

# Farming more precisely



**James Johns farms 450 acres outside Truro, Cornwall. The farm holds 250 milking cows and grows mainly grass, as well as about 150 acres of maize. The farm is slowly moving towards a zero grazing management regime, as the farm is fairly wet and this will minimise damage to the pasture.**

Mr Johns registered for a Soils for Profit visit in 2010, and on applying was interested in investing in GPS guidance on the farm and subsoiling techniques to help alleviate compaction and other structural issues. After his advice visit Mr Johns submitted an application to the capital grant scheme and was successful in receiving a grant to purchase a trailing shoe slurry applicator and a GPS guidance system. During the visit, the use of a trailing shoe was discussed as a way to reduce artificial fertiliser use on the grazing ground and to make better use of the nutrients in the slurry.



Trailing shoe slurry attachment

*“The advantages of the trailing shoe machine, allow you to spread a much more precise amount of slurry per acre, and target it where you want it to go. We have noticed that applying it in this way, greatly reduces the smell when compared to a splash plate,”* Mr Johns commented. However it does have some complexities on this farm. *“If we are applying a large volume of slurry per acre, we quite often see lines of sand left in the*

*pasture, due to the use of sand in the cubicles. It’s also not a quick process acres per hour are limited depending where you are. There could also be soil compaction due to the overall weight of tractor and tanker in marginal weather conditions. However we can access the ground with the cows quicker than applying it with a splash plate.”*

As well as the trailing shoe, Mr Johns also invested in a GPS light bar guidance system. He is very positive about the investment and feels that he is able to complete field tasks much more accurately. *“The screen takes out human error,”* Mr Johns remarks, *“it means that it is easier to continue driving when it gets dark, and minimises overlapping and over application. We can spread fertiliser much more accurately, and with rising prices, it can only be a good thing.”* Mr Johns does not use the system for cultivating as he feels that on his system the tolerances aren’t there yet. Occasionally there are signal problems, where guess work usually saves the day.

*“If I was buying it again, I would probably get a model with a bigger screen”* admits Mr Johns. *“But even without the grant, I would have invested in the guidance system. The visit was very useful and the advisor was knowledgeable. It is good to have an opportunity to invest in equipment that helps make the farm more efficient.”*

If you would like to learn more about precision farming please click [here](#).