

F-series slashes Agri-trans Partnership's fuel bill

Should any vital link in a value chain not function to capacity or fail, the whole chain is negatively affected. The same applies to the transport of felled timber and sugar cane as an owner-operator in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands has found and, to his credit, he has discovered a reliable and efficient solution to keep delivering a sustained service.

Stan Trollip along with his wife, Bridgette, and son, Ryan, owns and manages Agri-trans Partnership, a transport company near New Hanover. Stan had grown up in the Mooi River area where his father had managed a farm with a dairy and racehorses.

"I had come to work on a sugar farm in the New Hanover area and when my employer emigrated, I was fortunate to be able to take over the farm,"

he says. "As the farm already had trucks used for sugar cane transport, it seemed natural to continue in that vein and so build a business."

The Trollip family also owns a timber farm aptly named Linton in the Mooi River area which prompted them to expand their business to include the transport of felled timber to pulp and paper mills. "Our truck fleet across many different sized vehicles has grown to 29 and we fetch sugar cane in about a 50km radius from New Hanover and transport it to sugar mills at Noodsberg, Dalton and even as far as Maidstone near Tongaat," Stan explains. "Timber on the other hand is fetched from as far away as Mooi River, Winterton and Greytown and taken to pulp and paper mills in Richards Bay, Umkomaas and Durban."

Hauling bulk freight such as sugar cane or timber implies that mechanical loading will take place at some point and here Agri-trans relies on Bell Equipment's legendary tri-wheeled machines for those onerous tasks. "We first bought a used Bell 100 Cane Loader with lots of hours on its clock in 1996 and used that to load our

cane trailers," Stan says. "We've bought numerous secondhand Bell Cane Loaders since then, but our first new Bell 125 Cane Loader arrived in 2010 and has since clocked 21 000 hours."

Agri-trans had bought various used Bell Cane Loaders and Loggers over the years and, with a fully equipped workshop and three qualified mechanics, has not shied away from rebuilding these machines including refurbishing engines and transmissions.

"We're aware that Bell Equipment first built its reputation on these reliable tri-wheelers and that's why we've never been afraid to buy a used Bell Cane Loader or Logger," says Ryan Trollip. "The quality of their design and build is such that with the same care and correct maintenance any decent machine deserves, reliability is guaranteed, and longevity is a given."

In 2018, Agri-trans was once again in the market for new Bell Tri-Wheelers and this time excitement ran high when the company took delivery of the new F-series machines with two Bell 125F Cane Loaders and a Bell 225F Logger.

"Bell Equipment's Sales Representative, Keith Milne, had told us about this new Yanmar water-cooled engine and he wasn't exaggerating as it runs so quietly and is fuel efficient to boot," Ryan enthuses. "We've also found that with the fuel tanks underneath the machine, the centre of gravity has improved the machine's stability, which leads to a safer machine for our operators."



Both Stan and Ryan have been impressed by the Bell 125F and Bell 225F machines' fuel consumption. "You would appreciate that being in transport, we're very aware of how much fuel our fleet consumes in a month and that is pretty close to 160 000 litres, a huge overhead," Stan adds. "This is why we're so amazed at how much less fuel our F-series Bell machines are using as these are some of the key factors that lower production costs and improve bottom line margins."

According to Stan, Agri-trans' older Bell Cane Loaders use on average 6,11 litres per hour compared to the F-series machine at 4,86 litres an hour. The older Bell 220 Loggers burn 6,21 litres compared to the new Bell 225F Logger at 4,75.

Agri-trans Partnership operates around the clock except for Sunday nights. Owners and operators alike have been impressed by the LED lighting on the new F-series machines that makes for safer night-time operations. Night-time operations are favoured as delays at especially the sugar mills are reduced while cane harvesting happens only in daylight. Each Bell Cane Loader easily handles 180 to 200 tons of cut cane in a 12-hour shift.

"We move our fleet of eight Bell Cane Loaders and Loggers between the various loading zones and roadside depots using roll-back trucks," Ryan explains. "It takes on average about 90 minutes for a Bell 220 Logger to load a 38-ton truck and each machine normally loads 200 tons of timber in a shift."

Agri-trans relies on Bell Equipment's Pietermaritzburg Customer Service Centre for its maintenance and spares. "We've always had the assurance that Bell Equipment understands and appreciates our business model and should a particular part not be available, we know we'll have it within 24 hours," Ryan says. "This cuts our downtime to manageable levels."

"With the way we work, it would be impossible to maintain the value chain if it were not for our Bell Tri-Wheelers loading both cane and timber," Stan concludes. "That's why it was a particularly happy day in early October 2021 when we took delivery of another new Bell 225F Logger to further prove our commitment to our many loyal clients."



From left: Keith Milne (Bell Equipment Sales Representative), Ndoda Ngubane, Wellington Gondo, Berg Arntzen (Agri-trans Timber Manager), Ryan Trollip, Stan Trollip, Bridgette Trollip and Sikhavathi Jekevu. (Back): Bell Operator, Mzandile Madondo.