

Can-Do Timbers has full confidence in John Deere mechanized solutions

There are said to be many reasons for mechanized timber harvesting with safety being at the forefront. However, at the end of the day increased and efficient production is what counts as the world demands all the diversified products that the wonder of forestry produces.

Keeping up-to-date with the latest technology is not always easy but a well-known timber harvesting contractor in Mpumalanga has seized the opportunity of deploying some of the most modern equipment in the world in a gum harvesting application.

Cassie Greyling of Can-Do Timbers, based in Barberton, recently took delivery of a John Deere 859MH Tracked Harvester and a John Deere 1910E Forwarder. The former is fitted with a Waratah 616C Harvesting Head with full 360-degree 'through-hose' rotation.

"Our policy on mechanization still stands as a 60:40 split in favour of mechanized harvesting and we had been operating in this particular area near Graskop since 2014 where our contract allowed us to buy a new John Deere 759JH Tracked Harvester and a John Deere 1710D Forwarder," Cassie explains. "Both these machines, which we will keep, have given us excellent service of 30 000 and 20 000 hours respectively. In keeping with our thinking of staying up-to-date, we're excited

about the full potential that our new equipment is yet to reach."

According to Bell Equipment Product Manager: Forestry & Agriculture, Charles Inggs, John Deere's new M-series Tracked Harvesters have revolutionized mechanical harvesting in terms of increased productivity and operator comfort. Their proven and reliable 9,0 litre John Deere engine offers 300HP.

"The engine has changed position whereby the cooling packs are situated at the back of the machine incorporating the variable speed,

reversible, hydraulically driven cooling system fan. The cooler packs swing out making the cleaning and maintenance times a lot quicker. The powered opening clamshell engine enclosure further provides easy access with a working platform for daily service checks and repair as well as access to filters for regular service intervals.

"The new cab on the 800 M-series has 44% more front window area and has 17% more interior space. By doing this, the cab position has moved forward whereby the visibility out to the righthand side has dramatically increased. Further contributing to the productivity increase is the Rapid Cycle System (RCS) integrated into the boom as standard on all 800 M-series machines. A single joystick controls the motion of the boom, stick, and head in a straight, level path. This has equated to a 35% faster cycle time compared to the previous J-series machines. The system can be switched on and off as well as adjusted to meet harvest site conditions," he says.

On the levelling machines, the 800 M-series comes out standard with the U7 extreme-duty undercarriage. This provides for a longer track chain and roller life as well as superior stability on slopes creating better productivity.

"Even though the 859MH Harvester is 10-tons heavier than its predecessor, it still burns only 23 litres of diesel an hour, which has been a pleasant surprise to us but we suspect it's because it really runs at much lower rpm," Cassie says. "The Waratah 616C Harvesting Head swinging through a full 360 degrees also saves time which leads to improved efficiencies."

John Deere's largest 1910E Forwarder shouts out ease of operation for better productivity. It boasts



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Charles Inggs (left) Bell Equipment Product Manager: Forestry & Agriculture with Cassie Greyling, owner of Can-Do Timbers.

an innovative rotating and levelling cab where improved operator comfort has been attained. Ergonomic armrests and the Timbermatic™ F-09 automation allows effortless, fingertip control of loader functions. A large expanse of floor-to-ceiling tinted glass and large side and rear windows allow virtually unrestricted all-round visibility.

“We’ve been impressed by the fact that the software in both these new John Deere models is Windows-based, which has made the interface with our own systems so much easier,” Cassie adds. “John Deere’s Timberlink™ and Timbermatic™ monitoring systems help boost uptime while minimizing maintenance and daily operating costs and give us full production and engine performance information via satellite.”

The load bunk on the John Deere 1910E Forwarder is larger than that on the 1710D model and can easily handle a load of 19 tonnes. Can-Do Timbers’ teams though will on average take loads of approximately 12 tonnes as gum is not that dense. An added feature is the ability to adjust the load space with the Variable Load Space system,

depending on what lengths of timber are carried. The V-shaped bottom of the load bunk gives better clearance over rocks and stumps and a smoother ride in rough terrain.

“We work on wet rates and at 14 litres an hour, the John Deere 1910E Forwarder fits our contract perfectly,” Cassie remarks. “As to replacement hours, we do an average of about 6 000 hours a year and we look to replace machines at 18 000 hours as that’s when component replacement starts costing money.”

“Looking back though, with our careful maintenance regimes and the technical back-up of Bell Equipment in Nelspruit, our previous John Deere 759 Harvester had its engine rebuilt at 23 000 hours, which says a lot for the longevity of the machine should it be needed.”

“On the whole, we expect an increase of between 4 and 5% in our productivity and should we achieve that, this whole exercise would have been worth it. Mechanization with state-of-the-art equipment such as these John Deere machines is the way to go.”