



The Tractor Boys

Roland Taylor takes himself around the showrooms to see what's on offer in the world of the compact tractor

As this article was being prepared it was announced that AGCO, manufacturers of Massey Ferguson tractors, was closing its UK factory in Coventry. Sales of its tractors are to continue in this country and throughout the world. The reason given was the state of the agricultural industry, which has seen a considerable loss of sales over the last few years. It is little wonder that manufacturers have been turning their attention more and more to the turf care market. Companies, which have in the past not been very interested in this sector, are now introducing models specifically designed for it. This has led to some interesting developments as companies vie for what is a relatively small market.

From an end users point of view it is certainly worth looking carefully at what is on offer as there are some high specification packages around. Interest rates are still low so there are also some attractive financial incentives in the form of HP and leasing to be had.

With SALTEX on the horizon there is no better time than now to take a look at what is on offer. As an appetiser we have looked at the latest models and some of the stalwarts as well.



TEXTRON

Earlier this year the Iseki TK538 joined a range of models from 17hp to 66hp. This new arrival has a 38 hp diesel engine and a 16 forward and 16 reverse transmission with shuttle shift which means you can change direction from forward gear to reverse. There is a differential lock for extra traction on difficult terrain or when working in certain conditions.

The power steering has its own pump and there is a second unit dedicated to hydraulic rams, plus additional valves for the front lift and other hydraulically operated attachments. A Rear PTO is standard and there is an option of a mid-mounted one. Both are operated via a switch.

The tractor comes fitted with a ROP or there is the cab available.

For those readers looking for more power there is the 46hp TK546, with a lifting capacity of 1700kg.

JOHN DEERE

The new 4010 series is claimed to be the first in the industry to incorporate electronically controlled hydrostatic transmission. These new systems the eHydro(tm) and ePowrReverser(tm) (who thinks up these names) are only available on the 4310 (30hp) and 4410 (34hp) models.

These are a spin off from the larger agricultural tractors and they are said to provide greater productivity and easier adjustment of the tractor output to match more precisely the requirements of a specific attachment. Push button controls, more efficient diagnostic servicing and heavy-duty construction are also incorporated features.

The eHydro(tm) transmission includes eMatch(tm), a facility that enables the operator to customise the tractor's transmission response to meet the needs of the particular task being carried out. By combining the speed and load matching plus the optional cruise control, greater accuracy with less operator fatigue is said to be achieved, especially at low speeds.

The ePowrReverser(tm) transmissions provide clutchless shuttling between forward and reverse, especially useful when using a loader. Deere say this is the only true power reverser on a mid chassis tractor in the compact market.

Other features include, lateral floating 3-point linkage to follow the ground contours and fully independent PTO operation. Operator comfort has been taken into account with large uncluttered driving area and tilt steering wheel, plus all the controls are positioned within easy reach.

Tractors in the 4010 series are from 18hp to 48hp, some models offer a choice of hydrostatic transmission or gearbox.





RECO

Kioti have been building tractors since 1947. Their DK range spans from 35hp to 51hps and the power units are said to meet the strictest emission levels in the world.

All models have a mechanical gearbox with synchromesh shift and creep speed is standard. The hydrostatic power steering has its own pump and produces a maximum turning angle of 58 degrees.

The hydraulics and rear linkages have a number of features fitted as standard including, position and draft control, swinging draw bar and two double acting spools valves.

The design and layout of the driving area with its fully adjustable seat is said to keep operator fatigue to a minimum.

ROPS frames are included on all models and a luxury safety cab can be fitted to the top two models in the range.

Tractors in the Kioti DK series have a 2 year warranty with unlimited hours, parts and labour.

CHARTERHOUSE

The big difference of Antonio Carraro tractors is the facility to turn the driving position through 180 degrees so that the unit can be either used with out-front attachments, the same as a specialist built machine or, alternatively, as a conventional tractor. Another feature is a full oscillating chassis this, according to the manufacturers, makes them highly manoeuvrable with a tight turning circle. Four wheel hydrostatic drives with differentials to both axles give extra traction when required. There is plenty of choice of power within the range. The Supertrac 5400 and 8400 HTM are available with 48hp or 74hp diesel engines and the Ergit TRX/TTR offers a choice of 60, 64, 75 or 87hp.



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RENAULT

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KUBOTA

All models in Super B series are powered by the company's own E-TVCS (Three Vortex Combustion System) indirect diesel engine with a choice of 17hp, 21hp, 24hp or 27hp. This line up is said to have improved performance and easier to operate.

Main features include, integral power steering which is controlled by a micro-computer plus, Bi-speed turning, (not fitted as standard on all models) this automatically engages to give fast turning and reduce the risk of turf damage. Kubota say the hydraulic pump boosts power levels to those found on larger tractors. There is a choice of either hydrostatic or gearbox transmission depending on the model. Four-wheel drive and differential lock are standard throughout this series.

Top of the range is the M5700 designed for practicality, this tractor has no unnecessary extras to increase the cost.

AGCO LTD

The MF1200 series consists of six compacts with a horsepower range from 16.5hp to 40hp. Diesel engines are standard and there is a choice of either hydrostatic or mechanical transmission models. Depending on the specifications other features can include power steering, oil cooled disc brakes and hydraulics capable of lifting 550kg on the three-point linkage.

In the larger size, MF2200 series there are 47hp, 54 hp or 64hp diesel engines units available. Specifications include mechanical or advanced electro-hydraulic controls, plus low profile and centre of gravity models for situations where extra stability is required.

RENAULT LTD

All PALES tractors are now fitted with a Twinshift system that enables the operator to electro-hydraulically double each mechanical gear by activating two buttons on the gear lever. For travelling between sites there is now the option of a 40km/h transmission

There are a total of 24 forward and 24 reverse gears and these can be selected without loss of traction or momentum. All the controls are now colour coded and are sited to ensure they fall naturally into the hand, thus reducing operator fatigue. A dedicated hydraulic circuit for powering equipment can be fitted.

The PALES range has models from 52hp to 76hp.

NEW HOLLAND

At present this company lists a 27hp, 38hp and 45hp compact tractors, all are powered by liquid-cooled diesel engines. The small unit has a mechanical gearbox with a 9-forward and 3-reverse speeds, alternatively you can have 2 or 3 range hydrostatic transmission.

With the two larger tractors there is a choice of either hydrostatic or mechanical 24 x 24 creeper speed transmissions. Both these models have 1,486kg rear linkage lifting capacity. DualPower enables the operator to alter the power in the selected range, by flipping a switch. Another feature is SuperSteer(tm) front axle with SensiTrak.

MOTOKOV UK

Two new models of TYM tractors a 31 hp the HPT330 (hydrostatic transmission) and 70hp T700 are joining the present range of 31hp, 39hp 43hp and 55hp models. Either a 'Green' Kubota or John Deere diesel engine is fitted depending on the specification. The smaller powered units have ROP as standard and the larger ones come complete with an air conditioning cab. The company says that all models have flat floors for ease of access and operator comfort. TYM tractors come with a host of extra features as standard, plus 2 year warranty.



CLAYMORE GRASS MACHINERY

The Yanmar name has long association with compact tractors and many makes use the company's diesel engines as a power source. It is hardly surprising to find they also produce their own brand. Claymore offers four models 17hp, 20hp, 24hp and 28hp. All have hydrostatic transmission and a 2WD-4WD shift system.

SMALLHOLDER TRACTOR COMPANY

A new 37hp model the ST20040 has been recently released. Powered by a 37hp diesel, this 2-wheel driven tractor features 12 plus 12 shuttle transmission, 2-speed PTO and twin spool values. ROP and power steering are standard. Another model about to be released, is the ST2050 a 52hp model with 2- and 4-wheel drives.

There are a number of important points to take into account when considering buying a particular model

* A tractor is a relatively long-term investment, so future needs should be a consideration, plus the track record of the company who will be supplying it.

* Tractor powered equipment is continually being improved and in some cases new models require more power so again this should be taken into account as far as lifting and PTO or hydrostatic drives are concerned.

* Safety, noise, vibration and fatigue all need to be addressed.

* The prices of replacement parts vary considerably between different manufacturers.

* Check out exactly what comes with the tractor. Often the engine and drives are the same or similar. It is all those other bits and pieces, that are included in the price, that make the difference.

As said earlier, there are some value-for-money packages around so its worth delving a little deeper before deciding and SALTEX presents an ideal opportunity to start investigating.

