

Northern Ireland IAgRE members visit Farmhand Ltd in Dublin

NI IAgRE Branch members recently travelled to Farmhand Ltd in Dublin to see and enjoy hearing the detail around the impressive facilities, from which well-known brands of agricultural machinery are supplied to the retail trade. We were welcomed by Mr Paul Scrivener, Farmhand's managing director. He explained how his grandfather, Mr Denis Scrivener, was friendly with the Krone family in Germany and how he started the business with their co-operation in 1962. The Krone family business is well known as the manufacturer of the popular Krone range of grassland machinery and they held a share in Farmhand until it was fully bought out in 1993 by the Scrivener family. Farmhand is the long-term exclusive wholesale agent for its current product brands. They supply the products and provide comprehensive technical support through its retail dealers. Fast Parts was set up as a separate generic spare parts division within Farmhand Ltd in 1987.

Import franchises for the Swedish built Quickie tractor mounted loader range began in mid 1960s followed by Amazone tillage equipment from Germany in 1968. Since then APV (from Austria), Zuidberg (from the Netherlands) and Flexxaire (from Canada) have been added.

Farmhand relocated their operations to the present 5200 sq metre modern hi-tech premises, on its 3.7 ha site in Damastown Industrial Estate, in 2008. A further extension was added in 2021. The product lines are distributed throughout the whole island of Ireland, via 30 independent family-based retail dealerships, including 6 in Northern Ireland. Some have represented Farmhand brands for more than 50 years,

Paul Scrivener took over as Managing Director from his father John in 2015. Farmhand now have a team of 50 full time employees involved in wholesale sales, distribution, machine assembly, technical knowledge transfer and training, warranty support, maintaining the stock of spares and in product promotion. Specialist demonstration teams and technical information staff promote the products at public field demonstrations and agricultural shows.

The product ranges held and distributed by Farmhand include the following brands.

The **Krone** ranges of grassland machinery are available in a wide range to suit all applications for both farmers and agricultural contractors. For grass harvesting, their largest tractor mounted 3-mower combination has a working width of up to 10.5 m. Krone have been making their own 10 m cut Big M (now 449hp) mower from 1996. It is still the only self-propelled unit of its type available and is very popular with contractors in Ireland. They appreciate its ease of use when working in the smallest

and most irregular shaped fields due to its maneuverability and elevated driver's cab position. Ireland is the biggest market for it with around 15 Big Ms sold there each year.

Krone also supply mounted or trailed grass tedders and rakes for swath preparation. Rakes for typical on-farm use have working widths up to 10 m. Larger units for contractors preparing a swath, to feed a high-output forage harvester, can collect across 19m and work at 15ha / hour or more in ideal field conditions.

Krone introduced their own high output self-propelled forage harvesters in 2009 as the Big X range. It now has power options from 490 hp to 1180hp and there are around 20 of them in use with contractors across Ireland.

Krone's ranges of self-loading forage wagons have been popular with both farmers and contractors in Ireland for the last 40 years. Load capacities range through 3 model ranges from 25 cubic metres to 43 cu m. They load / unload quickly and knife examination / rapid sharpening is facilitated by their swing- out cutter bars.

Amazone

Amazone's equipment for seed-bed preparation, seeding and fertiliser spreading is widely used across Ireland. Amazone also make their own auto-reset reversible ploughs following their acquisition of Vogel and Noot in 2016.

Their PTO-driven power harrows are popular both on their own and as part of combination tillage / seed drill units. Final assembly is often completed on site to incorporate the detail specification orders from specific customers. Farmhand maintain large stocks of alternative component types such as packer rollers, cage, tooth packer, wedge ring types, in various sizes. Amazone power harrows feature quick release tines on a low- maintenance bed with oil immersed gears and bearings. Their range of tractor-mounted harrows is available in 3m, 4m or 6m folding versions.

A range of seed drills, for mounting on top to form the popular combination tillage / sowing units, is available. The basic units have mechanical seed metering but most of the rest use pneumatic hose- fed coulters. They also offer a drill with precision seeding units. Seed carrying capacity can be extended by adding a front-linkage mounted tank. Trailed versions carrying up to 4,000 litres of seed are also available with working widths of 6m. The largest version can carry 7,800 l and sow on up to 15m bout widths.

Amazone twin-disc mounted fertiliser spreaders are available in either PTO or hydraulic drive versions. The latter versions incorporate advanced features such as variable disc speeds matched to hopper outlet settings controlled by ISOBUS. This can

alter application rates in response to electronic field maps. We enjoyed service manager Gary Ryan's technical explanations of how the features were set up and managed in the field to achieve accurate spreading of all types of granular fertiliser. There is the option of the Wind Control feature to offset the distortion effects of cross winds on lateral spreading accuracy. As well as the traditional use of collection trays to check even spread distribution a convenient system of flexible rubber mats can now be used. Bout widths up to 36m are available and the TS version can spread across 54 m.

Amazone also make large trailed spreaders with load capacities up to 10,000 litres. Some can spread both granular fertiliser and other products like ground lime. Farmhand also showed us an actual demountable demonstration example mounted on a 6 wd Mercedes truck chassis.

Amazone crop sprayers are available as both tractor mounted or trailed versions, the mounted versions are available with tank capacities ranging from 900 to 2000 litres and boom widths from 12 to 30 m. Manual or automatic ISOBUS control extends to individual boom sections and nozzles. Control of individual nozzles is now possible to maintain even application during turning when the outside of the boom travels faster over the ground than the inside. Other features include automatic boom levelling.

We enjoyed Mr Ryan's demonstration of the control functions for induction filling, using ,emptying, cleaning and boom folding on a UF 2002 version. On 4wd tractors the option of a front mounted tank is now a popular option which can increase the total combination carrying capacity up to 3500 l. Trailed versions using the same control technology are available with tank capacities from 3200 to 5200 litres and boom widths up to 30 metres. Increased interest in on-farm liquid fertiliser application is now extending the role and use of crop sprayers.

Quicke the Swedish made Quicke tractor fore-loaders have been available through Farmhand since the mid-1960s. It is recognised as the most popular tractor loader brand in Ireland with around 35,000 being sold so far. Farmhand supply loader attachments such as Quicke's own bale handlers and silage grabs. As well as basic loaders for smaller tractors, those for medium / large tractor use now offer options of electronic control and data collection.

APV is an Austrian based manufacturer of compact grass harrows and spreading / sowing equipment for small seeds and pellet / granular products. As well as small implements, which can be operated by a quad or small tractor, the APV components can also be incorporated on larger cultivators or cereal seed drills for simultaneous application of grass seed or small granule crop protection products.

The **Zuidberg** range of front mounted tractor linkages and PTO drives, made in the Netherlands, can be retro- fitted on most tractor models.

Flexxaire is a Canadian manufacturer of reversible hydraulic cooling fans for diesel engines. The airflow through radiator grills on some engine driven harvesting machines can get blocked by plant/ straw type debris leading to overheating. This fan automatically reverses to blow off the debris before returning to its normal cooling mode direction.

Farmhand spares franchise

FAST PARTS was set up in 1987 as a separate division to supply fast wearing replacement parts for both the agriculture and construction sectors. This involves 35 brands distributed across 350 dealer outlets. The parts ranges cover all types of tillage, harvesting, crop protection, tractors, and other equipment. One supplier example is Ireland based Dromone Engineering, a specialist manufacturer of both tractor hitch systems and quick-attach bucket systems for construction plant.

Farmhand Ltd stores more than 35,000 lines of separate parts in specialist IT controlled storage buildings. As well as several large service and repair workshop areas there are also drive-in covered storage buildings with outside yard areas for parking of machines and the loading / unloading of transport HGVs.

The visit ended with IAgRE Branch Chairman Lawrence Knox thanking the directors and staff for their warm welcome to such an informative and enjoyable visit. It was a unique opportunity to hear about the origin of this impressive business and see how it is run. We wish Farmhand Ltd, and all the people involved there best wishes for the future.

More details of the Farmhand Ltd business, its range of products, services and dealerships can be viewed on <http://www.farmhand.ie>

Photos of the day follow below:

1. With our Farmhand hosts
2. Listening to the technical details of the Amazone crop sprayer
3. L-R IAgRE Branch Chair Lawrence Knox, with Farmhand staff Adrian Leech, T J Doyle, Gary Ryan and Peter Verhoeven

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