

XtraBlatt

On a good course

Cover story

The Albring family
The Fresh Grass Express

Wüstenberg-Landtechnik
Service with no ifs and buts

Switzerland
Organic meat with music





EDITORIAL

Dear readers,

You are holding a very special issue in your hands – the twentieth edition of XtraBlatt. This is indeed a small anniversary. Ten years ago, we launched this project with the aim of enhancing our customer communication. Since then, we have been covering high-quality contents from the Krone world, especially from the world of our customers. XtraBlatt is not collection of brochures but a magazine that – in my opinion – is indeed on par with trade publications. This was a point my father and myself made from the very beginning.

The cover topic in this issue is “On a good course”. This doesn’t refer to a fundamental change of strategy we recently might have performed at Krone. No, our general course has long been set. But the rapid changes taking place in the political sphere, in our societies and markets challenge us to prepare for future challenges in the best possible way. In this respect we are certainly in a good position.

In this context, I feel it is important to stress that our core values have not changed although the Group has grown to a considerable size. This Krone spirit is reflected by our focus on customers, our innovative strength, efficiency, commitment and a sense of togetherness as well as diligence, honesty, courage, swiftness and common sense. Compared to our competitors, we are still a medium-sized company and as such we are always available for our dealers and retail customers. This is indeed something that sets us apart from some of our major competitors. Encouragingly it’s not the big that overtake the small. It is the fast that overtake the slow and what is better overtakes what is good. This has inspired us to reorganise our company – something that has largely gone unnoticed by outsiders. Thanks to these new structures, we will belong to the faster and better in future.



Bernard Krone has been Chairman of Krone Group Supervisory Board since 2020

Incidentally, the cover story is not solely the interview with our Director of Finance, Ole Klose, but also deals with the introduction of our Speedboat. No worries, we won’t diversify to shipbuilding. But find out what’s the story behind this. And of course, as always this edition holds a varied mix of stories for you to indulge in. The outfit of XtraBlatt has been changed but the editorial content has not. Enjoy the informative read!

Bernard Krone
Yours Bernard Krone

»» The Krone “Suppliers’ Day” has been a tradition for 15 years. This is the occasion to place corporate topics such as strategic development, trends in engineering and technology and quality enhancement under the spotlight. This year, all suppliers to all companies within the Krone Group were invited to meet at Spelle.

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The Speedboat crew is a team of 30 people from all walks of the Krone organisation. Their task is to broker ideas and stimulate innovation.



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STRATEGY

Full speed ahead

Nearly unnoticed by competitors and customers, the Krone Group not only generated a rapid growth in sales which increased to more than 3 billion euros during the past few years, more than that it also underwent a major transformation process that led to the formation of new business fields. XtraBlatt talks to Financial Director Ole Klose on the Hows and the Whys.

XtraBlatt: Herr Klose, 18 months ago you were appointed to the executive board – a move that increased the number of board members to three and came in response to the rapid growth of the Krone Group. What are the responsibilities of each executive now?

Ole Klose: Chairman of the Board is David Frink who is in charge of the highly process-oriented business fields of digitalisation and investments and at the same time heads the agricultural machinery division. Stefan Binnewies takes care of strategic purchase processes and vendor management and also heads the commercial vehicles division. My job is to pool all financial activities within the Holding and in addition to that act as head of Human Resources and

all other divisions that are not agricultural machinery or commercial vehicles. Examples are the so-called retail businesses LVD Krone Agricultural Trade & Services and Lankhorst. Also in my remit falls the Krone Fleet” trailer leasing business and the “Fleet green” farming equipment leasing operation which was established only recently. And there is our “Silver Crown” subsidiary which pools our equity interests in external companies and capital investments. Last but not least, I act as a liaison officer between the operative holding company and the Bernard Krone Foundation, in the hands of which the Krone family laid their entrepreneurial activities in 2020.

XtraBlatt: Your comments suggest that the Krone family placed the entire operative business into the hands of the management.

Ole Klose: Herr Krone is Chair of the Supervisory Board and as such he is of course involved in all major decisions and measures for change. Frau Renzelmann continues to act as managing director of LVD Krone and as such hold an operative position. This said, it is correct that the operative side of the business is now entirely in the hands of non-family managers – which is a first in the history of the company. It was primarily the rapid growth of the group that made such a move necessary, because it called for change and process-driven structures that would meet the needs of a large group.

XtraBlatt: Isn't there a certain risk that this organisational change may tempt Krone to move away from its traditional focus on customers? After all, customer proximity has been part and parcel of the Krone brand and its success.

Ole Klose: No way will this happen! The reorganisation will definitely not affect our undivided attention to customer satisfaction. This may indeed be a challenge, but we are working hard on keeping up and even enhancing the values that make up the Krone brand – quality, innovative strength, reliability and commitment, availability, flexibility and fast decision making processes.



» Profile

Ole Klose joined the Bernard Krone Holding SE & Co. KG in October 2019. After serving on the management board, he was appointed to the executive board as Chief Financial Officer (CFO) and head of Human Resources in April 2022. Together with CEO David Frink and COO Stefan Binnewies, Ole Klose forms the steering committee of the Krone Group. Before he joined the Krone Holding, he held various leading positions in the banking sector. For the last 16 years, he was in charge of key accounts, corporate finance and shareholding management at the private bank Lampe. Ole Klose is 56 years old, married and has two children.

XtraBlatt: On the theme of enhancement, Krone has invested heavily in the past few years. Currently it is building a new parts centre in Spelle and a new factory in Ibbenbüren. These activities have been flanked by the acquisition of various companies, such as Gigant and Knapen, and by investing into start-up companies, for example. What is the strategic plan behind these activities? Expand the portfolio or increase the added value?

Ole Klose: This is an interesting question that touches upon many and complex topics and therefore it is not an easy one to answer. Let's start with the manufacturing side. The factory at Spelle is the only factory in the group that produces agricultural equipment and as such, it has long reached the brink of exhaustion. Everyone has been going out of their way, mustering up an incredible strength and offering an enormous flexibility so the division can meet all challenges. Yet, it's high time to defuse this nearly explosive situation and come up with a sweeping solution. After all, we can see a very great potential for growth in the agricultural machinery markets. However, at present we don't have the capacities to unlock this potential. One of the sweeping solutions mentioned is the new parts centre with a state-of-the-art stock keeping system. After we will have moved to the new warehouse, we can expand the agricultural machinery factory to the existing warehouse in 2024. »

Agricultural dealerships have always had a pivotal function between Krone and its agricultural customers.

Ole Klose, Krone Holding Chief Financial Officer



The new facility in Ibbenbüren, too, forms part of these sweeping plans. The agricultural machinery division was weighing the following options: either move its labour intensive assembly lines to another country and spend the generated added value there or invest in its domestic facilities. We opted for the latter and the Ibbenbüren factory. This factory will operate at a level of automation that is yet unprecedented in this industry. Choosing a greenfield site, we were able to design the factory to our needs. Its IT infrastructure will be absolutely innovative. I'd like to call it state-of-the-art. A three-million investment, the project presents a major milestone in terms of financial commitment and also in the history of the company. One production hall has been completed; further halls will follow. These projects provide us with a competitive factory, help us generate added value und keep it within the group.

XtraBlatt: Will the new factory focus on manufacturing components for the Spelle factory or will it also produce machinery itself?

Ole Klose: The Ibbenbüren factory's foremost activity will be the manufacturing of components and assemblies for the Spelle factory. Yet, in the mid or long term it will expand its activities to producing also those less complex machines (mowers, tedders or rakes) in efficient and highly automated processes and to high-quality standards.

XtraBlatt: The purchase of axle specialist Gigant a few years ago was also driven by the motive to retain more added value in the Krone Group. Is that correct?

Ole Klose: That's not 100 percent correct. Strategically, Gigant belongs to our Blue World, the Commercial Vehicles. From all assemblies on a truck trailer, the axles are the most complex ones. This means they offer the greatest potential to generate added value. In this respect, your assumption is correct. Nevertheless, it not our main motive. In fact, our main motive was to exploit the fact that axles are the key assemblies on a trailer for implementing the innovative features that will be necessary to meet tomorrow's requirements and challenges: electrification of road infrastructure, automation or shortage of drivers, digitalisation and CO₂ reduction.

In this context, we should also mention Trailer Dynamics, an innovative company in which Krone is involved through its Silver Crown venture capital division. The company is developing an electric drive axle which is linked to a sensor-specced kingpin and as such will help us implement "smart" features for semi trailers. CO₂ reduction is currently a very hot topic also for Krone, because the EU regulations don't apply only to trucks but also to commercial trailers. Commercial trailers now have a large battery in addition to the drive unit. The battery powers a telematics system, for example – which in turn allows us to develop exciting solutions for our customers in the logistics industry. Digital and electronic services like these are much more prominent in the commercial trailer industry than in the farm machinery industry today – although we can see such a trend in farming, too.

XtraBlatt: What do you mean specifically?

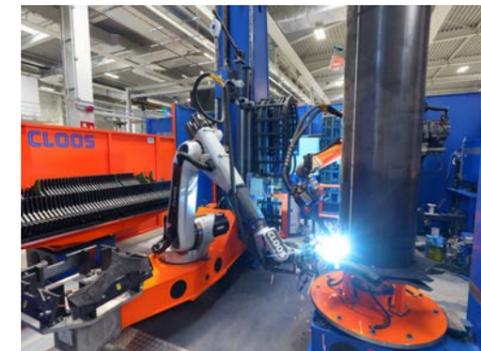
Ole Klose: The keywords here are again automation and digitalisation. After all, farmers, contractors and farm machinery dealers are all struggling with a growing shortage of labour. Dealerships will take huge strides to keep up their traditional level of service to which farmers and contractors have become used and to meet ever more complex challenges. All this requires the industry to explore uncharted territory.

XtraBlatt: Will that translate into the use of AI technology that forecasts the probability of component failure?

Ole Klose: This is certainly one of a number of options. Yet one question remains. How will a shrinking number of dealerships – employing fewer apprentices who are less willing to meet the challenges in farming and technology – keep up the high-quality service farmers and contractors depend on? This situation will require solutions that are nearly inconceivable today. Currently we can't see yet which of the available options, such as Augmented Reality or service centres of com-



Krone is building a new factory on an 18.5ha plot of land in eastern Germany. A three-digit million investment, the new facility near the town of Ibbenbüren will manufacture components for the existing Krone factories. The facility will take up operation in various stages. The first hall is already up and running. Further halls will follow.



petence, are the most useful and applicable ones. A mix of various options may be appropriate as a short- or mid-term solution. These include preventive maintenance and service contracts that help smooth out demand in peak periods as well as the use of digital tools and the provision of competence centres that serve larger sales areas.

XtraBlatt: Yet the service business will stay in the hands of the dealerships. Is that correct? After all, we can see different yet successful solutions in today's utility vehicle industry ...

Ole Klose: Yes, the service business will stay in the hands of dealers. And to be very clear here – dealerships continue to be the key interfaces between Krone and our agricultural customers. We all have to sit down and come up with further solutions for a reliable and long-term strategy for the used machinery business, for example. Here, different solutions may apply in different regions and yet I am convinced we will manage.

XtraBlatt: Let me ask a rather provocative question: Is the selling of machines still the way forward in farming or will we rather see

pay-per-use solutions where customers don't purchase a machine but its use?

Ole Klose: The utility vehicle industry is more advanced in this respect than the agricultural industry. Pay per use will become an option in farming, too, albeit on a smaller scale. Introducing the "Krone Fleet Green" project in Germany and Denmark only recently, we launched our first trial project where a small number of machines is leased rather than sold. By comparison, Krone Fleet operates in the international commercial vehicle market and is currently running a leased trailer fleet in the five-digit range. ▶

The farm machinery markets are sending very clear signals of growth.

Ole Klose, Krone Holding Chief Financial Officer

Yet, compared with commercial trailers, farm machines are more difficult to assess in terms of value development and hours clocked – which doesn't make the math easier. However, digitalisation and data collection will help us get there. This said, we must bear in mind that the leasing business requires enormous financial backing, which is anything but petty cash. And these costs must show on the bill – and customers must be willing to pay them with the lease. It all comes down to TCO – Total Costs of Ownership of a machine. More and more contractors and farmers are thinking down that line as they compare costs holistically and realistically. This trend could be accelerated by the current interest rates.

XtraBlatt: *Speaking of new thinking and new solutions for the future – what is your opinion on grassland farmers paying contractors not by the number of hectares or bales but also by the level of forage quality or nutrients in the feed? After all, the technology is available today ...*

Ole Klose: An intriguing idea, indeed. Yet, it's not just a matter of technology ...

XtraBlatt: *But of what ...?*

Ole Klose: ... a new quality of collaboration between farmers and contractors. Should contractors at all agree to such a billing scheme, they would probably also ask to have full control of the harvesting process, which means the entire grassland management would be in their hands – something which I find hard to imagine – at least for the German speaking countries. And even if they had full control, they couldn't control the weather as the single most important parameter.



By introducing the electric axle and a sensor-specced kingpin from Trailer Dynamics, the Krone logistics division has made great advances towards reducing the carbon footprint of commercial trailers. The innovation offers exciting potential for further digital and electronic innovations that will add value to existing products – a growing trend that is also observed in the farm machinery industry.

Also, there is the issue of calibrating the weighing systems and NIR sensors that are integrated in the machines and also the issue of acceptance by national legislators. Yet, you are right – this is a very exciting idea. If customers wish this, it will be feasible I think.

This takes us to your first question, the question of strategy. Digitalisation offers huge opportunities but also huge challenges, especially for medium-sized companies like Krone. Thanks to our experiences in the utility vehicle sector and thanks to the transformation of our group and the formation of the new Silver Crown division (see the following article), we are now in the position to set the right course. To keep in the trope – the telegraph is set to “Full speed ahead”.



Ole Klose leads the group together with Chief Executive Officer David Frink (middle) and Chief Operations Officer Stefan Binnewies (COO).

TREND SCOUTING

Speedboat on course for success

A strategic task for Krone is scouting the markets for trends and challenges we will be facing not tomorrow but only after tomorrow and develop suitable solutions as early as today. XtraBlatt talks to senior members of the new “Silver Crown” business unit to get an idea of what it is all about.



Krone wishes to partner up with innovative companies whose business activities go beyond the actual field of engineering.

Johannes Hennewig,
Executive Director of Silver Crown

We invest not only in technology but also in people.

Guido Ringling,
Executive Director
of Silver Crown



The Speedboat crew is a team of 30 people from all walks of the Krone organisation. Their task is to broker ideas and stimulate innovation.

Where will the markets evolve in the next ten or 15 years? What will be the trends in mechanical engineering in the world after tomorrow? Which disruptive trends could pose a long-term threat to our business? Any company – also an agricultural machinery manufacturer like Krone – is facing these issues. Since no company possesses the proverbial crystal ball, they have to send out scouts who scan the markets to spot the latest trends and innovations. These scouts are usually grouped into specific departments or teams.

“Such teams often operate as so-called Think Tanks or Innovation Labs. At Krone, they are grouped into our “Speedboat” unit. A speedboat is small, agile and fast. It dashes off to fish fresh ideas and broker them to the mother ship, detect promising partners for Krone and test them for matching up”, explains Johannes Hennewig. Together with Jochen Mählmann and Guido Ringling, he leads the independent business unit “Silver Crown”.

How ideas evolve into projects

Are three people enough to do all the scouting that is necessary to keep a company the size of Krone ahead of the pack? Guido Ringling chuckles: “In fact, there are many more people on board the Speedboat, figuratively speaking. In fact, as many as 30 highly committed people throughout the Krone Group are on the lookout to identify processes of change in the industry, develop solutions and stimulate innovation.”

He also points out that these 30 people aren't full-time scouts but hold regular positions in the organisation. This applies also for the three Silver Crown leaders: Guido Ringling, for example, is in charge of strategy at the agricultural machinery division; Jochen Mählmann used to be in charge of strategy at commercial vehicles. Today, he is man-

aging director at one of the start-up companies. His successor at commercial vehicles is Anna-Lena Jerzembeck. In his accounting position at the start-up company, Johannes Hennewig is in charge of shareholding management.

“Recruiting the Speedboat crew from across the company holds a number of advantages. The first is that we get two strategists and one accountant. The second is that these represent both business fields – farming and commercial trailers. After all, the Speedboat does more than just dash off and collect ideas and incentives. In fact, the Speedboat team also assess the ideas and together with representatives from the various businesses develop them into results – just like prototypes are developed into production machines,” says Johannes Hennewig.

A partnership of equals

The projects scouted cover a large range of different activities. In fact, it is not the idea of merely finding and engaging into start-up companies. “This is of course one option,” says Johannes Hennewig and continues: “But an equally useful option is to forge a cooperation. By the way, that applies also to established companies – not just start-ups,” tells Johannes Hennewig. His colleague Guido Ringling adds: “This is the greatest difference between our activities and those of a typical venture capitalist who invests in any type of business with the aim of a specific return on investment. Krone's main interest is to gain access to advanced technology or a strategic head start that will advance our own business or that of our customers. These aspects are at the centre of our interests as investors. As such we deal with our partners on an equal footing, because we don't invest in technology but people.”

One example of a very successful project of the commercial vehicles division is “Trailer Dynam-

ics”. This start-up company developed an electric drive axle and a kingpin that is fitted with a sensor. This kingpin serves as the interface between the truck and the semi trailer. “The sensor allows the kingpin to interact with the e-axle for reducing the fuel consumption of the truck by at least 20%. This innovation is a small revolution in the transport industry and marks a major milestone in our efforts to reduce our carbon footprint,” tells a notably enthusiastic Guido Ringling.

This example shows how an external achievement can be perfectly integrated into the Krone Group: “Trailer Dynamics continues to operate as an independent company. Our part is to provide the funding in order to take a homologated project to market. We also offer the start-up company access to the European markets in exchange of a breakthrough innovation,” explains Johannes the partnership, adding: “The example also highlights another task of Silver Crown, which is synchronising the various operations and the pace of operation at a large family-run company with the pace of a start-up company.”

More than “mere” technology

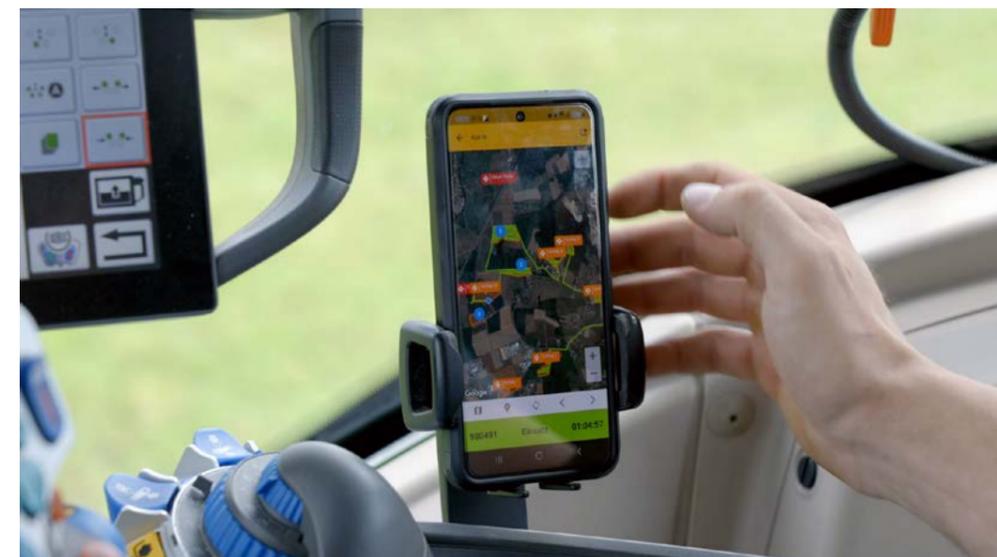
The crew on the Krone Speedboat not only sets course for technical innovations but also for more remote business activities. One example is AgForce, a software firm that developed the AgForce management software for contracting companies which use it as a main module for their digitalisation and process optimisation plans. Another Krone commitment is the Scalehouse fund which provides financial backing to start-up companies. The fund groups a number of companies from north-western Germany, representing various sectors. Headquartered in Osnabrück, Scalehouse has its own funding structures and



Johannes Hennewig (l.) and Guido Ringling are two of three directors at Silver Crown.

invests in exciting start-up companies in the agri-tech and food-tech markets as well as in digital business processes.

AgForce and Scalehouse are examples of the digitalisation processes in the agricultural industry. Guido Ringling: “Ultimately we seek a holistic approach to the topics of agriculture and nutrition, as we analyse emerging trends and, of course, employ them to derive strategies for the companies involved. It is especially the greater area of Osnabrück and the neighbouring regions that seem to be evolving into a stronghold of innovative and ambitious firms and an agricultural network of excellence in the digital age. Krone is a major player in this world.”



One example is our share in AgForce, a software firm that developed the AgForce management software for contracting companies which use it as a major module for their digitalisation and process optimisations.

Time to rethink

Climate change presents new challenges for hay and silage producers. Yet grassland expert Heinz-Günter Gerighausen believes that these can be overcome – provided farmers prepare their grassland for “drought stress” and manage it with the same level of care they give to their arable crops. An appeal for a rethink.



When it comes to professional grassland management, the necessary components are all there – we just have to use them correctly and consistently.

Grassland expert
Heinz-Günter Gerighausen

Although winter 2022/2023 brought significant rainfall to large parts of Germany, the deficits of previous years in the deeper soil layers are still far from replenished. Some regions such as the Allgäu highlands in southern Germany recorded yet another pronounced winter drought. Looking back over several years, it is clear that on average upland areas that typically expect to receive up to 1,200mm of rainfall a year are already having to cope with about half of the formerly available water resources. Yet in these very areas, permanent grassland is one of the dominant farming operations and livelihoods. So, in the long term, will permanent grassland continue to provide a reliable basis for the production of high-quality forage – the bedrock of high-performance dairy farming? Or – and this is a provocative question – will we be left only with extensive grazing of suckler cows, sheep and goats? Indeed, is the EU’s recent extensification programme perhaps the best solution?

Grassland care pays off

Heinz-Günter Gerighausen believes that the sometimes high losses in forage production due to drought already constitute a drastic form of extensification. As consultant to the North Rhine Westphalia Chamber of Agriculture and lecturer at their agricultural training and research institute Haus Riswick, he has devoted decades to optimising grassland management and forage production. The 70-year-old is also a leading authority in the agricultural machinery industry, where his

immense experience is highly sought-after when it comes to testing forage harvesting equipment. However, when asked about the fundamental changes required in grassland management, he stresses: “There really is no magic formula that is applicable to every region. What really matters – now more than ever – is to develop specific strategies for specific situations. I would like to provide some suggestions and new ways of thinking. But ultimately, every farmer has to develop their own particular solutions for overcoming the challenges – and be willing to try new approaches.”

His first suggestion for changing grassland management is fundamental. In Heinz-Günter Gerighausen’s view, we need to approach grassland with a different mindset and stop treating it like a poor relation, as land which is there anyway and no use for anything else, whose yields we somehow have to use. “Why do farmers pull out all the stops when it comes to managing their arable land, but neglect even the most basic aspects of grassland care whose effects have been proven through decades of testing?” he asks in his direct, pragmatic style, before adding: “Well-managed grassland can be just as productive as arable land and the effort you put in pays for itself several times over in the form of yields plus quality.” ➤



Regular inspections to assess the crop and weed population is the basis of professional grassland management.



Grassland expert Heinz-Günter Gerighausen: "What really matters - now more than ever - is to develop specific strategies for specific situations."

» In brief

Good grassland management (classification and appraisal of soil, sward management, overseeding) is more important than ever

Adapt the grass species to the changing climate conditions and grow more legumes

Select site-specific overseeding mixes

Use NIR sensors to measure nutrient and DM levels to determine the optimum harvest time

He cites regular harrowing and overseeding as one of these many stops. "Not to mention regular soil sampling and liming, although this is one of the simplest and most effective means of optimising forage yields. Yet many farmers believe even this is too expensive," – he can't resist a little dig. Regular inspection of the land is also an important option. Heinz-Günter Gerighausen is convinced that this is the only way to detect changes in the sward and take appropriate measures.

"During the dry summer of 2022, farmers in some regions such as the Sauerland and Eifel uplands and the Lower Rhine – whose fields had come to resemble a steppe – managed only a meagre second cut and had to forego the third cut entirely; and yet it was clear that some grass species had withstood these extreme conditions better than others. So even on permanent grassland, it makes sense to adapt the species composition by regular overseeding and to seek out site-specific mixes which suit the soil type and amount of water available. And when purchasing seed mixes, we must take care to buy batches of seed that are sourced from dry regions."

The value of legumes

He also underlines the importance of making greater use of leguminous plants when modifying the species composition of permanent grassland – not only for the benefit of diversity and insects, but to maintain performance by fixing nitrogen. "On this basis, the limitation of N rates to 170kg/ha under the Fertiliser Ordinance doesn't necessarily pose constraints on high grassland yields," he argues, adding: "Furthermore, by tapping into water in deeper soil layers, the deep-rooted legumes provide a greater degree of yield security."

The grassland expert then raises another important aspect: increasing the humus levels. The richer the soil in humus, the more vigorous the crop growth. What's more, he maintains, well-managed grassland that is rich in humus has a significant capacity for carbon sequestration and can help combat climate change. "Reducing the carbon footprint has become a major societal concern – and agriculture has a crucial role to play. This cannot be emphasised strongly enough."

In this context, he considers the application of organic fertiliser helpful – although not so much in the form of solid manure. It makes more sense, he says, to run it through the digester first and then apply it in pumpable form. Well-homogenised digestate can be applied effectively – ideally by trailing shoes or injectors – and in such a way that the nutrients normally end up where they are needed. At this point Heinz-Günter Gerighausen

corrects a misunderstanding: long-term trials have shown that grass crops can make very effective and early use of "winter slurry" – applied from February – and that contrary to popular opinion, the losses are very manageable.

Controlled traffic

The grassland expert takes a dim view of cultivation and a total reseed, because this involves loss of humus. A much better approach is to plan the overseeding carefully in order to give it the best chance of success. This is more than just harrowing once in spring, scattering a bit of seed and hoping for the best. "This was and still is a common method. Time and again I hear farmers complain that they haven't achieved the success they hoped for. Which is hardly surprising, since the increasingly severe dry spells in spring and summer quite simply prevent successful germination and growth. The answer is not only to choose a different species, but to adapt management methods as well. Depending on the weather, overseeding in late summer or early autumn generally produces better results," explains Heinz-Günter Gerighausen.

In his view, another problem that should not be underestimated is soil compaction that is mainly caused by heavy machinery travelling on wet ground. Heavy harvesters, too, may affect the pore volume in certain conditions. "Although the consequences on grassland may not be as immediately obvious as on arable land – they do exist." He knows this from experience and countless studies. Using a subsoiler to break up compacted ground makes no sense in grassland. Instead, it simply increases the risk of fine soil particles ingressing in the pores, hence increasing compaction down the line.

Instead, Heinz-Günter Gerighausen is in favour of "controlled traffic farming" (CTF). "This may sound utopian, but thanks to RTK and GPS it is now entirely feasible and we should not underestimate its positive effect," he argues. This said, it is however important to operate the entire fleet on the same working width, which in turn suggests that it is more profitable to put fertilising, cutting and harvesting entirely in the hands of a contractor. "That would also make it easier to coordinate cutting and harvesting operations. After all, all too often grass is ensiled at excessive DM contents – especially if the farmer cuts the grass themselves and then calls the contractor for harvesting." The grassland expert is keen to stress that here too, farmers need to adopt new ways of thinking.

NIRS is a must

On the theme of contractor, Herr Gerighausen mentions another technical aspect which he

regards as the way forward: the use of near infrared spectroscopy, i.e. of NIR sensors on forage harvesters for determining the nutrients in the crop. "This technology allows us to determine the accurate nutrient levels in the forage. This way, livestock farmers will know the quality of the base ration at the time of clamping." Dry matter (DM) measurements are equally important, since these help to determine the optimum time for harvesting. These challenges will increase as rough estimates are no longer enough as we replace traditional grass species by new species and as cut crops dry faster in hot weather.

"In my view, there is no better method than the NIR analysis for capturing the status quo and responding accordingly. The fact that contractors apply a modest markup for using NIR technology is entirely okay and also necessary: after all, these extra costs are absolutely manageable and nothing compared with the substantial benefits for the farmer. When it comes to professional grassland management, the necessary "stops" are all there – all we have to do is to use them correctly and consistently," Heinz-Günter Gerighausen concludes.



NIR sensors accurately measure nutrient and DM levels, allowing farmers to determine the optimum time of harvest.

Unless we start growing different grass species, we must anticipate diminishing yields as spring and summer drought increases.



A move away from slats to straw

Although the trend for bedding bulls on straw is supported by policy-makers you wouldn't expect to find it in the German district of Steinfurt in northern North Rhine-Westphalia. Here the Lambrecht-Speller family rear Bavarian Simmentals. We visited them to find out more.

On the northern tip of the Westphalian region known as Tecklenburger Land lies the hamlet of Hopsten, where the Lambrecht-Speller family have farmed for generations. "In the 1960s we were the first family in the region to acquire a combine harvester. Soon, more and more farmers and contractors followed suit, which is why we gave up contracting," explains Heiner Lambrecht-Speller, who runs the farm with his son Alexander and an apprentice. Prior to 2014, there were up to 1,000 finishing pigs on the farm.

"Yet, due to the many restrictions that have been imposed on pig farming since that time, this business is no longer profitable for us. At the time, we also had a beef finishing unit which we expanded to provide 800 finishing places, making this our core business," says Heiner Lambrecht-Speller. In the interests of animal welfare, the family now use open-sided housing and has moved from the typical slatted floors to straw bedding. "Soft bedding is already a legal requirement for calves under six months old. So we upgraded the entire operation to conform to husbandry level 3 (the highest welfare standard)," explains Heiner Lambrecht-Speller. "Our stalls are open but protected from the wind," adds his son.

Simmentals from Bavaria

The old pig shed has been given a new lease of life by converting it into a well-ventilated calf shed. This can accommodate 110 six- to eight-week-old calves per cycle. "The Simmental is our preferred choice. This dual-purpose breed is very popular in Bavaria. The bull calves are collected from various dairy farms and delivered to us by truck," says Heiner Lambrecht-Speller. He and his son chose this beef breed because they are gentle and easy to manage. "Typical beef finishing farms buy in cattle

at the age of six months from beef cattle or suckler cow farmers. This of course means that the interim rearing costs are passed on to them, which is something we avoid with our system. Furthermore, these animals are available only at certain times of the year, whereas we get regular deliveries of Simmental calves every ten weeks," explains Alexander Lambrecht-Speller.

Obviously, the calves don't get finishing feed right from the start. "Each calf is fitted with a transponder which allows them to drink milk from our automatic feeder. By monitoring their intake digitally, we can spot a sick calf immediately, for example if it's drinking very slowly or not taking the full amount. This monitoring process is very important when you're dealing with calves from up to 75 different farms. It takes about three weeks for their immune system to adjust," explains Alexander Lambrecht-Speller. And it takes around one week for the calves to get used to the automatic feeder. Ground straw, concentrate and later, silage maize, are gradually introduced to ensure that the calves also grow into healthy ruminants. At the same time, the amount of milk is reduced. At around ten to twelve weeks, the animals are completely weaned and switched to a total mixed ration (TMR). This consists of rearing feed, grass silage, maize silage, straw, brewer's grains and grain maize. Husbandry level 3 prohibits the use of soya as the feed must be 100% GM-free. The finishing period begins at the age of six months and is divided into three stages: early, mid and late finishing. During this period the feeding regime switches to maize silage, grass silage, brewer's grains, rapeseed meal, grain maize and – depending on availability – pressed sugar beet pulp, in varying amounts according to the respective stage. >



» The farm

The **Lambrecht-Speller Farm** dates back to around 1650. At that time, three men – named after their occupations – were commissioned to survey and map land in Breischen, an area in North Rhine Westphalia near the border with Lower Saxony. Der Dräger, der Speller und der Teecken wurden mit dieser Aufgabe vertraut. The Speller's task was to operate the surveying instrument, which was called a Spiel – hence the name Speller. In payment for their work, the three men were each given a plot of land in Breischen, where the farms are situated. The farm has gone by the name of Spellerhof ever since, and the name Speller has passed down the generations as a suffix to the family name.



The biogas plant is an effective means of utilising the manure.

Heinrich Lambrecht-Speller

Harvesting and machinery

Most of the forage is produced in-house, with only brewer's grains, rapeseed meal and pressed sugar beet pulp bought in. "On our 120ha farm we have 14ha of grassland and the rest is arable. The soil index score of our land ranges from 18 to 34," tells Alexander Lambrecht-Speller. The land is managed in partnership with the neighbouring farm. "We do all the work ourselves except the harvesting, because we can hire the professional-level machinery," he explains. So, they hire a contractor for harvesting, who mainly uses Krone machines. According to the farmers, the BiG X 630 forage harvester is the cornerstone – it is its high chopping quality that is largely responsible for the



The old pig shed was converted into a calf shed

A self-propelled feed mixer is used to ensure that the feed meets the animals' requirements. The bulls are sold to an abattoir at 18 months with a live weight of approx. 800kg. The slaughter weight is at least half the live weight.

high feed conversion rates and hence the farm's success.

"We currently use a Comprima V180 XC and have already tested a VariPack Plus. This produces an enormous bale weight, which makes the machine an intriguing proposition for us, because we do a lot of bale transportation and handling," says Alexander. The straw harvest is particularly important for the farm as they need around 2,000 bales per year, which equates to around five bales per day. A trailed straw blower spreads fresh straw in the cattle's resting area every day.

How the manure is used

The pens are mucked out once a week. "We use a "sloping floor" system here that originated in southern Germany. The resting areas inside the sheds have a slope of 5%; over time the cattle trample down the manure and litter, working it with their feet down to the manure passage. We collect it and take it to a digester," explains Heiner Lambrecht-Speller, who also happens to be director of a local community biogas plant. "The biogas plant is an effective way of utilising the manure. This still contains plenty of energy because the cattle don't digest the feed to 100%," he adds. The digestate is then recovered and spread onto their fields as fertiliser – mainly using rented machines. But when the Lambrecht-Speller family need special services such as applying slurry with an injector, they turn to the local contractor.

Future investment

"In my view, light, air and water are fundamental to good cattle husbandry. So, as well as opting for an open and well-ventilated cattle house, we have a water system that cannot freeze," says dad Heiner. Of course, an adequate supply of feed is also key to



Benedikt, Heinrich and Alexander Lambrecht-Speller (from left): Heinrich and Alexander run the family farm, while Benedikt works in Product Marketing at Krone.

Our animals have access to fresh feed 24/7.

Alexander Lambrecht-Speller

successful beef finishing. "Our animals have access to fresh feed 24/7. Currently, we are pushing up the feed in the feed passage several times a day. The pH value of the rumen fluctuates if insufficient premium quality feed is not provided at all times. This leads to rumen acidosis (excess acid production), which in turn has a negative effect on health and performance," explains Alexander. For this reason, the farm is now investing in a Wasserbauer robotic feed pusher, which refills the feed passage ten to twelve times a day.

"We hope that this year will not be as dry as last. The drought had a severe impact on the forage

quality. We are trying to reduce the risk of a poor maize harvest by growing grass leys. However, the large number of cattle farms and the rising trend for potato growing in the region means that land is in short supply," explains Alexander. Nevertheless, the farm managers are positive about the future: their next project is to build a new silage clamp to further improve the quality of their forage. «

The trailed straw blower spreads five round bales in the sheds every day.



A success story

Do you remember the day the first Krone XtraBlatt landed on your doormat? That was ten years ago! So it seems a fitting time to ask Marketing Director Markus Steinwendner why this customer magazine is so important for Krone.

2013

2023



» Profile

Markus Steinwendner worked as a mechanical engineer developer in the plastics industry for a number of years during which he also studied part-time for a degree in Marketing and Management. Then in December 2011, he joined the Krone Austria team in the Marketing and Sales Promotion department. On 1 March 2021 Markus Steinwendner was appointed director of the Marketing Department at the Krone Agricultural Machinery division in Spelle.

XtraBlatt: This edition of XtraBlatt looks different to previous ones – how come?

Markus Steinwendner: We're celebrating the tenth anniversary of XtraBlatt and felt that this was a good opportunity to update the design. At the same time, we wanted to be sure that our readers would still recognise XtraBlatt, so rather than a revolutionary new layout, we aimed for an evolutionary development to reflect the overall image of Krone today. In terms of content, the concept remains unchanged: a diverse mix of features, interviews, specialist articles and news items.

XtraBlatt: How did the idea of launching a magazine for farming customers come about?

Markus Steinwendner: The original initiative came from the Krone family. Bernard Krone was very keen to establish a magazine which reported on stories about farming and our customers. Without the backing of the Krone family, this insightful mouthpiece would never have got off the ground. Krone has been using this form of customer communication successfully in the trailer division since 2006 (See the blue panel "For the Blue business").

XtraBlatt: Which target groups is XtraBlatt aimed at?

Markus Steinwendner: The core target group is naturally our farming customers – by which I mean farmers and contractors who have a connection to Krone. Then there are our sales and service partners. Our aim here is to reach the management as well as the sales and workshop teams. Our retail partners also receive XtraBlatt because they like to pass copies on to interested customers. We also send the magazine to relevant stakeholders from industry, politics and associations. This forms part of our intensive PR work for the agricultural industry. Our competitors are

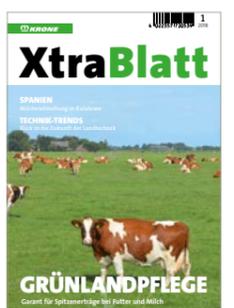
XtraBlatt is the place for content which furthers our customers' professional development and expands their horizons.

Markus Steinwendner, Marketing Director

not in our target group and yet some do take an interest in the topics we discuss; so one or two copies also land on these desks.

XtraBlatt: What role does XtraBlatt play in Krone's communications strategy today?

Markus Steinwendner: We publish two editions a year with a print run of 48,000 copies circulated in German-speaking countries, i.e. Germany, Austria and Switzerland. We deal with topical issues that affect our customers and take a journalistic approach that can be very critical. This is exactly what our readers like about our customer magazine: it's an informative read rather than an advertising brochure. Our products are not the main focus of XtraBlatt. Instead, we report on industry trends and developments which affect our target groups, either directly or indirectly.





At the same time, we want to showcase ideas which inspire us and which we believe will play an important role in farming in the future. We can't offer a solution to everything, but we want to promote ideas which could be beneficial to our target groups and worthy of further thinking. On top of that, we cover fascinating topics relating to our corporate life and development. In simple terms, the printed XtraBlatt is a very important pillar of communication with our customers.

The content of our digital communications is different: short-lived, entertaining and product-related. It ranges from "highly relevant" to "trivial" – the main thing is it reaches our target audience and stays in their minds! Trivia is very well suited to digital platforms, for instance an amusing video clip or a witty post on our social media channels. In contrast, the issues we address in XtraBlatt clearly come under the "relevant" category. This is the place for content which helps to further our customers' professional development, see the bigger picture and expand their horizons. By providing a broad, diverse marketing mix, we seek to communicate to our target audience the right content through the right channel at the right time and with the right sentiment.

XtraBlatt: XtraBlatt is a classic print medium. Have you thought about transferring more content to digital platforms in future?

Markus Steinwendner: We still believe that the high-quality printed magazine is a very good way to reach our target audience. With XtraBlatt our motto has always been "print first". That tactile feeling of holding a hard copy in your hand is still very important to many of our customers! And I'm talking about all age groups, not just the over 50s. Having said that, XtraBlatt is also available in digital form on the Krone website. Every edition from the very first to the latest can be downloaded free of charge from our online archive. It's popular too – each edition of XtraBlatt has been downloaded approximately 9,000 times in German and 7,000 times in English. All issues – from the very first to the latest – are archived in a repository where they are available to anyone free

of charge. In total – including this 1-2023 edition – there are 20 editions containing over 1,000 pages, so plenty to keep you occupied! Our archive also contains an English version of XtraBlatt for international readers. With regard to digital communications, from this edition onwards we intend to integrate selected XtraBlatt content into our social media posts as well, mainly with a view to generating interest in the next edition. This will make the customer magazine a cross-media publication.

XtraBlatt: Will XtraBlatt be available in other languages in future?

Markus Steinwendner: There are no plans at present, but it's not something I can rule out completely. We have a global presence, so it is entirely legitimate to translate the magazine into English. However, a key component of our marketing strategy is to localise our communications by adapting them to each individual country and to leave it to our importers and sales companies to decide on their preferred communication "tools". In my view, it makes no sense to offer customers in Brazil, France or Hungary articles written in Portuguese, French or Hungarian about farmers in Germany, Austria and Switzerland – customers want to read about issues they can relate to. So translating XtraBlatt into a host of different languages serves no purpose. At international level, in addition to the Krone XtraBlatt, we also have other customer magazines published directly by our subsidiaries. This is why we focus XtraBlatt on German-speaking countries. «



»» For the Blue Business

The first edition of the customer magazine for the Commercial Vehicles division appeared in 2006 under the name "Krone trailerforum". In 2020 it was relaunched as DENKFABRIK (think tank). Since then, the magazine has been issued twice a year in German and English with a print circulation of around 12,000 copies. The magazine is aimed at readers in the transport and logistics industry but covering also cross-sector topics it is gaining popularity outside this field.



Big M

Side-shifting relative to the slope gradient

The self-propelled high-capacity mower conditioner from Krone is now available with a feature that side-shifts the front mower relative to the current slope gradient. The benefit of this is that the front mower adjusts the overlap with the rear mower(s) automatically on slopes and in curved lines, which ensures a stripeless cut.

The side-shift feature relies on an angle sensor on the main frame in addition to the steering angle sensor on the rear axle. The angle sensor measures and supplies real-time data on the current conditions. The system determines the steering

angle, the slope gradient and the drift that results from the slope gradient; based on this information, it shifts the front mower automatically to the side without any interference from the operator. At the same time, the angle sensor ensures that the drive power is distributed uniformly to all four wheels, improving traction and ensuring maximum sward protection. The system takes off strain from operators and allows them to focus on the work at hand. In addition to that, auto side-shifting by slope gradient also boosts productivity, because the mower cuts much faster on slopes and without striping. «

EasyCut F 400 Fold / EasyCut F 400 CR

Two new front mowers

Based on the EasyCut F 400 CV Fold with its patented folding cutterbar launched in 2019, Krone now offers two further models of the 4m front mower: the EasyCut F 400 Fold without conditioner with windrowing augers and the EasyCut F 400 CR (photo) with rigid cutterbar and integrated roller conditioner (CR = Conditioner Roller). Both front mowers are designed for operation in conjunction with a butterfly combination, hence for delivering maximum coverage at maximum overlaps. The EasyCut F 400 Fold is the best solution for cut & carry systems. The EasyCut F 400 CR expands the Krone portfolio especially for lucerne cutting applications in export markets.

by the EasyCut cutterbar, which is equipped with SafeCut and SmartCut and which has proved very successful for many years now. «



Both models maximise the working width that is available in butterfly combinations. For example, overlapping up to 57cm per side, the EasyCut B 1000 implements a working width of more than 10m for each side for stripeless cuts in all conditions. The cutterbar suspension is adjusted hydraulically from the convenience of the cab for excellent adaption to ground contours and optimum forage quality. A first-class cut is also ensured

HASI STRAHM, MÜNCHENBUCHSEE, SWITZERLAND

Organic meat with music

Broad, black-tipped horns, dark eyes, dark muzzle – Swiss organic farmer Hasi Strahm loves his Aubrac cattle. He markets the meat himself under the brand stressfrei (stress-free). A farm walk.

Swiss organic farmer Hasi Strahm farms a 65-head herd of Aubrac cattle, including 25 suckler cows.



Hasi Strahm lives and works by the maxim “nature pure and simple, with modern technology.”

As we enter a generously sized shed on Hasi's farm in the Swiss canton of Bern, we find more than 60 Aubrac cattle mingling in their extensive straw-filled stall which is open to the south. On the north side are two hay and straw storage bays, each measuring 800m³, machinery sheds, and a recreation room with kitchen on a mezzanine level. Beneath this is the farm's meat processing room, along with a cold store. The rails of an overhead hay crane traverse the shed roughly 10m above us. Sixty-three-year-old Hasi Strahm steps down from the cab after delivering a load of fresh hay to the feeding platform.

The 63-year old farmer tells his story: “When I built this livestock shed eight years ago, I was fulfilling a long-held dream. The building is designed to make work as simple as possible. You see, I run the farm on my own just now.” He began farming Aubrac cattle in 2006 – starting with seven suckler cows and one bull. “I now have 25 suckler cows in my herd,” he says.

The seasoned farmer took over the farm from his parents 33 years ago. At the time, it was still in the middle of Münchenbuchsee, a small town which now has a population of well over 10,000. The then



The Hasi Farm is situated in the Swiss canton of Bern at 560m above sea level. The scenic location offers views of the Alps and the Jura

29-year-old Hasi Strahm first set about converting the conventional dairy operation to organic milk production – to Bio Suisse standards. “In 2006 I gave up farming Holstein cows,” he says. “I was keen to switch to a suckler herd, with a robust breed that was resistant and long-lived. My wish was and still is to produce organic meat – under the maxim: nature pure and simple, with modern technology.”

Healthy cattle

His search for a suitable breed took him to a beef farm in northern Germany. He was very taken with the Aubrac cattle they bred there – medium-framed, well-muscled, with a yellow to reddish-brown coat. “And that's still the case today,” he says, his eyes lighting up as he proudly approaches a cow contentedly munching on hay. He scratches its head affectionately before moving on. “I now breed them myself, but when it comes to the herd book, I'm something of a minimalist. For example, I don't weigh these animals.” He replaces the bull every four years. “I make a point of breeding only healthy animals with true characteristics,” he says. Apart from the bull, he doesn't bring in any animals from outside. “In this way, I avoid introducing parasites and disease.” The livestock farmer is happy: “My animals are 99% healthy,” he adds with satisfaction.

Originally, his farm was situated on land that was designated for building. So, he sold it in 2012 and relocated the farm 2km further into the countryside – purchasing the necessary land and constructing the buildings in the process. “Ultimately, this project has cost me around 9 million Swiss Francs, but I'm an idealist,” Hasi Strahm concedes. “Anyway, two of my children will take over the farm in the next few years. So if everything goes to plan, the project has a wonderful future.”

When I built this livestock shed eight years ago, I was fulfilling a long-held dream.

Hasi Strahm



The feed passage is regularly replenished with the hay crane. The animals are fed only hay and second-cut hay.

» Side note

He regularly works with a group of young people to tackle long-rooted weeds on the grassland and arable fields. "The youngsters do various tasks around the farm to earn a bit of pocket money," he says. "Armed with a dock weeder, they go out in the spring and pull up docks."

It has to be organic

Hasi Strahm cares deeply for his animals, and the whole concept of organic farming. "And farming organically only makes sense when you have animals," he stresses. "I need to spread manure on the fields if I want to harvest a crop. I don't want to take from the land all the time. I have to give back as well." For example, on average he harvests between 80kg and 120kg of maize kernels per "are" (approx. 8t/ha), after applying 40m³ of manure in the spring. "I'm more interested in cycles than high yields." He articulates his approach to farming, which is both his philosophy and elixir of life: "To the best of my ability, I want to live with nature, rather than against it. And I like the fact that my farm is largely self-sufficient – apart from certain feed I buy in, such as mineral licks, or coarse grain to distract the cows while the calves are being tagged in the field."

"My farm is forage-heavy and no-till," Hasi Strahm points out. "I grow arable crops on 38ha, 24ha of which is given over to forage production." He reserves 3.5ha for biodiversity measures and ecological areas. The rest of the land, close to the shed, is down to permanent pasture. "My four-year crop rotation is deliberately non-intensive: Grass leys in the first year for forage production, followed by wheat, a forage catch crop, maize and then leys again."

And here too, his main focus is the circular economy. "This crop rotation builds up humus," Hasi Strahm points out. "I no longer produce silage bales from the final cut, if I do one at all." For a

few years now, he has been leaving the third cut to the soil organisms. "In this way, earthworms and other creatures make more humus for me," he maintains. In autumn, he applies another load of manure to the grass ley with a muck spreader. "To prepare the seedbed for maize, I do several passes with a spring-tooth harrow," he explains, "The tractors run on duals to protect the soil."

Four to five days after drilling the maize, he runs the tine weeder over the seedbed, weather permitting. He knows from experience that this strategy removes 80% of the weeds. And immediately after drilling, he sets up his crow scarer. "Crows are a danger before the four-leaf stage."

Krone machinery by choice

The cattle are free to feed 24h a day – with music playing in the background the whole time, from classical tunes to pop songs and at maximum 68dB. Hasi Strahm is convinced that this improves their quality of life. To produce organic meat, the Aubracs take a little longer to reach their ideal finishing weight. He sets out the timescale: "My bullocks are ready at around 24 months – by then they have the right proportion of fat to muscle. In the stall they are fed hay and the second cut (we call this the Emd). In summer, they are mainly pasture-fed." Most of the first cut is stored in the hay dryer. The second cut is dried in the sun and turned into square or round bales.

Hasi Strahm understands the value of having good equipment. He's been a great fan of Krone haymaking equipment for many years, which he



Farming organically only makes sense when you have animals.

Hasi Strahm



The farmer sells the meat from his Aubrac cattle and home-produced pork from his vending machines and also to individual retail customers such as a hospital.

explains Hasi Strahm. And then he drives home again with the quartered animal and bones it himself. "I vacuum-pack the prime cuts such as fillets, back and entrecôte, but I turn most of the meat into mince," he says. He sells frozen meat from a vending machine – as burgers or sausages in packs of three. He processes on average one animal per month, in other words around 200kg of meat "net". "As a one-man operation, that's exactly the right workload for me," he remarks. In addition, the catering department of a local hospital purchases another carcass every five to six weeks.

Hasi Strahm's shed obviously wouldn't be complete without solar panels. The two roof sections of the building together generate nearly 500,000 kW of solar power. "I use one tenth myself and export the rest to the grid – at a price that is fixed for 25 years," he says. This is how the farm will be handed down to the next generation in the foreseeable future. When exactly, the farmer does not say. «

sums up as follows: "I am impressed by the quality and durability of the machines. In 2021, I bought an EasyCut B 870 CV, which is the ideal machine for my style of grassland management," he stresses.

Stress-free meat

So how does he slaughter the animals without stress? "I shoot the cattle in the shed myself," he explains (he is an experienced marksman). Three to four months before they reach their slaughter weight, he takes them off the pasture in preparation. "During these months I leave the animals here in the shed so they don't notice anything." Before shooting an animal, he distracts it by offering an extra portion of hay; then he hides behind a mobile shooting table around ten metres away.

His rifle is equipped with a telescopic sight – and a silencer: "That's how it has to be," says Hasi Strahm. Although the other cattle hear the muffled shot, they don't associate it with anything and therefore don't take fright. "Of course, it's quite another matter when the animals are slaughtered in the abattoir with huge amounts of stress hormones flooding their system. And that affects the flavour of the meat," he explains, speaking from experience.

According to Swiss law, a veterinary must be present at the slaughter to inspect the carcass. A butcher must also be on hand to make the breast cut. Thirty seconds after being shot, the animal is already hanging from the crane to bleed and will then be towed on a sledge to the transport trailer. "The butcher and I drive to the abattoir 12km away,"

Hasi Strahm prefers to use Krone machines for haymaking.





 **KRONE**

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RX
400 GD

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Farm machinery in miniature



Not just left on the shelf: some collectors present their models in dioramas.

Like the big ones, only smaller: the models of Krone machinery are bestsellers like the originals. XtraBlatt spoke to the project team Luise Spinneker and Klaus Schütte to find out why the journey from an initial idea to commercial success in the shop is a long one.

There's more to farm machines than mundane facts about performance, fuel economy and price. People have a very strong emotional connection to these machines. Indeed, when it comes to brand attachment, no other sector comes even close to agricultural machinery. To strengthen this connection, Krone has created a comprehensive range of merchandise items over the years – including various articles of clothing, traditional toys, all kinds of promotional gifts, and of course models. “The latter make up the lion’s share of items bought in the Krone Shop,” says Klaus Schütte. He and his colleague Luise Spinneker are responsible for merchandising at Krone. But selling the products is not part of their remit. They oversee the entire process chain from initial design through to delivery of the models to the Krone Shop and to numerous distribution channels, such as specialist model shops and farm machinery dealerships.

Brand ambassadors

Some just want a toy to play with, while others are captivated by the extraordinary level of detail in a well-made collector’s model. These models also dominate the merchandise business of the Krone Group. “Basically, we distinguish between toys and collector’s models,” explains Klaus Schütte. Most of the toy models are on a scale of 1:32 or 1:16 and manufactured by well-known toy manufacturers such as Bruder or Siku, who assume full entrepreneurial responsibility.

“And that includes deciding which models to put on the market. Our only role here is to advise the model toy manufacturer once they have made that decision,” says Luise Spinneker. This means that the two of them spend time on the road, for example visiting leading toy fairs. This advice recently proved successful for Bavarian toy manufacturer Bruder. The company produces a toy model of the Krone BiG Pack 1290 HDP VC big baler on a scale of 1:16. Luise Spinneker and Klaus Schütte are particularly proud of this model. Boasting hinged panels and detailed mechanics, several of them have found a home in children’s bedrooms all around the world.

For kids who grow up on a farm or at a contracting business, a model like this is not just a source of childhood fun, but it is a formative brand ambassador. The latest big baler is the sixth Krone model in the Bruder product range. It joins a rake, a rotary tedder and earlier big baler and forage wagon models.

A growing market

Toy models may well dominate in kids’ rooms, but collector’s models dominate the sales reports. “The market for collector’s models has sky-rocketed since the early 2000s,” explains Klaus Schütte. A trend that all agricultural machinery manufacturers can share in. But the collector’s models business brings with it a degree of entrepreneurial risk, as Luise Spinneker explains: “We bear the financial responsibility for collector’s models. We decide which models to market, we commission the production and define a minimum order quantity with the manufacturer.” If the model turns out to be a flop, we have no return on our investment. “Bearing in mind that the overall investment for a single collector’s model is a six-figure sum, that’s something we want to avoid at all costs,” explains Klaus Schütte.

Basically, we distinguish between toys and collector’s models.

Klaus Schütte

Toy manufacturer Bruder also makes models of Krone machines: here, a scale 1:16 BiG Pack as a toy.





A machinery shed full of miniature treasures: Krone equipment stored for the winter.

We bear the financial responsibility for collector's models.

Luise Spinneker

So particular care is taken when selecting potential models. The bestsellers are the 1:32 models of the BiG X 1180 with maize header and pick-up and the Krone BiG M 450, made by the Italian model manufacturer R.O.S. The 1:32 model of the Krone BiG Pack HDPVC, made by the same manufacturer, is also held in high esteem by collectors all over the world. The fact that these models are currently no longer in stock in the Krone online shop or in specialist model shops indicates just how popular they are with collectors.

But who actually decides which Krone product to model? The first step is the desire to introduce a new Original machine to the Krone product range, accompanied by a collector's model. So colleagues from Research & Development, Product Management and Product Marketing get together to discuss whether a model is feasible in the first place. "Even at this early stage, we check out the sales prospects," emphasises Klaus Schütte. "Models of self-propelled harvesters and tractors are more popular. That's for sure." For trailed equipment

models, it is considerably more difficult to tick all the collectors' boxes and achieve profitable sales figures.

Based on trust

If the assessment proves positive in terms of feasibility and market potential, the manufacturers are contacted. When a producer is found and a price agreed, a contract is drawn up. But there's still a long way to go before the model goes on display in the collector's cabinet.

First, the model manufacturer has to sign a nondisclosure agreement. "To produce a realistic model, the manufacturer needs the computer-aided design (CAD) data, which of course are treated strictly confidentially. The fact is, we're often dealing with models of products that haven't even been launched yet," explains Luise Spinneker. When the agreement has been signed and the CAD data shared, there is a face-to-face meeting with the model manufacturer during which photos of the machine are taken. A 3D drawing is then produced from these photos. This in turn provides the basis for the first scale model made from synthetic resin. "Once we've approved it, the model manufacturer can then start manufacturing the production moulds," says Klaus Schütte.

These moulds are used to produce a "first shot" model. "This is also sent to us for approval," says Luise Spinneker. At this stage, a few changes are usually requested. Once these have been made,

the manufacturer submits a packaging proposal. The packaging is designed in-house by the Krone Marketing department to Luise Spinneker und Klaus Schütte's specifications. All that's left to do then is manufacture the model and deliver it!

And this has proved to be the greatest challenge since the start of the Corona crisis. "Although many model manufacturers make the scaled moulds in Europe, the models themselves are generally manufactured in the Far East." The consequences of restrictive lockdown policies in many countries are still being felt today, making delivery schedules almost impossible to predict. "Before the pandemic, the entire manufacturing process from design to supply took twelve months; today we have to allow at least 18 months," Klaus Schütte bemoans. Currently, he and his colleague are waiting for production to start on a model which is scheduled to be launched in November at the Krone Shop at Agritechnica and at the Krone Online Shop.

Synthetic resin specialities

Despite all the uncertainties in the model market, it's not just the flagships of the Krone machinery range that make it to the collector's display cabinets in miniature form. "When we plan to launch a limited-edition model, we get the manufacturer to make it in synthetic resin, unlike the diecast models which are made from metal," explains Klaus Schütte. Although these models are more fragile than diecast models, the resin allows for an exceptional level of detail and is ideal for limited production runs. The Krone Shop currently contains a very detailed model of the EasyCut F 320 Highland mower on a scale of 1:32. Because it is a limited edition, it is particularly sought-after by collectors.

Other models are already in the pipeline, yet Klaus Schütte and Luise Spinneker are reluctant to reveal more at this stage. One thing they can say with absolute certainty though is that the new models are bound to delight collectors of agricultural machinery models! <<



1 The best-selling model is the BiG X. This one has semi tracks.

2 Popular with collectors all over the world – the Krone BiG Pack HDP VC model on a scale of 1:32 is accurate in every detail.

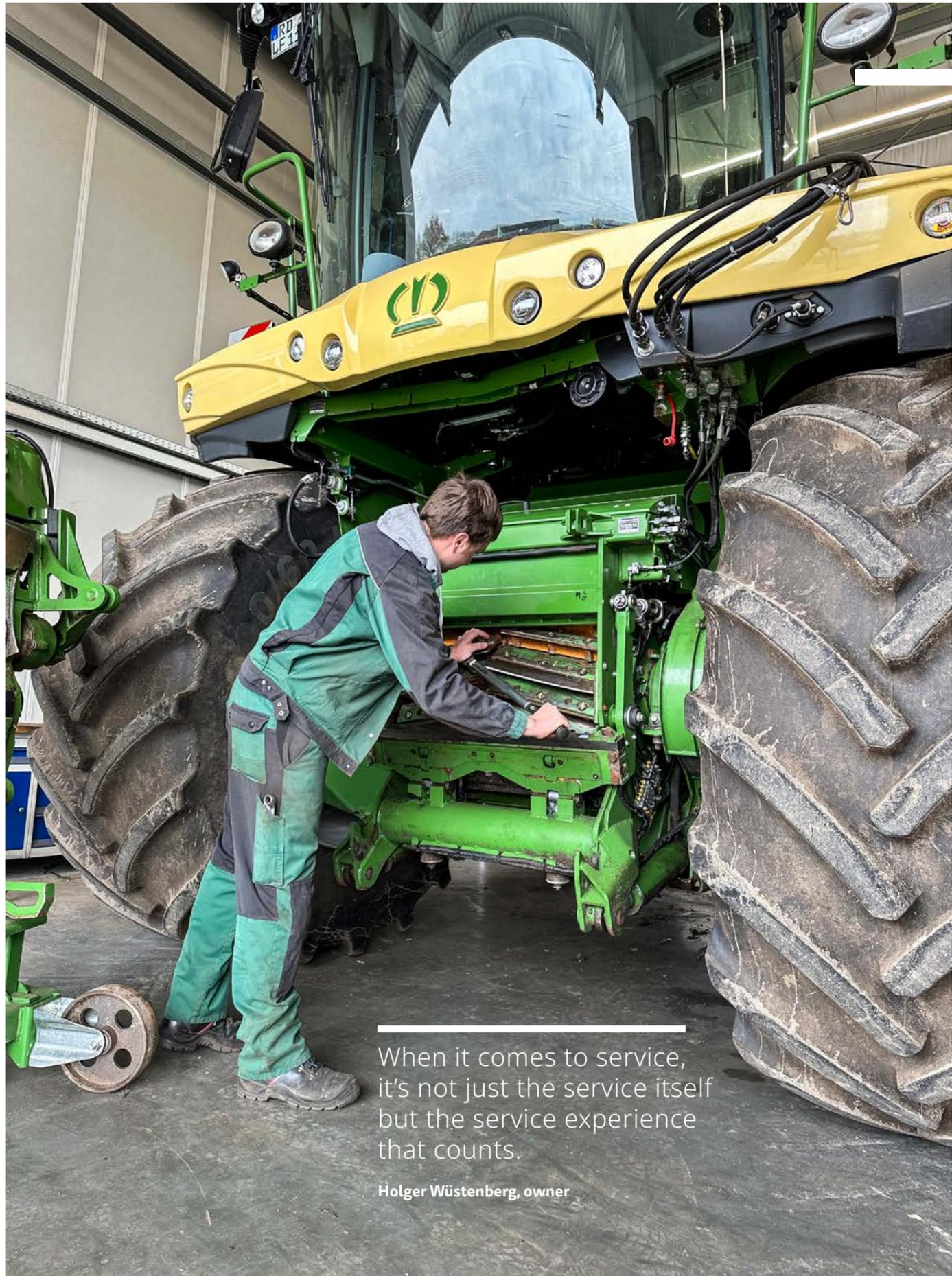


The Krone team behind the models: Luise Spinneker and Klaus Schütte.

>> Buy a model



Use this QR code or click on the link kurzelinks.de/Krone-Modelle to get to the model section at the Krone Shop.



When it comes to service, it's not just the service itself but the service experience that counts.

Holger Wüstenberg, owner

WÜSTENBERG-LANDTECHNIK

Service with no ifs and buts

Krone and Wüstenberg – together, they make a strong team. The two partners share not only half a century of successful collaboration but the same philosophy when it comes to service – “no ifs and buts.”

The opportunity to attend major events without restriction is one of the many – quite literally – liberating “post-Corona” experiences. So it's hardly surprising that agricultural machinery shows are making an unprecedented comeback – as illustrated by the success of the company's in-house show held at their headquarters in Börm, a town not far from the Danish border. “We welcomed over 10,000 visitors over the two days, which was tremendous!” comments owner Holger Wüstenberg with delight. And Hans-Rudolf Lübcker, who as managing director is in charge of operations at the headquarters, adds: “It was impressive to see how happy people were to finally meet up in this kind of setting after a four-year break. No wonder the mood was so upbeat, despite the challenges the agricultural industry is currently facing. This momentum will see us through the season!”

Partnership of equals

The positive trend in milk prices since 2022 has certainly contributed to this upward momentum; after all, dairy farming is such an important sector in Schleswig-Holstein or at least its northern part where heavy soils dominate. Börm itself lies a rather sandy region on the central ridge of Schleswig-Holstein. As a result, the customer base here is “mixed”, comprising livestock and arable farming. The Wüstenberg Group has a workforce of 280 and operates from eight sites, three of which are in Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania to the east and one in Brandenburg to the south-east. “Our main brand products – including Krone – and of course the accompanying service provision are available in all our branches. But in Schleswig-Holstein we tend to focus on forage harvesting and Krone's sphere of activity, especially north of the Kiel Canal,” explains Holger Wüstenberg.



For them, good service is always a result of the whole team pulling together: Holger Wüstenberg (right, owner), Hans-Rudolf Lübcker (left, managing director of the Börm branch) and Udo Fedders (Börm workshop manager).

He describes the company's 50-year partnership with the forage and straw harvesting specialist from Spelle as exceptional and, in his view, as a major factor behind their commercial success. By way of illustration, the Börm site alone services more than 70 BiG X and BiG M SP machines. They also have a large market share in the attached machine range, from mowers to balers. “The partnership of equals, Krone's family business spirit and down-to-earth approach unburdened by hierarchies are key success factors,” Holger Wüstenberg is keen to stress. Hans-Rudolf Lübcker adds: “Digitalisation aside, business deals are still made by people – and that's a good thing! The fact that we can take customers to visit the factory during pre-sales negotiations for larger machines and projects is always a plus. And if our master mechanics need Krone's help with particularly complex technical issues, they can pick up the phone and be put through to the right person straightaway. This is how teamwork makes for a successful agricultural machinery business.” ➤

Following the four-year break during the Corona pandemic, the Wüstenberg in-house show attracted more than 10,000 visitors.

Holger Wüstenberg's service concept pivots around an excellent parts availability.



Top qualifications

Both company boss and managing director advocate the importance of the in-house expertise and motivation of the staff at the Wüstenberg specialist service centres, because these form the basis for customer acceptance. And it's clear to them that qualifications are key. Wüstenberg is currently training 60 apprentices in various trades across all eight sites. Most of them train as agricultural and construction machinery mechatronics, with each branch having two to three apprentices in each year group. Overall, the combined service teams at the workshops and parts warehouses account for well over 50% of the Wüstenberg Group's workforce.

In-service training is addressed with equal enthusiasm. Holger Wüstenberg believes that it is absolutely essential to keep abreast of the latest developments and provide the best possible level of service. Another logical consequence of this is the increasing level of specialisation within the workshop teams. Each branch generally has several master craftsmen and each specialises in certain types of machines and/or brands. There is also a high degree of specialisation among the ranks of mechatronic technicians, as Hans-Rudolf Lübcker explains during a tour of the workshop. "It's the only way to deal with the technical challenges."

Greater commitment

For the owner and his managing director, first-class service translates into speed – being available outside office hours and stocking a large range of parts locally for instant availability. 23,000 items on stock at the Börm branch provide the necessary back-up. But that's not where it ends. Having a large number of back-up machines and forager/combine assemblies sitting in the yard and stockroom is also a pivotal aspect of service – especially for contractors. "It may sound obvious, but when it comes to service, it's not just the service itself but the experience. And in this respect the majority of our customers believe, like us, that we do a good job and that our guiding principle 'you're in safe hands with us' holds true," says Holger Wüstenberg with satisfaction.

And for him, it's a matter of course that this guiding principle will be pursued with the same commitment in the absence of future – although it's not a foregone conclusion, quite the reverse. So, while customer numbers are declining as small businesses give up farming also in Schleswig-Holstein, customers' expectations of agricultural machinery specialists are only increasing. However, greater expertise and more service alone is not the solution; a greater sense of commitment on the part of all involved – customers, specialist service centres and manufacturers – is also called for. "Costs are rising significantly as machinery becomes more and more complex. More predictive maintenance is therefore an important step towards better reliability and cost control," explains Hans-Rudolf Lübcker. The number of new machines sold with an extended warranty and a fixed maintenance agreement has risen substantially, by over 50% in the case of contractors. "For us as an agricultural machinery specialist, it's nonetheless essential that we are paid in full by the industry for any work performed under warranty or service agreement. And in this area too, our partnership with Krone is outstanding – and an important basis for our mutual success. In a nutshell, this service comes without ifs and buts," Holger Wüstenberg concludes. «

Digitalisation aside, business deals are still made by people – and that's a good thing!

Hans-Rudolf Lübcker, managing director of the Wüstenberg branch in Börm

The GX general-purpose wagon **Now available with rigid sides**

Since the 2022/23 sales season the Krone GX general-purpose wagon has also been available with rigid sides in addition to versions with hydraulic telescoping extensions. One advantage of the rigid version is a 600kg lower dead weight; another is a tailgate that opens up wider than on the models with hydraulic side extensions. This, for example, is a boon when loading pallets or straw bales from the rear.

The GX with rigid sides offers all the traditional comfort features that make this wagon a jack-of-all-trades in year-round use – the patented single-frame chassis and the sloping mudguards that reduce material buildup. Furthermore, the machine has smooth-surface GRP sides for reduced friction as well as the moving and see-through headboard for excellent visibility of the cargo space.

The strong and heavy-duty floor belt moves in either direction and, permanently tensioned, it won't billow up during empty hauls. Its springy surface makes the wagon also suitable for haul-

ing delicate crops. The new GX version also boasts the DLG Silver Medal winning KRONE ExactUnload, an innovative system that empties the machine at uniform rates relative to the length of the clamp. «



The SmartConnect Solar telemetric unit **Suitable for all machines**

The telemetric unit SmartConnect is the technology around which Krone configures its data management solutions for farm machines and commercial trailers. The manufacturer now offers another and even more flexible solution that is powered by a solar cell – the Krone SmartConnect Solar. This autonomous telemetric unit links also those less high-tech machines such as mowers, tedders, rakes and other non-electronic equipment into a digital data management system. SmartConnect is now compatible with all machines no matter the make or application.

In conjunction with a position sensor on a tailgate, SmartConnect Solar can also serve as a trip counter. On a rake arm it detects the machine's working or transport position and even

operates as a hectare counter after the work width has been entered to the telemetric system. The machine's position data are transmitted in real time through an integral GPS receiver and a radio modem with multi network SIM card. Fleet managers can view and evaluate the machine data remotely and in real time through Krone Smart Telematics in the mykrone.green portal. SmartConnect Solar also links up to the universal agrirouter data sharing platform. «



THE SPEEDSHARP BLADE GRINDER

Sharp as you like

Sharp blades on the cutting system of a forage wagon are essential for ensuring high-quality grass silage. XtraBlatt visits contractor Wesch in northern Germany to find out about the three advantages of using the Krone SpeedSharp auto grinder – excellent grinds, time savings and fuel savings.



Dennis Jenk opens the side door of the forage wagon with practised ease. The employee of contractor Harry Wesch from Moorausmoor (a village in the Lower Saxon district of Cuxhaven) unlocks the blades and pulls out the blade cassette. He then swings it to the side and lifts the blade sharpener into position. Once the two hydraulic hoses are connected, it's all set. At the press of a button, the shaft of the 24-disc blade sharpener begins to rotate, automatically starting the grinding process. Sparks fly and after a little over a minute, all 24 blades are sharp again. The blade sharpener repositions itself and grinds the second set of 24 blades. Then Dennis Jenk returns the cutterbar to its working position, switches off the blade sharpener and carries on forage harvesting. The whole process has taken just under 5 minutes.

"The alternative would have been to drive back to the yard and replace the blades," explains Dennis Jenk, adding: "Provided everything went to plan in the first place, that would have taken a good hour, including driving there and back!" Time that nobody can spare at silage time. "That's why we decided to invest in an automatic blade sharpening system when we were looking to replace a forage wagon a few years ago," says contractor Harry Wesch. They then purchased two more forage wagons with blade grinders.

Krone launched the SpeedSharp system in 2013. At its core lies a shaft fitted with 24 spring-loaded

abrasive flap discs. These grinding discs with individual, widely overlapping abrasive flaps ensure excellent grinding performance and long service life. Each flap disc is specially contoured to maintain a consistent grinding angle until the wear limit of the blade is reached, while the springs between the grinding discs ensure uniform contact pressure. A "cold" grind in several stages prevents annealing of the blades, which increases the service life of the grinding discs and prevents the blade edges from overheating.

Since its introduction, the on-board grinding system has become a frequently selected option, says Krone Product Manager Benedikt Lambrecht-Speller, who is also in charge of the SpeedSharp system. About one third of all forage wagons leaving the assembly line have the SpeedSharp blade grinder and this percentage rises to as much as 50% on the high-capacity RX and ZX models. "The system is particularly popular with customers who operate on sandy or stony ground where blades need sharpening more often," he adds.

1 Sharp blades within minutes: the SpeedSharp grinding system sharpens the blades on the cutting system within a matter of minutes. There is no need to remove them from the machine.

2 All must play ball: premium-quality forage is the result of meticulously orchestrated processes – including regular blade sharpening.



1 The blade grinder is lifted into position. A few simple operations, then grinding can begin.

2 Ready to go again. Dennis Jenk shows a cutting edge that has just been sharpened while on the machine.

3 The discs produce a consistent grinding pattern, thanks to springs ensuring a uniform contact pressure.

» In brief

Fact 1

About one third of all Krone forage wagons have the SpeedSharp blade grinder.

Fact 2

The economic benefits of the grinding system include a noticeably better fuel economy in the field and significant time savings during sharpening.

Fact 3

Chop length and quality are among the key factors for optimal forage quality. Short-chop forage leads to a more rapid reduction in pH, thereby minimising the risk of butyric acid fermentation.

"In addition, farmers and contractors who seek to produce optimal quality forage require consistently sharp blades and therefore appreciate the fact that our SpeedSharp system can sharpen those 48 blades on our forage wagons in a matter of minutes!"

A sandy challenge

Having consistently sharp blades is a particular challenge for contractors who harvest on varying soils. "The sandy, often stony soils in the local Geest region soon take it out of the blades. And if the customer prefers a very short cut, you just have to accept that the blades will need re-grinding after only a few trips to the clamp," explains Harry Wesch. The blades were not always able to cope with these stresses, he went on to explain. "In the first few years we often had to deal with broken or torn blades," says the contractor. A problem that Krone has now solved with the introduction of the more resistant HD blades, says Benedikt Lambrecht-Speller. Harry Wesch values this level

of customer focus: "You call them, explain the problem – and a few weeks later Emsland comes up with a solution." It's not something the contractor takes for granted, but ultimately this level of service is behind his decision to rely almost entirely on Krone for the forage harvesting side of his business.

Although today, the cut grass is also often picked up by foragers, forage wagons do present a more cost-effective option in many situations. "This is especially true when the fields are small or remote," explains Christoph Jenk, who is responsible for the workshop and scheduling. Apart from that, some farmers don't like to see the heavy foragers go into their boggy grasslands that are so abundant in the region. Therefore, during the grass season the contractor's three forage wagons are usually kitted out with their own pick-ups. "Of course, we also run the forage wagons alongside the forage harvester, depending on the harvesting chain," says Dennis Jenk.

Optimal forage quality

"One of the keys to optimal forage quality is the chop length," says Harry Wesch. And this should be short, because short chops causes pH to drop more rapidly during the ensiling process, thereby minimising the risk of butyric acid fermentation. Furthermore, a shorter chop length creates a greater surface area, which in turn enables cows to digest the feed more easily, absorb more energy and thus more milk.

For delivering their customers forage of a consistently premium quality, the contractor must use sharp blades in the first place. Therefore, the company makes a particular point of diligently sharpening the blades at the end of each harvest day. Most blades are resharpened in a stationary grinding machine at their workshop. But at peak times there's often a backlog of blades waiting to be re-sharpened during the evening. The SpeedSharp blade grinder has gone a long way towards alleviating this situation. However, the forage wagon blades still need re-sharpening on the stationary machine at regular intervals.

The Harry Wesch contracting business began operating from a farm in 1991 and now employs eight full-time and twelve temporary staff. Forage harvesting is the mainstay of their business, and for this, the company uses mainly Krone machinery. The cutting is done with two butterfly mower combinations. Raking and grass collection is done with Krone equipment. The machine fleet includes three forage harvesters – two BiG X 850 and one BiG X 1080 –, two Krone rakes and the three ZX series forage wagons already mentioned.

Less diesel consumption

Colleague Torben Trzeciek has just resharpened the blades on his forage wagon combination. Like all drivers of forage wagons, he knows exactly how to operate the blade sharpener and uses it a dozen times per year during forage harvesting, which can involve up to five cuts. In his view, abrasive consumption is comparatively low. "We replace the abrasive flap discs that have reached their wear limit at the end of the season," explains Torben Trzeciek. But he doesn't just use the SpeedSharp when the blades are noticeably blunt. He also grinds the blades before heading off to a new customer. "New customers tend to inspect the first few loads particularly carefully. So obviously it's a good thing if the first wagon load has been processed with freshly sharpened blades," he explains, ever the grassland professional.

Regular resharpening also makes sense in terms of operating costs. "Significantly less tractor power is needed for cutting when you have freshly

The system is particularly popular with customers who often harvest sandy or stony land.

Harry Wesch, contractor

sharpened blades," explains Christoph Jenk. This is reflected in a reduced fuel consumption, which the Wesch repair shop manager puts at around 1 to 2%. But it's the same story with any machine with blades. Sharp blades cut through the forage with ease. As the blades become dull during the course of the day, there is a noticeable increase in fuel consumption. So for contractor Harry Wesch, the SpeedSharp blade grinding system is a win-win. The customer benefits from optimum chop quality, the contractor from reduced fuel consumption and there is less risk of customers complaining about the silage quality. «

A highly motivated team – Harry Wesch and his team provide local farmers with an efficient and reliable service that covers more than forage harvesting.



News ticker



Marketing to gain and retain staff

Krone and JCB joined forces in 2009 as partner companies behind the “Contractor Marketing Award” set up by the magazine Lohnunternehmen (Contractors). The 1st prize of the competition is a one-day seminar at Krone. Due to the Corona restrictions, the 2019 winners Dettmer, Feldmann, Kock and Stropfen had to wait until spring 2023 to collect their award in Spelle.



Sales boost

Despite continuing uncertainties in the market, the Krone Group generated sales of around 2.5 billion euros during the 2021/2022 financial year, a rise of more than 15% above the previous year's figures (around 2.2 billion euros).



Supplier award

Each year Krone awards a prize for “Supplier of the Year” in various categories. The eight prize winners in 2022 recently received their award at the supplier conference, which this year included the entire Krone Group for the first time.



Emsland Scholarship

This year Krone is once again sponsoring the Emsland Scholarships organised by the Emsland Trade Association. The two 2023 Krone scholarships were awarded to Leon Schomakers (left, general mechanical engineering) and Tobias Badulin (business administration and management). Recipients of the scholarship receive a monthly allowance and the opportunity to gain initial practical experience within the company.



Highland machine No. 100

The Austrian Krone dealership Hauser had cause for celebration when they handed over the one hundredth machine in the Highland series. The machine was bought by Christina Schweiger and Franz Embacher, who said their decision to purchase a Highland model was prompted by its excellent suitability for working on slopes.



» More news

Use the QR code or kurzelinks.de/Pressemitteilungen to find the latest Krone press releases.



VDMA Electronics Technical Committee

The Electronics Technical Committee of the VDMA – the body representing the machinery and equipment manufacturing industry in Germany and Europe – held its 52nd meeting on current topics at the KRONE Customer Centre a few weeks ago. It was a very well-attended event, attracting 41 participants from the industry.



25th anniversary

Brent Raines, product specialist for mowers at KRONE North America, received an award from Martin Eying (right, Director of Sales & Marketing) and Heiner Brüning (left, Director of After Sales) at the Subsidiary Conference in Spelle in recognition of his 25 years of service to the company.



Crowd puller

Around 10,000 visitors attended the AgriTeck FarmTeck Exhibition in Astana, Kazakhstan. The Krone stand was delighted by all the attention – European forage harvesting equipment is highly sought-after in Kazakhstan, where the dairy industry is state-subsidised.



Addiction prevention

Former professional footballers Uli Borowka (left) and Christian Hochstätter (right) visited Spelle recently. They are involved in addiction prevention and praised Krone for the company's internal handling of addiction and the counselling services on offer.



Apprentice party

The main aim of the “Apprentice Party” was to strengthen friendships and socialise together again after the Corona pandemic. A shooting match was arranged, followed by a schnitzel dinner and an evening of laughter, singing and dancing. It was a resounding success!

Biogas conference

During the Global Conference of Compressed Biogas (CBG) in New Delhi, Krone presented itself to 200 plant operators as a specialist partner for innovative harvesting equipment.



Obituary

We are saddened to announce the death of Wolfgang Deimel who passed away in March at the age of 79. He worked on the design of forage wagons and balers for over 30 years, holding a position of responsibility for much of that time. In 2016 he received the Max Eyth Medal from the VDI (Association of German Engineers) in recognition of his achievements.

The Fresh Grass Express



Delighted dairy farmers (back row, from left to right): André and Monique Albring with their children Dieke and Tessa and (front) Jesse and Sanne.



The icing on the cake for the 480 cows on the Albring farm is the fresh grass. In the summer months, the Fresh Grass Express comes past once a day to deliver around 40kg of fresh grass per cow per day in addition to the (then slightly reduced) total mixed ration.

Feeding fresh grass to cows housed in cubicle houses – known as cut-and-carry feeding – is rare in Germany, which is mainly due to the workload. XtraBlatt visited the Albring Farm in the village of Ihorst in Lower Saxony to find out how the family has managed to do this efficiently, saving a great deal of concentrate and making their 480 dairy cows very happy in the process.

Ten thirty in the morning in Germany...is not just time to tuck into a famous brand of nougat waffle, if the adverts are to be believed. In the Albring family's cubicle house in the North German village of Ihorst, not far from the Dutch border, 480 cows eagerly await the daily Fresh Grass Express. And the train is bang on time – or to be more precise, the tractor, front-mounted mower and forage wagon complete with weighing system and feeding belt that feeds out the fresh grass on top of the total mixed ration (TMR) that has already been laid down in the feed passage. Fresh grass is just as appealing to cows as a snack from a food van is for many people: a treat that also happens to taste delicious. "You can tell how much they like it by the fact that it disappears so quickly," he explains with a wink.

The right equipment

But why does André Albring and his wife Monique, who bought the farm together 23 years ago, insist on this comparatively labour-intensive feed regime? "Firstly, we can make better use of our grassland, and secondly the protein in the fresh grass replaces a considerable amount of soya in the ration during the summer months. This increases the contribution margin per cow – which is ultimately the most important aspect," he explains. And he doesn't regard the additional workload that comes with feeding fresh grass as a serious problem – provided he has the right equipment.

This is what prompted André Albring to invest in a new forage wagon with a 40m³ capacity in 2022. The generous volume means that he or one of his staff has to make only one or at most two trips a day to harvest the grass. He opted for an RX 400 GD from Krone – not just because the wagon appealed to him, but because the manufacturer from Emsland was the only one at the time who could also supply the additional feeding belt in good time.

Krone also hit the spot when it came to the front mower. "I wanted a working width of 4m instead of 3m. It reduces the number of overlaps, which is important on our peaty soils, especially in wetter years. In addition, the wider width means that the forage wagon is filled about 30% faster – and time is money for a farm our size," explains the farmer. However, he hit a slight snag: Krone did have a 4m wide folding front mower in its range – but none with the cross-feed auger that André Albring was so keen on. ➤

The forage wagon delivers fresh grass to one side of the feed passage, then turns around and delivers it to the other side on its return.



The economic benefits of feeding fresh grass are obvious.

André Albring, farmer

“I can’t use a tedder if I want to feed fresh grass and I set the bar very high when it comes to forage cleanliness, which is why I need an auger. But here too, Krone was very flexible and provided me with a pre-production model at short notice. So our harvesting method proved a win-win for both sides,” he adds with satisfaction.

Stepped cuts

On the subject of cut-and-carry forage quality, André Albring raises the question of cutting height. For him, 8cm is the absolute lower limit, ideally 10cm. There are two reasons for this; firstly, there is less risk of forage contamination and secondly, regrowth starts sooner. When it comes to blade length, he aims for 14–15cm wherever possible, and maximum 22cm. In his experience, forage intake is best at this length. If the grass inadvertently grows taller, he prefers to ensile it.



In 2022, the Albring farm took delivery of a pre-production mower model with cross feeding auger.

The cutting cycle can be very challenging in Ihorst because the soil conditions are so variable – they have everything from peaty subsoil and peaty sand to sand and smaller plots with “heavier” soils. “If all conditions are met, the grass continually regrows in such a way that the field looks like a flight of steps and after around 20 days we go back to step one and start all over,” he outlines the optimal situation. Fertiliser is also applied in a similar patchwork fashion. The slurry is separated in the farm’s own plant and some of the solid fraction is used as litter, while the liquid fraction is spread on the grassland with their own tanker and trailing shoe injector according to the cutting cycle.

And how does harvesting fresh grass fit in with the overall grassland management system? Grass silage is still a major component of the feed ration. A quick look at the farm’s figures helps to illustrate the situation: the Albrings farm around 230ha of land altogether, of which 50ha is arable, mainly down to maize. Of the 180ha of grassland, 25ha can only be used extensively due to the peaty soil; here the Albrings take the first cut for hay for their calves and a second cut for silage or cut-and-carry. In the spring they use around 35ha of the remaining 155ha of grassland for cut-and-carry in the spring and take a first and second cut silage from the rest.

The proportion of cut-and-carry increases significantly in the summer months, and here the amount of rainfall is an important factor. Too much water is particularly problematic, because it makes the land more difficult to drive on and



“It’s often not worth using it for silage, but for feeding fresh grass it’s really good,” André Albring explains. As he sees it, one advantage of the late cut is that this way the grass is not too long as the fields go into winter. In his experience, the grass sward can get off to a better start the following spring, if properly managed.

Fresh grass instead of soya

Experience is key: originally from the Netherlands, Monique and André Albring carved a new life for themselves as farmers in Ihorst when they acquired the farm in 2000. “My brother runs the family farm near Stadskanaal in the Dutch province of Drenthe and has long been an advocate of feeding fresh grass – like many other farmers in the Netherlands. The advisory bodies there are also well-acquainted with this method and can provide farmers with specialist help. Unfortunately, in my experience it’s not like that in Germany, which I think is a shame, because the economic benefits of feeding fresh grass are obvious,” he says – turning the conversation back to the three advantages mentioned at the beginning relating to ration formulation. ▶

also impairs the forage quality. On the other hand, too little rainfall, as was the case in the summer of 2022, can leave them with no fresh grass at all. “Although that’s unfortunate, it’s not usually a disaster. Where possible, we try to ensure that we always have enough forage for at least one and a half years – so we can easily ride out shortages,” explains André Albring.

If you’ve been paying attention and are wondering how you can feed and maintain the performance of 480 cows plus offspring – 900 animals in total – from 230ha of land, you’ll understand when you learn that the Albrings buy in maize from other local farmers every year. These take their slurry in return. Furthermore, the Albring family can make use of the 3rd and 4th cut from neighbouring farmers who don’t want to use this forage themselves.

André Albring finds that 22–25cm is the ideal growth height of fresh grass and that 30cm is the maximum. The stubble length should be between 8 and 10cm to avoid forage contamination.

The Albring Farm has grown in several stages during the last 20 years. Some of the young stock and heifers are now kept on a second farm.



André calculates an average of 40kg TMR per cow per day in summer, the ration consisting of 24kg of silage maize, 8kg of grass silage, 1kg of soya, 2kg of rapeseed meal and 5l of water. In addition, he feeds each cow up to 40kg of fresh grass each day, although this is not mixed in with the TMR, but laid on top of it. During the winter, when no fresh grass is available, he increases the TMR to around

50kg per cow per day and adds soya meal to the mix. The ration is fed out every morning and then banked back up several times a day with the wheel loader. As mentioned, the fresh grass is fed during the morning although the ideal time would be in the afternoon. "But then no cow would come to the milking parlour before the last blade of grass had been eaten – and that would interfere with our workflow," he grins.

Strict cost accounting

The third plus point of feeding fresh grass is cost effectiveness. On the cost side, there is of course the machinery to factor in – front mower and forage wagon – plus labour and fuel costs for cutting and bringing in the grass, which takes around 1 h/day. But on the credit side, there are savings especially on soya meal. "When soya prices skyrocketed nearly 100% in 2022, this was the main factor behind our decision to consider fresh grass as an alternative. Today we replace around 600kg of soya with fresh grass every day." Over the course of 180 days, that's an annual saving of around 108t or, based on the current price for non-GMO-soya of around 540€/t (as of May 2023), more than €58,000. In 2022 it was almost €65,000. "For this reason alone, fresh grass is an entirely logical decision for us. On top of that, there are many other aspects such as animal health and palatability of the feed and the associated higher uptake, which has ultimately increased milk yields per animal and lactation period by up to 150l, according to our calculations," explains André. Also, sustainability increases as we replace at least some of the soya. This is another important aspect – especially from the consumer's point of view – which must not be underestimated.

The average milk yields of the Albring herd currently stand at 8,000 litres per cow – so it's not exceptionally high. But the "inside milk values" tell

a different story: 3.7% protein and 4.3% fat speak for themselves. Even more important in terms of profitability are the low veterinary costs as a result of good welfare conditions, a good diet and an average of four lactations per cow. "The majority of our cows produce even more milk; yet in 2010 we started replacing Holstein Frisians by Simmentals. With this breed some cows are stuck at 20kg per day, so we sell them more quickly, which reduces the average herd productivity slightly. The main advantage of Simmentals, however, is their beef performance. Also, Simmental bull calves achieve significantly higher prices than Holsteins. All in all, the numbers add up very well for us," Monique Albring explains.

On top of looking after family – four children, six farm staff including one apprentice – and helping out on the farm, she is in charge of the office work. As a qualified bank clerk, profitability is something she clearly understands. "Profitability has been hugely important for us right from the start, because when we took over in 2000 we had very little equity. We had 10ha of owned land, 30ha of leased land and 40 cows. Then we have gradually grown to our current size – without skating on too thin ice in financial terms. That wouldn't have worked, if viability hadn't been our absolute premise," she adds.



Digital through and through: electronic control systems and camera in the tractor cab.

Albring Farm in brief

230ha of land, 180ha of which is grassland
480 dairy cows plus offspring
Average milk production: 8,000l/animal/year with 3.7% protein and 4.3% fat
Feeding fresh grass in summer reduces soya consumption by around 108t/year

A compact combination for safe travel on the narrow country roads.



The TMR consists of silage maize, grass silage, soya, oilseed rape and water.

On an equal footing



Promoting dialogue between farmers and consumers, the German Forum for Modern Agriculture (FML) offers a diverse programme of events to do just that. Managing director Lea Fließ describes the association's aims and activities.

XtraBlatt: Ms Fließ, what topics are the main focus of the Forum for Modern Agriculture's events?

Lea Fließ: We cover all topics of farming – from pumpkin growing, loose housing and from arable farming to livestock husbandry. But we are also very much guided by what matters to consumers. In our experience, there are essentially three areas to address. Firstly, how are the livestock treated and what are farmers doing to protect nature?

Secondly, we are constantly raising the issue of security of supply, because this is something consumers rarely consider, although that has changed since the war in the Ukraine. We want to show that farming connects everything: it supplies people with food and manages sustainably for nature and the animals. And thirdly, the subject of nutrition regularly crops up in our activities and is illustrated from various angles. Yet, we do not take a stance on diets. This is something everyone must decide for themselves.

XtraBlatt: The association's activities are paid for by the members. Who are they?

Lea Fließ: We currently have 66 members. Half of them are associations and the other half are businesses, mainly from the upstream agricultural sector. For example, the German Farmers' Association (DBV), the German Agricultural Society (DLG) and the Raiffeisenverband (the German umbrella association for agricultural cooperatives), as well as larger companies and small businesses.

XtraBlatt: What are the aims of the Forum?

Lea Fließ: We want to give the many stakeholders in the agricultural industry and the upstream sector an opportunity to engage in dialogue with the general public. We give consumers fascinating insights into the industry and show what agriculture is really like today. Our industry has been on a path to greater sustainability for several years now. In order to succeed in this transformation, it needs the approval of the public – and that's where we come in. Large parts of the general public and the media are still unaware of many of the positive contributions the farming industry makes to society and the environment.

XtraBlatt: You use AgrarScouts for many of your campaigns. Who are these people and what do they do?

Lea Fließ: The idea of AgrarScouts first came about at our educational agricultural Event Farm programme at the Grüne Woche show in Berlin in 2016. There are now 800 of these volunteer "agri scouts" – quite a large network of farmers and trainees from different companies. Die

Scouts sind ehrenamtlich tätig. They receive one day's training on how to communicate rather than what to communicate. We show them how important it is to listen first and to find out what the other person knows rather than bombarding them with figures. They should talk about their work on the farm and what they do each day. We find that this format works very well – both for the farmers and for the general public.



» Profile

Lea Fließ is the managing director of the Forum for Modern Agriculture which she joined in 2015.

One campaign of the Forum For Modern Agriculture is the interactive exhibition titled "Klimaklo" – the world's smallest agricultural exhibition on climate change.

XtraBlatt: What kind of activities and events do you offer people locally?

Lea Fließ: The ten members of our core team are creative experts in the fields of communication, events management and agriculture. We try to offer something new every year. Our marketplace events are a well-proven format for starting a conversation with the public. For example, we organised a discovery tour, which involved travelling around the country with a small info bus. On another occasion, we took a couple of tractors to a location in the centre of Berlin and invited residents to go for a spin. As it rained all day, we drove the people back home with their shopping and so had plenty of time to chat. We also set up the world's smallest agricultural climate exhibition in a portalo – dubbed the Klimaklo. This was another of our marketplace campaigns.



The German Forum for Modern Agriculture stages talks of its "AgrarScouts" with the public at prominent locations in towns and cities. The photo shows them at the Berlin Food Week.

Our annual “Farmer for a Day” event provides an opportunity for the public to gain hands-on experience of farming life. On 13 May this year anyone interested could apply to spend a few hours working with a farmer – it’s one of our most popular activities. Due to high demand, we had to close our call for applications on social media early this year. All in all, we organised 80 farm visits that day. We are also involved in education and we visit schools. For example, we invite farmers to the classes and design the lesson with them.

XtraBlatt: *And you award sustainable solutions for the future of farming!*

Lea Fließ: Yes, that’s right. Our Innovation Award for Modern Agriculture is now in its third year. The protection of our climate, environment and the species is a particular challenge for farmers. These awards also aim to raise public awareness. We showcase creative solutions that have already been developed, such as new technologies or sales processes.



Shoppers at supermarkets often welcome the initiative of AgrarScouts talking about their farm work and answering questions.

XtraBlatt: *Which topics come up time and again in these discussions?*

Lea Fließ: We often get asked questions about intensive livestock farming – such as “Why do you keep such a high number of animals in a house?”, “Why can’t the animals get out in the fresh air?”, “Why is it so cramped in there?”, “Do you treat them with antibiotics, even when they are not sick?” or “Why do we need pesticides and artificial fertilisers?”.

XtraBlatt: *Give us a few examples of how the AgrarScouts would respond!*

Lea Fließ: We point out that it is a major achievement for our agricultural industry to supply Germany with high quality food as well as

exporting it to many other countries. We explain that problems inevitably arise with all the associated processes and we are now tackling them. We talk about solutions which are already being implemented. But we also make clear that we still have to develop further solutions and that we are working hard on them.

Take pesticides for example – a topic which the general public is often highly critical of at first. Our visitors ask us why we use these chemicals in the first place. People are worried about possible effects on the environment, climate and so on. During the conversation, we try to steer the topic back into the appropriate context: we explain that farmers use pesticides only in small quantities that fit in a tiny pipette. The chemical is diluted with water and applied in the smallest possible dose. Examples like this help many people to better understand the management actions.

XtraBlatt: *What tips do you give farmers for communicating with consumers?*

Lea Fließ: Above all, we recommend that they just be themselves. Rather than talking about “the agricultural industry”, they should talk about their own farm, their specific challenges and, of course, what they could do better. It is always helpful to admit that you yourself were troubled by some aspect or other in the past. There’s nothing wrong with farmers being honest in saying: I’m glad that we’ve moved on from here. They should demonstrate that they are heading in the right direction, that obviously they don’t get everything right, but that many situations cannot be changed overnight. And they can speak out and specify what exactly they would need in order to develop new solutions, namely support in the form of a conducive political environment and support from the public. For example, a planning application for a new livestock shed can come unstuck when a public initiative campaigns against such plans. This is something we have to explain over and over again.

XtraBlatt: *Farmers can of course engage with consumers independently, can’t they?*

Lea Fließ: Yes, we often point that out. The important thing is to talk to people on an equal footing and not down to them sitting on the tractor. Farmers can also be proactive and discuss important issues with the media, invite them to the farm or take the initiative to clarify certain points in more detail.

XtraBlatt: *How do you gain an accurate picture of the response to your campaigns?*

Lea Fließ: We do this in two ways. We gather reactions for visitors on the ground and look at what



Visitors to the Event Farm at Grüne Woche show in Berlin enjoy the 360° VR farm life experience.

The very popular “Farmer for a Day” campaign gives people an insight into day-to-day farming. In between sessions, there’s time to chat and ask questions.

our followers on social media are saying about us. And we also conduct online surveys. The results of these surveys highlight other topics which we aim to address in subsequent campaigns.

That’s how we came up with climate protection. On the one hand, it’s a very obvious topic. On the other hand, we were surprised that the respondents didn’t perceive farmers as the main culprits but rather as part of the solution. This ultimately led to us planning the Klimaklo tour through Berlin. It was important for us to point out that agriculture cannot single-handedly solve the climate problem. We were able to engage effectively with the public because people already had a good understanding of this topic.

XtraBlatt: *What sort of reactions do you get from the public?*

Lea Fließ: Our activities are generally seen in a very positive light. People are happy to obtain concrete information from us on the subject. They appreciate the opportunity to talk directly to farmers and that we offer transparency and authenticity. That doesn’t mean of course that we always agree. In fact, we feed any criticism we hear to our members, although that’s not our main job. Yet, it’s important for people to express their criticism and talk to farmers about it.

Only very rarely does it happen that our AgrarScouts are accused of animal cruelty or well poisoners. On the contrary, like I said, we find there is a great deal of understanding for the situation farmers are in – rising costs and financial pres-

ures and all the responsibility their profession involves.

XtraBlatt: *What is the experience of the Forum with the media?*

Lea Fließ: I was somewhat surprised by the media’s understanding of the industry when I joined the German Forum for Modern Agriculture in 2015. I’m sorry to say that many media outlets report about agriculture in negative terms. And it’s not often easy for farmers to live with that. But through our activities we can show that the majority of the population takes a much more positive view.

Of course, the media has a duty to look at things critically. We see ourselves as educators in this situation. Our “Farmer for a Day” campaign, for example, always gets brilliant coverage in the local press and our Innovation Award is often covered by the national media. But there is still a lot more all stakeholders in the industry can do.

» More reading

Find out more about the German Forum for Modern Agriculture:



www.moderne-landwirtschaft.de



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‘Die moderne Landwirtschaft’



PRODUCTION

“Sustainability is in the DNA of a family business.”

Sustainable governance is becoming increasingly important as a means of expanding rather than restricting opportunities for future generations. How does the Krone Group address this issue? We spoke to Sustainability Manager Philipp Sander.

XtraBlatt: *Why are so many companies preoccupied with the subject of sustainability at this time?*

Philipp Sander: One reason is that banks, customers and insurance companies will base their credit terms and procurements on sustainability criteria in future. In addition, the war in Ukraine has taught us that purchasing energy and raw materials whenever we want and at a favourable price is no longer something we can take for granted. So we must give some thought to how we can become more independent. At the same time, employee satisfaction, especially in times of labour shortages, is the basis for long-term corporate success – and that is key aspect of sustainability.

XtraBlatt: *You are the Krone Group’s Sustainability Manager. What is your role exactly?*

Philipp Sander: I’m often asked this question, and I can understand why because the term “sustainable” is now so ubiquitous. My main task – in short – is to combine and coordinate the sustainability activities of the various departments across the Group to form the basis for a company-wide strategy for sustainable development. In future, we will set out these activities in our Sustainability Report.

XtraBlatt: *What exactly does this Sustainability Report contain and how often does it have to be updated?*

Philipp Sander: Basically, because of its size, the Krone Group has a statutory obligation to publish a robust Sustainability Report that incorporates

all sites from the 2025/26 financial year. Its aim is to provide an annual account of the sustainable business practices we have adopted in the areas of environmental, social and corporate governance. In concrete terms, this means that we must provide data on how much CO₂ is generated by the Krone facilities and products, how much waste, how much water is consumed, what workplace health and safety provisions we have in place and how we implement statutory requirements relating to respect for human rights and the avoidance of child labour throughout our supply chains. >



» Profile

Philipp Sander is 29 years old and has a master’s degree in energy management from Osnabrück University of Applied Sciences. He was appointed Sustainability Manager of the Krone Group on 1 August 2022.



Krone's strategy for sustainable development includes the generation of renewable energy on its own premises.

XtraBlatt: How do you interface with other areas of activity within the Krone Group?

Philipp Sander: To best represent the three areas of the Sustainability Report, we have set up an internal sustainability team, which essentially comprises our head of Compliance (to verify the legal conformity, integrity and business ethics of all corporate activities), head of Human Resources and an assistant to the management board. Since the Krone Group's environment-related issues are currently the main focus of my day-to-day business, I am in close contact with the energy and environmental officers at our Agricultural Machinery Division sites. In addition, I also work closely with our Corporate Strategy, Marketing and Purchasing departments as there are many overlaps in these areas. Another exciting aspect of my work is analysing start-up firms together with our investment management team – assessing them through the lens of sustainability...



Workplace safety, healthcare and reconciling work and family life are also considered key topics in the company's sustainability policy.

By summer 2023 we will have installed solar panels at all our sites. The total output will be around 5.5 MWp.

Philipp Sander, Sustainability Manager

XtraBlatt: As an ordering party, is Krone also responsible for supplier compliance with sustainability requirements? And if so, how do you monitor that?

Philipp Sander: Yes, but this is something that has to be done together, as we emphasised at our recent supplier conference. We have the advantage that most of our suppliers come from Germany and so compliance with applicable standards relating to respecting human rights and working conditions is a given. However, when it comes to the use of critical raw materials and resource-friendly production methods, we like to warn our suppliers of future requirements well in advance, which helps them. We make an effort to develop personal relationships especially with our suppliers for our major product groups, so it is easier to share information on upcoming requirements and challenges. However, "critical" suppliers will undoubtedly have to undergo on-site audits in future. But I would like to stress that

a sustainable primary industry, such as steel manufacturing, can make a major contribution to the sustainability of Krone products. In this respect, we are reliant on domestic politics to pave the way for a sustainable steel production in Germany and to provide manufacturers with the necessary support to adapt to these ever greater demands.

XtraBlatt: To what extent does Krone see it as its duty to urge sales partners to operate sustainably?

Philipp Sander: I would rather put it this way; we see it as our duty to reach out to our sales partners at an early stage of product development. This is to develop joint solutions to meet the needs of contractors and farmers. Agriculture faces the enormous challenge of feeding more and more people on the same amount of land. This can only be done with the aid of high-tech, high-quality machines that are used with the utmost efficiency. So ultimately, from a sustainability perspective, the aim is to prevent soil compaction and provide support through digital processes. If we also manage to produce our machines in the most climate-friendly way possible, then so much the better.

XtraBlatt: What steps is Krone taking to become more independent and sustainable in terms of energy?

Philipp Sander: As well as observing energy efficiency criteria when making new and replacement investments, the energy supply to our factories is a major lever. We prioritise our actions here in the following order: we use our own land for power generation, we look for local

partners for using renewable energy as well as for nationwide projects we can get involved in. By summer 2023 we will have installed solar panels at all our sites. The total output will be around 5.5 MWp. However, the long-term challenge is to procure renewable electricity in low-wind conditions at night and to replace natural gas, which we currently use in the paint shop, for example. It remains to be seen which alternatives will prove economically viable in the coming years in this highly volatile market.

XtraBlatt: In your view, how will sustainability within the Krone Group develop in perspective?

Philipp Sander: Basically, I think that the concept of sustainability has always been in the DNA of a family business, because these companies are always thinking about the next generation and so act with foresight. But it's also true that this theme has come increasingly to the fore in recent years. In essence, two topics will continue to be critical to the company's success: customer satisfaction – hence the quality and price of our products – and the motivation of our staff.

As far as the first topic is concerned, in terms of sustainability I regard resource efficiency, reparability and recycling as the key factors for long-term success. And it all starts with product development. Given the right political framework, I can also see wind power and hydrogen as major advantages for our Emsland factories. When it comes to motivating our staff, we must put the spotlight on fair remuneration, workplace safety, healthcare and reconciliation of work and family life. «



From 2025, the sustainability report must provide transparent data on how much CO₂ is emitted by the various Krone sites and the products, also how much waste is produced and how much water consumed by the sites.



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