

With a growing emphasis on non-chemical measures to control arable weeds, Opico has introduced a range of Hatzenbichler inter-row cultivators to its expansive selection of machinery. Alice Dyer reports.

# Mechanical weed control steps up a gear

**S**uitable for combinable, root, salad and specialist crops, Opico's latest inter-row cultivator addition cuts through weeds between the crop rows and works soil to aid plant establishment, without causing damage to the crop.

Opico has been importing comb harrows, grass harrows and seeders from Austrian firm Hatzenbichler since 1994. But a dwindling chemical armoury, pressure from consumers and supermarkets, and an increasing environmental agenda has spurred the need for more mechanical solutions.

Featuring a number of configurations, the machines can be used in wide row crops at 75cm centres, all the way to cereal crops at 16.5cm centres.

It is available in rear- or front-mounted versions, for those without GPS, and can be fully- or semi-mounted.

Three steering options are available: manual, mechanical, and camera guided for high volume performance.

For combinable crops, the inter-row cultivator is available in working widths of three



Opico will launch its range of Hatzenbichler inter-row cultivators at Lammas 2020.

metres up to 18m, with one, three or five hydraulic folding section frames at 12.5-30cm spacing.

## Depth

The firm's Vibro-tines with duck foot shares, which dislodge the weeds and cut soil at full width, can be adjusted to change the depth of the tine, and the cultivator's tough springs/coils

cut weeds without piling soil onto small cereal plants, says the manufacturer.

The sugar beet inter-row cultivator has a similar set-up, but weeds with three tines per row.

With 35-50cm spacing, rows can be adjusted to suit crops between those working widths, and optional plant protection discs are available to prevent soil being thrown onto young plants.

With slightly wider rows, the maize inter-row cultivator is available in working widths of 3-12m, with three or five tines per row.

The machine has 50-75cm spacings to cater for the narrower spacing now typical of crops for anaerobic digestion.

S-tines with A-shares are fitted to move more soil and to throw soil onto the bottom of

larger maize plants to smother weeds later in the season.

For maximum accuracy and to prevent any damage to crop, a bespoke tube profile, manufactured for Hatzenbichler, ensures the unit does not move as a result of vibrations along the main frame, while box section parallelograms prevent individual units twisting in hard going ground, says the manufacturer.

## Prices

### Combinable crop inter-row cultivators

- ▶▶ Six metres, 24 rows at 250mm spacing – £20,251 RRP
- ▶▶ 6m, 36 rows at 166mm spacing – £24,375 RRP
- ▶▶ Option – Section control Muller hydraulic row lift for 13 rows – £10,756 RRP

### Sugar beet inter-row cultivator

- ▶▶ 6m, 12 rows at 500mm spacing – £19,851 RRP

### Maize inter-row cultivator

- ▶▶ 6m, eight rows at 750mm spacing – £21,458 RRP
- ▶▶ Option – Seeder/applicator with loading platform – £8,674 RRP
- ▶▶ Option – Kress finger weeders for maize – £748 per row
- ▶▶ Option – pair of rolling row shields for maize – £208 per row

### Comb harrow and seeders

- ▶▶ 12m mounted Comb Harrow with 7mm tines – £10,738 RRP
- ▶▶ Air 16 Seeder and platform to fit 12m Comb harrow – £10,322 RRP
- ▶▶ 24m Comb Harrow 7mm – £40,512 RRP



## Harrow options

▶▶ For maize, sugar beet, vegetable and specialist crops, optional extras include rotating Kress finger weeders for use in bigger plants, which use rubberised fingers to dislodge weeds, getting closer to the row. Crop protectors are also available for small crops to prevent soil being thrown on top of them.

Seeders are an optional extra across each of the machines for undersowing, strip seeding and

band sowing. Coulters can be fitted to broadcast or drop seed after the last cultivation, or on the front to cultivate seed in.

## Targeted

The seeder also allows micro-fertilisers to be applied to the crop being weeded, for more targeted application.

Optional hydraulic row lift allows control of four to 13 sections, lifting each unit as it reaches the headland.

## Guidance

▶▶ For high volume performance, developments in guidance technology have created a

better platform for inter-row systems to work and the optional camera guidance has two parts

– the Hatzenbichler guidance headstock, with light, standard and XL headstock versions ranging from 450kg to 1,300kg.

Anchored by flange wheels running behind the tractor wheel, this ensures only the cultivator moves. The strength, weight and build of the headstock and flange are a key part of the system.

Dual hydraulic cylinders move

the machine from left to right in equal measures, using a similar system to a tractor steering ram to give precise, short, smooth movements, says Opico.

## Cameras

The Tillet and Hague guidance system uses two cameras mounted over the plant rows.

The camera being used is automatically selected, so if

there is a problem with a row due to crop failure, for example, it will automatically use the other camera's guidance. It also means when the cultivator reaches a headland at an angle, it automatically shuts off those tines.

The cameras identify how quickly it is moving to give the machine its speed, without the need for GPS.

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