

JCB 530-70 Loadall is the ultimate multi-tool for Aqua Farming

Imagine buying a machine that you thought would be used for the sole purpose of loading bales of animal feed but during a scant two months of using it you find that it is so useful for a myriad of tasks that you gradually come to consider buying a second similar model.

This is exactly what has happened to Johan Greyling, the owner of Aqua Farming (Pty) Ltd, a large and successful commercial farming operation in the Western Free State, situated between Hertzogville in the Free State and Christiana in the North West Province.

Johan and his wife, Ronél, are the third generation of the Greyling family to farm this land after the arrival of Johan's grandfather, Faan, in 1938. Johan's father, Carel, took over the farming before Johan started farming in 1993 having completed a BSc Agric degree at Free State University.

"You may think our farm has an unusual name in Aqua Farming but there is an interesting tale to the

origin of its name," Johan tells us. "When my grandfather first worked this land there was no water, and water was conveyed 6km from the Vaal River using donkeys. When water was later found by drilling under an earthen bank, our family was so grateful that they called the farm Aqua and when we registered a farming company in 2003, we stuck with the name."

Aqua Farming has made its name cultivating potatoes, onions, lucerne and pecan nuts on a substantial scale with Simbra cattle and Merino sheep adding balance to the land usage. Johan and Ronél, who is a former schoolteacher, are also known for the way in which they treat their staff and the community around them with many initiatives in wellness, adult education,

schooling, scholarships, and various outreach programmes. The farm's motto of "quality counts" applies to its people, animals and produce.

"We produce five cultivars of potato as well as potato seed. Our commercial potatoes are sold to a large supermarket group and to those companies producing potato crisps and frozen products," Johan explains. "It is however on the animal feed side that we've shown some good growth and our lucerne is exported to amongst others, China, the United Arab Emirates, and Botswana."

Aqua Farming's lucerne is baled into especially dense rectangular bales that weigh 700kg each, with multiple bales stacked three high fitting snugly into a shipping

container. Handling the bales had been done with an agricultural tractor equipped with forks but Johan and his team were on the lookout for a nimbler machine with dedicated hydraulic functions that could provide faster and safer handling of the lucerne bales.

"We really looked around the wider market for a dedicated and versatile loading tool and we eventually found what we were looking for when visiting the Bell Equipment stand at Nampo in 2023 where we first saw the JCB 530-70 Loadall," Johan adds. "The special offer on the machine when purchased at Nampo made the offer to purchase even more enticing despite it being more reasonably priced than competitor models. With financing in place, we were pleased to be dealing with Johan Griesel, the Sales Representative of JBJ Machinery, the Bell Forestry and Agriculture dealer in Schweizer-Reneke. We have a long business relationship with Johan and he saw to it that we took safe delivery of the JCB 530-70 Loadall in June 2023."

"It would be safe to say that a product that was developed for the construction market is now delivering huge benefits to us in the agricultural space," says Cassie du Preez, Aqua Farming's Lucerne Production Manager. "To call the JCB 530-70 Loadall versatile would be an understatement as we keep finding new uses for it almost daily."

The JCB 530-70 Loadall is fitted with JCB's quickhitch system that sees the bucket quickly interchanged with a set of forks and Aqua Farming has taken the tool attachment selection a step further by manufacturing a spiked bracket that safely holds three 700kg bales of lucerne when loading into tautliner trucks or shipping containers.

With the standard fork attachment the JCB 530-70 Loadall easily handles and stacks pallets containing potatoes and pecan nuts as well as bulk bags of commodities like fertiliser. The bucket has proved valuable backfilling trenches and loading farm produce such as maize and silage.

"We impressed ourselves recently when installing solar panels on the roof of our shed and we used the forks and the long reach of the machine to lift pallets of solar panels onto the roof. This task, had it been done manually, would have been very slow, clumsy, and not altogether safe," Johan says. "For us though, the speed with which we can now load lucerne bales stacked three high into a shipping container is justification enough to have bought the JCB 530-70 Loadall. All its ancillary uses, with our different divisions vying for its availability, really got us thinking whether a second similar machine would not see various farming operations running smoother."

While Aqua Farming's JCB 530-70 Loadall is still new, Johan is considering a maintenance contract with JBJ Machinery, as the official dealer, to maintain the machine once it exits its 12-month/unlimited hours warranty period. It is envisaged that at the present usage of around four hours a day and for 10 active months of the year, the machine's current fuel consumption of 5,02 litres of diesel an hour will fit in well with the farm's budget.



Owner of Aqua Farming (Pty) Ltd, Johan Greyling (left), with JBJ Machinery Sales Representative, Johan Griesel, and Aqua Farming's Lucerne Production Manager, Cassie du Preez.

