which is supplied by a contractor."

Regular feed analyses, carried out in collaboration with advisory bodies and scientific partners, are used as the basis to calculate the feed ration. The main component is sandwich silage, supplemented with straw, high-energy cereal mixes, protein sources (soya and rapeseed meal), minerals and water. Rapeseed oil is also added to the dry matter ration. An additional portion of concentrated feed is dispensed by the milking robot. The dairy cows are also given a lactation starter for the first 120 days of milking.

High feeding frequency

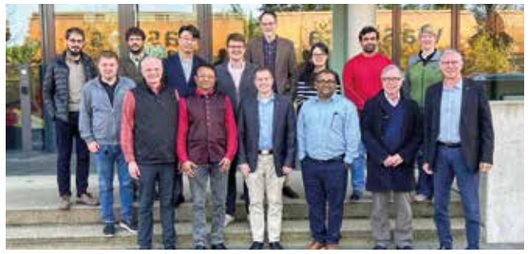
A key element is the high feeding frequency supplied by the feeding robot. The farm has a silo capacity of 1,900 m³ across three bunker silos. The individual components are stored in reservoirs, which are usually filled using a wheel loader. It is remixed six times in 24 hours – a particularly gentle process thanks to the horizontal screw cutting and mixing system – and is then dispensed. This ensures that the forage intake is uniform and significantly reduces selective feeding behaviour. Additionally, there is hardly any leftover food. The robot also regularly supplies more feed. "Of course, it is well known that frequent feeding leads to a more stable rumen environment and significantly higher milk yields," says Josef Hetzenauer senior.

This is where the robot is loaded with the individual components.

Technological advancement and automation improve animal welfare and increase productivity provided they are used correctly. In times like these, robots have the huge advantage of being powered by electricity, which can lead to energy cost savings of up to 50%. Father and son Hetzenauer are demonstrating that the systems developed by their company, Hetwin, work at the Weberhäuslhof farm. Numerous groups of visitors have already had the chance to see it for themselves on site. However, rather than spending the time saved at home on the sofa, farmers prefer to invest it in observing their animals, improving herd management and implementing further optimisation measures. ««

The feeding robot is working in the background. It supplies fresh dry matter ration six times a day.

News highlights



Science in the spotlight

CIGR Next Leaders Event: As part of their tour of Germany, the international group of scientists and lecturers visited KRONE after stopping off at Lemken. Visitors gained an insight into VTE production at the Technology Centre. Informal discussions and exchanges rounded off the visit.

Award won

The LAMMA Show is the UK's largest agricultural machinery trade fair. It took place in Birmingham in January 2026. Among other things, KRONE UK showcased the BiG Pack HDP II 1290 and the EasyCut F 320 mower. The CombiPack HDP won the Grassland Innovation Award. A strong performance backed by professional expertise.

KRONE at USCHI

KRONE North America had a large exhibition stand at the USCHI Convention in Des Moines, USA, and invited 160 customers to attend a training session on the forage harvester. Bernard Krone emphasised the importance of the US market. The event was very popular and included in-depth discussions.

Service training in India

The first service training course for tedders, rakes, round balers and large square balers in Hisar, near New Delhi, India, marks an important milestone. Twenty participants benefited from in-depth training sessions, which were a great success thanks to the excellent organisation by KRONE India.

Contractor at KRONE

Around 200 contractors gathered at the KRONE Customer Centre in Spelle for the annual general meeting of the North Rhine-Westphalia regional association. President Klaus Feistmann and Bernard Krone opened the day, which was all about dialogue, innovation and service.

Excellent

KRONE has been awarded the Red Dot Award 2026 for the design of the BiG Pack HDP II 1290 (VC). The jury commends the combination of clean design, functionality and brand identity. The design stands out for its practicality, transparency and strong focus on performance.

Collectible item for fans

The legendary KRONE MC 16 B maize chopper is a row-independent precision forage harvester designed for front or rear mounting. This highly detailed die-cast collectible model is sure to delight collectors. The scale is 1:32. The manufacturer is Marge/Vehiculous.

Training sales partners

Between August 2025 and March 2026, KRONE Product Marketing trained around 1,200 sales partners in 36 face-to-face, online and distance learning courses. The main focus: innovations from the Agritechnica trade fair, basic knowledge and digital solutions – improving their expertise, confidence in advising clients and sales success worldwide.

Restored one-off pieces

Two milestones in agricultural technology have been restored at the KRONE Museum: a Lanz agricultural engine (1917) and a Hanomag WD large plough (1919). These meticulously restored, one of a kind pieces are now fully operational again – an impressive contribution to the preservation of the technical heritage.

Anniversary

30 years of KRONE BiG M: since 1996, the world's first self-propelled mower conditioner has been synonymous with high acreage output and top-quality forage. Thanks to the continuous development and state-of-the-art technology, the BiG M remains a mainstay in forage harvesting to this day.

First place for the sixth time

KRONE has once again taken first place in the DSI 2026 Dealer Satisfaction Barometer. With a score of 17.2 out of 20, the company tops the rankings for the sixth time running. Particularly strong: top rankings in 8 out of 15 categories, including training, sales and collaboration.

Market launch

In South Australia, KRONE joined forces with Kubota Australia to unveil the new BiG Pack HDP II 1290. Training sessions and field work demonstrated the capabilities of the baler. Highlight: An impressive silhouette of the BiG Pack skilfully incorporated into the field, welcomed around 100 guests.

THE HELTHUIS FAMILY, KLAUSDORF, GERMANY

Increasing revenue, reducing costs

The Helthuis family's dairy farm is situated in a stunning location by the Baltic Sea. Further expansion is no longer possible here, although the power can be improved – thanks to sensors fitted to harvesters, feed mixers and in the rumen. The recent optimisation of the maize silage has provided excellent results.

Brent Helthuis understands the importance of high-quality basic forage.

> That last bit of starch was not as important to us as ensuring optimum digestibility.
>
> **Brent Helthuis, farmer**

A properly adjusted harvester is essential for producing high-quality maize silage.

Since early 2024, Brent Helthuis has been running a dairy farm with 500 cows and female calves in Klausdorf, Mecklenburg, Germany, together with his wife Marieluis and a team of twelve permanent staff. "Since we took over the business from my father-in-law, we have managed to significantly boost our performance," the 28-year-old told us during our visit in the spring of 2026.

Plenty of options

The figures are impressive: 43.2 kg of milk per cow per day. The current herd yield stands at 12,900 kg per cow per lactation. To achieve this, a number of adjustments have been made since the farm was taken over: milking is completed three times a day, while the resting areas and drinking water supply have been optimised. They are fed once a day, with a top-up every three hours. Since last year, the farm has been using a self-propelled feed mixer from Siloking, which is equipped with an NIR sensor ensuring that dry matter can be used as the basis of the feed. During the filling process, it measures a dry matter content of 70% of the target volume and adapts the final 30% so that the ration has the required dry matter content. "We were thus able to increase the forage intake from the basic forage by 4%," states Brent Helthuis satisfied.

At the same time, the farm has been working with smaXtec for around a year, utilising, amongst other things, a pH bolus system to continuously monitor the pH levels of the rumen – which has had a significant impact on the health of the cows. "The rate of acute mastitis has fallen by 70 to 80% since we started working with smaXtec. The number of cows in isolation boxes and the use of antibiotics have fallen accordingly," reports Brent Helthuis. "Of course, the basic feed also has an impact on this," he notes. "How the forage is chopped and its quality – in the end, is not just reflected in the performance, but also in the health of the cows and, ultimately, even in the carbon footprint."

The maize silage trial in which the Helthuis family took part in autumn 2025 demonstrated just how much of an impact the quality of the basic forage can have on the commercial success of a dairy farm. The trial is the continuation of a project undertaken by KRONE, smaXtec and Siloking (see article on page 52), which was launched last year focusing on grass silage. The objective was to further improve feed efficiency, reduce the carbon footprint of dairy farms and gain practical insights.

A perfectly adjusted harvester

Christian Holt, a product specialist at Maschinenfabrik KRONE, supervised the trial and describes the technical background: "A BiG X 860 was used – an 850 hp machine equipped with an XCollect maize header, a 36-blade drum for flexible chop lengths, and the OptiMaxx corn conditioner with a 50% speed difference as the key element for optimum conditioning of the maize kernels."

Kernel Processing Score

The Kernel Processing Score (KPS) also known as the Corn Silage Processing Score (CSPS) is a key quality parameter for modern maize silage used to feed dairy cattle. It indicates the proportion of the total kernels that pass through a 4.75 mm screen, and represents the degree of conditioning or reduction ratio of the maize kernels in the maize silage. The higher the value, the better the condition and the higher the digestibility of the starch in the rumen and digestive tract. It should be at least 70%.

The new Siloking feed mixer also uses sensors to help ensure that the desired dry matter content is achieved in the ration.

Photos: Helthuis

By optimising the dry matter content of the basic forage, basic forage intake was increased by 4%.

"We grow maize on 150 hectares of land with fairly consistent ground conditions. I believe, getting the timing of the maize harvest right is quite difficult and requires effective coordination with the service provider, which we usually manage quite well," says Brent Helthuis, but adds: "If I could – which, unfortunately, is not possible here due to space constraints – I would expand our herd to the point where having our own harvest fleet would be worthwhile." And Christian Holt adds: "No two years are the same; even during our trial, we could not harvest according to the calendar." However, the constant exchange of information about sampling and dry matter development ultimately helped us to find a very good harvest date. "However, the heterogeneity of the crops meant that only some of the area could be harvested as part of the trial." The other half was cut ten days later by the farm's regular contractor – also with the aim of achieving the same dry matter content.

> Across the entire herd, that amounts to an extra €200,000 in revenue per year.
>
> **Brent Helthuis, farmer**

High digestibility required

The aim for the maize silage was to achieve a dry matter content of 33 to 34%: "That last bit of starch was not as important to us as ensuring optimum digestibility. If necessary, I could also buy more grain maize to make up for the shortfall," states Brent Helthuis. The Kernel Processing Score, or KPS for short, is the key quality parameter in this context. The higher the value, the better the condition.

The cutting length was continuously adapted during the harvest and the flow of chopped material was constantly monitored in the silo – the cutting quality and degree of conditioning were checked in real time and adjusted where necessary. "Starting with a cutting length of between 5 mm and 8 mm, we increased this to between 7 mm and 10 mm as the day went on, to ensure the feed not only contained fine but also structural particles," reports Christian Holt. Brent Helthuis' initial scepticism about very short chop lengths has since abated. The farm also cuts grass to a length of between 4 mm and 7 mm, depending on the dry matter content. "This means the cows eat more feed, spend less time pushing it around the feeding table and make better use of it," he explains. However, even the best harvesting machine is of no use if the transport logistics and compaction management at the silo are not up to scratch. The latter is a top priority for the young farmer. "I almost always do that myself, with the help of my brother, who mainly works as the herd manager on our farm."

€1.22 more per cow per day

The laboratory results show that everything went to plan in the maize trial at the Helthuis farm: "The KPS value was between 80 and 88%, whereas last year's silage 'only' achieved around 70%. The starch content was 41%. It was remarkable that laboratory tests on the maize silage showed a maximum starch digestibility of 90% after just six weeks," summarises Brent Helthuis. The latter is noteworthy because maximum starch digestibility is normally not expected until the silage has been stored for between six to nine months. At the Helthuis farm, the reason could be the high degree of conditioning: finely grinding the grains promotes the fermentation process, as lactic acid bacteria can work more efficiently.

At the time of our visit, the farm is in the process of feeding the last few metres of the 'trial silage'. No changes were made to other feed components, which means that, in addition to the laboratory results, the actual success can also be measured – and this is particularly exciting for farmers, as it ultimately has a significant impact on profitability: The Helthuis family's herd produces 2 kg more milk per cow per day whilst also consuming less concentrated feed. According to Brent Helthuis, the income over feed cost (IOFC) is currently €1.22 more per cow per day. "Across the entire herd, that amounts to an extra €200,000 in revenue per year," he estimates. At the same time, the cost of concentrated feed fell by around 2%. "It all adds up when you consider the quantities," he adds. "In the end, it does not really matter whether I milk 100, 200, 500 or 1,000 cows. The result is always the same."

The smaXtec sensors in the rumen also confirm the improved silage quality: in February 2025, smaXtec consultant Daniela Marthold carried out a pH audit on the farm for the first time, which also involved testing faecal samples. At the time, she found significant starch residues – both in the form of grains and foam – as well as indications of changes to the intestinal epithelium, which suggested that the proportion of resistant starch was too high. After switching to the new maize silage, the tested faecal samples show almost no traces of residue. The grains have been completely ground up.

Medium-term target: 50 kg/day

The pH levels in the rumen of the high-yielding cows at the farm is currently round 6.0, which is considered normal for this performance level and can be actively managed through pH monitoring, thus also controlling methane production. A lower average pH level reduces methane production whilst increasing the amount of energy used for milk production. In other words: cow efficiency is increased whilst reducing the carbon footprint per kilogramme of milk. For the Helthuis family, this has not been a deciding factor so far, although their dairy is already paying a small bonus.

However, the young farm manager does not believe the farm has reached its full potential yet: "We are fine-tuning things, but our farm still has untapped potential." The Helthuis family would like to improve their breeding programme even further and have recently started using genomic ear tags on every female calf. After three to four weeks, these samples provide information about the animal's genetic potential. "I reckon this could see us reach a milk yield of 46 kg per day in the next few years," says Brent, adding with a wink: "Although, my goal is 50 kg per day." He is certainly capable of achieving this.

Info box: Key figures from the trial at the Helthuis farm

Total starch: 423 g/kg dry matter
On-site starch digestibility after six weeks: 90%
Kernel Processing Score: 86 to just under 90%
Chop length: 5-10 mm (continuously adapted)
Increase in milk yield: 2 kg per cow per day
Income over feed cost: +€1.22 per cow per day
Based on 500 cows: around €200,000 more per year
Use of concentrated feed: reduced
Feed costs: decreased by around 2%
Mastitis rate: down by 70–80% (since the start of the SmaXtec partnership)

OPTIMISING MILK PRODUCTION

CO_2 ↘, milk ↗

How much CO_2 is there in a kilogramme of milk – and how can this figure specifically be reduced? A joint project by KRONE, Siloking and smaXtec is investigating this question using practical tools and providing farmers with specific starting points.

Brief summary

KRONE, Siloking and smaXtec are combining harvest, feeding and animal health data into a single system designed to optimise emissions in dairy production.

The carbon footprint per kilogramme of milk is reduced due to the improved feed efficiency and early detection of health issues.

Some dairies are already offering a bonus for low emissions.

The challenge is to integrate all of the data from the manufacturers and ensure compatibility with recognised calculation methods.

Milk production is coming under increasing pressure: dairies are increasingly asking for the carbon footprint of the milk delivered, and some are already offering a premium for low emissions. At the same time, the economic efficiency of the farm remains the decisive factor. Against this backdrop, KRONE, Siloking and smaXtec have launched a joint project that combines both objectives: optimising milk production and reducing CO_2 emissions per kilogramme of milk. The three companies cover different but closely coordinated sectors of the production chain, ranging from forage harvesting and feeding technology to animal monitoring.

Data-driven control

KRONE is contributing its expertise in forage harvesting to the project. The quality of the stored silage feed not only affects the milk yield per animal, but also the methane emissions produced during digestion. High-quality, energy-dense silage with optimum fermentation parameters means that cows need to consume less feed to produce the same amount of milk – which reduces the amount of resources used, consequently, the carbon footprint per kilogramme of milk. The key contributing factors include the time of cut, the chop length, the compaction in the silo and the quality of the cover. Errors made during these stages cannot be rectified retrospectively and have an impact throughout the entire feeding period. Consistent process control should therefore already be in place from the chopping stage. Modern forage harvesters are now able to record harvest volumes, moisture content and field data in real time. This data forms the basis for a subsequent assessment of the feed quality enabling farmers to carry out a retrospective analysis if there are any performance variations in the barn.

Siloking is another partner in the consortium and is responsible for the technical aspects of the feeding technology. Feed mixers that mix precisely according to the recipe and record the actual dispensed quantities are a prerequisite for ensuring that rations are not only planned but also adhered to. Discrepancies between the target and actual rations result in suboptimal nutrient intake, increased feed consumption and, in the worst case, metabolic disorders that permanently impair the milk yield. The feeding technology supplied by Siloking records mixing and sample reports that can be integrated into higher-level management systems. This provides comprehensive documentation of the feed sample – a prerequisite to subsequently be able to calculate the feed costs per kilogramme of milk.

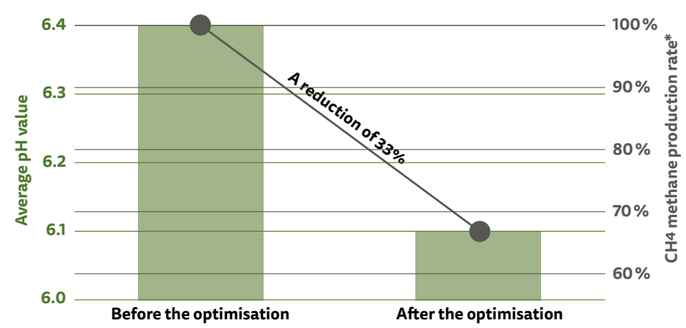
smaXtec is the third partner in the consortium and is responsible for the animal-specific part of the project. The rumen boluses continuously measure the temperature, movement and water intake. The system uses this raw data to determine the animal's health status, oestrus and the date when a calf is due. Two parameters are particularly important for the emission model – the actual milk yield per animal and the health status, which influences the amount of feed required per unit of production. Sick animals require more energy for their immune response and use less for the milk production. This worsens the feed conversion ratio and thus increases CO_2 emissions per kilogramme of milk. Early detection of diseases – particularly mastitis and metabolic disorders – makes it possible to maintain the herd's health at a level that has a direct impact on the carbon footprint.

Economic benefits

The main factor of the joint project is linking the data streams from all three sectors. Harvest data from KRONE, feeding records from Siloking and animal data from smaXtec are combined in a single model that calculates the carbon footprint per kilogramme of milk. This not only takes direct digestion emissions into account, but also considers the energy required for feed production, transport and feeding, as well as the lifespan of the animals. Only when the data set is complete can the CO_2 figure be calculated with the level of accuracy that dairies require for bonuses to be awarded.

The project shows that many of the relevant measures – better feed quality, more precise feeding, early disease detection – make economic sense regardless of the CO_2 emissions. They reduce feed costs per kilogramme of milk, cut veterinary bills and extend the productive life of animals. As a side effect, the carbon footprint of an already efficiency-focused approach on the farm, improves.

The effect of grass silage quality on feed efficiency and methane production in the total ration



*This is based on the assumption that 1 kg of milk produces 1.1 kg of CH_4 (methane). The focus is on the influence of the pH value on the methane production rate (see J. S. Van Kessel, J. B. Russell, FEMS Microbiology Ecology 20, 1996, pp. 205–210).

LANKHORST GROUP

With even more “drive”

The news that the Lankhorst Group has switched from Deutz-Fahr to CNH also caused a stir beyond the region. What does this mean for customers? XtraBlatt asked the two managing directors, Heinz Arns and Hendrik Oudehinkel, about the current situation and their future plans.

The 2026 spring exhibition at Lankhorst in Emsbüren, featuring the new brand portfolio, was the largest in the company’s 165-year history.

Lankhorst Managing Directors, Heinz Arns (right) and Hendrik Oudehinkel, believe the rebranding is a huge opportunity.

In the 165-year history of Lankhorst, a specialist agricultural machinery dealer, there has probably never been such a rush of visitors or such public interest in a spring exhibition as there was in March 2026. This was not primarily due to the fact that this traditional customer event had been cancelled in 2025 and will generally take place every two years from now on. The trigger was, in fact, the official announcement in January that Lankhorst and Lankhorst Nord were parting ways with their previous supplier, Deutz-Fahr, and would in future be relying on the Case IH, Steyr and New Holland brands for tractors and harvesters. This news certainly caused quite a stir, extending well beyond the area of activity of the Lankhorst Group, which stretches from the Ruhr region to the northern tip of East Frisia in Germany. After all, this marks the end of a highly successful partnership that spans decades.

To find out about the latest technology, the current and future product range supplied by Lankhorst, and its plans for the new brand structure – and no doubt also in the hope of snapping up a special offer or two – more than 25,000 visitors made their way to Emsbüren, Germany, on the first weekend in March. And prominent figures were also quick to take up the invitation including individuals from the ranks of national and local politics and the business community. Bernard Krone and Lankhorst Managing Directors, Heinz Arns and Hendrik Oudehinkel, hosted the opening of the exhibition, welcoming numerous senior executives from industry partners, most notably Dr. Markus Müller, the President for the Europe, Middle East, and Africa (EMEA) region at CNH.

Strategically focused

As part of the spring exhibition, an event for customers was also held in the evening, during which they gained a more detailed insight into how those in charge envisage future developments. This includes the fact that Lankhorst and Lankhorst Nord will continue to sell the Deutz-Fahr brand until the end of the contract at the start of 2027. At the same time, the official sale of products from the Case IH, New Holland and Steyr brands started at the spring exhibition. The two Lankhorst Managing Directors, Heinz Arns and Hendrik Oudehinkel, do not see this dual approach as a problem. On the contrary: “We have and will continue to supply Deutz-Fahr for the remainder of the contract term, convinced that these are very good products. This belief will not change, even following the switchover. And our multi-track approach within a product segment will continue with our partner CNH,” explains Heinz Arns. Hendrik Oudehinkel adds: “Every brand has its regular customers and its regional focus. That will not change overnight. But in future, we will be able to offer our customers even more customised solutions that are perfectly suited to their needs and preferences.”

Lankhorst considers itself to be very well positioned in terms of service. Of the 240 employees, 160 work in the workshop and spare parts department.

To be considered a fully-fledged player among leading suppliers, we must be able to provide a combine harvester.

Heinz Arns, Managing Director of Lankhorst

From a strategic perspective, this objective also reflects one of the reasons for switching brands in the tractors and harvesting technology sector: "Lankhorst and Lankhorst Nord have achieved outstanding growth in recent years, both in terms of the size of the area of responsibility and in terms of turnover. However, we felt that the combine harvester was a clear drawback. To be considered a fully-fledged player among leading suppliers, we must be able to provide a combine harvester, which Deutz-Fahr has removed from its range," explains Heinz Arns. Wheel loaders were another key part of the portfolio. In the Lankhorst region, Caterpillar has always been and remains the brand of choice, however, in the Lankhorst Nord region, a competitor is responsible for the sales and service of this brand. "That is where the New Holland wheel loaders will really come into their own," says Heinz Arns.

Multi-brand concept

From an external point of view, there is one intriguing question – how will the Lankhorst team operate in future with the KRONE and New Holland brands in the harvester sector, particularly as the Lankhorst Group is part of the E.M.S Retail holding company and thus part of the KRONE Group. However, the two managing directors do not believe this is a problem. "Every brand currently has its own loyal customer base. We will not work against this, although ultimately every customer has access to all of our brands. We take a multi-track approach, and the customer decides what suits them best. What is more important is that we do not compete against each other internally, but keep an eye on our external competitors," says Hendrik Oudehinkel with a twinkle in his eye.

Both managing directors regard the fact that virtually all previous Lankhorst partners also support the brand switchover, as a highly valuable and strategically important factor. New partners, such as Engbers Söhne, have also joined. "We were able to elevate the initial, understandable scepticism and are now working closely together. Maintaining existing customer relationships is more important to us than ever, as specialist retailers are and will remain the key to the market. Thanks to this network and, of course, our own 14 locations, we have an excellent nationwide presence and are well-positioned for efficiency," emphasises Heinz Arns.

Some market figures show that this has already been implemented successfully by Lankhorst and Lankhorst Nord. As Hendrik Oudehinkel explains, the current area of responsibility covers a total market of just over 2,000 tractors – which equates to just under 10% of the German market. According to Lankhorst, the company achieved a recent market share of around 15% with Deutz-Fahr, which was significantly higher than the national average for the brand. This brand will be used for the entire tractor range during the transition period following the brand switchover. "Of course, we could always achieve a little bit more," says Heinz Arns. "However, we will remain realistic, as there is currently a lot of uncertainty in the market, so the priority for now is to hold on to what we have achieved." In the medium term, however, the target for tractors is already set at 20% + X. "We have already had great success with KRONE large square balers and harvesters, and are now adding further products to our range – so there is certainly room for more. And, in any case, combine harvesters are an additional sector for us to explore," says Hendrik Oudehhinkel.

A premium service also includes good stock levels and fast delivery. The product range supplied by Lankhorst is now being expanded to include CNH products.

Full steam ahead in all areas

However, the Lankhorst management team are well aware that feeling well prepared is not (yet) the same as saying 'everything has already been done'. In this regard, we must pull out all the stops and really get to work to implement measures. One of these measures involves upgrading or even rebuilding individual sites to be fully operational, particularly with regard to combine harvesters. The focus will be on the branch in Thüle, near Cloppenburg, Germany, among others. It is not yet clear whether and where further sites might be appropriate in the future. According to Hendrik Oudehinkel, the primary aim is to optimise existing structures.

In addition, this will include, but not be limited to the fleet of service vehicles being expanded. And last but not least the expansion of the team. "We are delighted to have welcomed so many new faces to our team – all of whom are experts for the CNH brands and thus provide a vital pool of expertise in both the sales and service departments," emphasises Heinz Arns.

The combined workforce of both divisions currently stands at 240 people, around 160 of them work in the workshop and spare parts department. "We see premium service as the cornerstone of our success, which is why we are really stepping up our efforts with regard to the CNH brands," he adds. The first product and service training

We take a multi-track approach, and the customer decides what suits them best.

Hendrik Oudehinkel, Managing Director of Lankhorst

sessions started back in January, during which the Lankhorst team felt they had received excellent support from their new supplier. "This process is expected to continue until mid-2027. That said, we will occasionally make mistakes along the way – we therefore kindly ask our customers to be patient, just as I emphasised during the spring exhibition. Although we are doing our very best!"

EasyCut B 1250 CV Fold Collect

12.50 metres of efficiency

KRONE is expanding its range to include a mower combination featuring an integrated conditioner and active swath merging system for large-scale operations – the EasyCut B 1250 CV Fold Collect. The machine covers a variable working width of 11.40 to 12.50 m and is designed for 12-metre CTF systems. A CV conditioner with hardened V-shaped steel tines (Ø 64 cm) operates at two speed settings, while the conditioner plate is infinitely adjustable. Cross conveyor belts with a width of 910 mm can be activated individually and their speed adjusted, allowing for flexible switching between wide spreading and swathing modes. This technology enables mowing over a width of more than 24 m whilst simultaneously providing a storage surface of around 15 m. Telescopic outrigger arms and a hydraulic side shift of up to 60 cm on each side ensure the necessary overlap when used in combination with front mounted mowers. The low-maintenance EasyCut cutterbar, featuring eight cutting discs and two drums per unit, is driven from the side ensuring an even crop flow. The Fold folding mechanism reduces the transport width to less than 3 m, whilst the height remains around 4 m. Hydraulic relief, an ISOBUS operation device and optional high-cut skids round off the equipment for a variety of operating conditions in professional field work. This configuration ensures even forage placement and stable process chains, and helps to achieve consistent quality.

EasyCut R 360 Collect

Now with auger conveyor

Another new addition to the EasyCut series is the EasyCut R 360 Collect rear mounted mower with an auger conveyor. This allows the cut grass to be deposited either in swaths or spread out wide whilst mowing, thus making the harvesting process more efficient. When used on its own, the mower has a working width of 3.6 m; with a front mounted mower attached, this increases to up to 6.5 m. The storage surface can be conveniently adapted from the cabin via a hydraulically adjustable hood; partial widths are also available, for example to adjust swath widths. Technically, the Collect is based on the EasyCut R 360, which features six cutting discs and two mower drums. The full-cover cutterbar, 250-hour lubrication intervals and DuoGrip suspension ensure a clean cut and smooth operation. An impact damage protection system prevents damage. High-cut skids, a swath cloth and SmartConnect telemetry are available as optional extras. The mower is therefore designed for forage production farms and contractors. It also offers excellent transport stability, with a height of less than 4 m and a folding angle of 124°. A counterweight mount is fitted as standard, which relieves the load from the lifting unit. Additional options, such as the hydraulic mower bar relief enhance comfort and adaptability during operation, even in difficult conditions. This increases efficiency and ensures a cost-effective, high-yield forage harvest on modern farms and in a wide variety of operating conditions.

FROM THE MARKETING OFFICE

Dear readers,

A few months ago, I had the opportunity to visit farms in China. To be honest, I did not really know what to expect before the trip. My experience surprised me. The businesses we visited knew their processes inside out. Not just an estimate, but backed up by specific figures. Comprehensive data was available for many stages of the process – from the time of harvest and the use of machinery to the quality of the forage. This was a structured, data-driven approach to farming, and the consistency of it really impressed me.

> Trust remains the most important currency in the agricultural sector.
>
> **Markus Steinwendner, Head of Marketing & Communication KRONE Agriculture**

At the same time, the trip gave me food for thought. After all, the crucial question is not – who has the most data? Rather – who is making the better decisions? Data alone does not create added value. Data is only helpful if someone knows what questions to ask and what conclusions to draw from it. I believe this is actually one of the greatest challenges facing modern agriculture. The opportunities are constantly expanding. Machines provide information on throughput, quality parameters, fuel consumption and utilisation rates. In future, artificial intelligence will help to identify patterns and prepare decisions. However, the responsibility for the decision remains with the individual.

We are also noticing this trend at KRONE. We recently expanded our product range by launching our first pickup rake – the Swativo. Accessing this market sector was not a spur-of-the-moment decision. It is the result of numerous discussions with farmers, contractors and dealers from various markets. When it comes to crops such as lucerne and clover in particular, the requirements differ significantly from those of traditional grassland farms. Those who wish to maximise forage quality often need different methods and different technology. The introduction of the Swativo therefore also demonstrates how important it is to listen, identify trends and consistently incorporate customer needs into product development.

Technology is becoming increasingly important. Data is becoming increasingly valuable. Although trust remains the most important currency in the agricultural sector. That is not achieved through data sheets or technical specifications alone. This occurs when a dealer is available. When a service technician provides prompt assistance. And when a manufacturer understands the challenges its customers face on a daily basis.

That is precisely why I am already looking forward to EuroTier trade fair in Hanover, Germany. Of course, the focus there will be on innovation, technology and new solutions. For us, however, the trade fair is above all a platform for face-to-face interaction. Working with feed consultants, herd managers and the world's leading dairy farms. With people who make decisions every day and whose experiences are essential to the further development of our products and services. With that in mind, I hope that you have a good harvest!

With best regards

Head of Marketing & Communication
KRONE Agriculture

krone-agriculture.com

30 BiG M
YEARS | 1996 – 2026

1996

30 YEARS

HAPPY BIRTHDAY BiG M

30 YEARS BIG M – AN ICON OF FORAGE HARVESTING.

Since 1996, the KRONE BiG M has been setting benchmarks in professional forage harvesting. What began as a vision is now one of the most powerful self-propelled mower combinations in the world. 30 years of continuous development, high area performance and impressive productivity. Three decades of engineering excellence, hands-on experience, and a true passion for efficient harvesting processes.

Scan for more!

KRONE