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Harvest Champion

Eric Watson continues New Zealand's championship pedigree with his record setting wheat harvest

An Engineering Dream

MacDon's engineers get their way with the company's next generation of Headers and Windrowers

The Right Way, The First Time

Michigan Farmer Pat Feldpausch has learned from experience to always put your best foot forward

MacDon Family Day

The family culture stays strong at MacDon with events like Family Day

2018 Calendar Inside!

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Harvest Champion

Eric Watson continues New Zealand's championship pedigree with his record setting wheat harvest

By world standards, the size of New Zealand's arable industry is downright tiny. According to the Institute of Agriculture and Environment at New Zealand's Massey University, a mere 145,000 hectares (358,000 acres) of wheat, barley and oats was grown in 2012, roughly one tenth the area allocated to wheat production in North Dakota each year. So for New Zealand to hold not one, *but two*, Guinness World Records in grain farming is beyond remarkable.

Performance Magazine chronicled the first of these records back in the fall of 2015 (*For The Record, Issue 19*) which was set by Canterbury area farmer Warren Darling for barley production. Now another Canterbury farmer, Eric Watson, holds the World Record for wheat yield thanks to his monster harvest of 16.791 tonnes per hectare (249.68 bu/acre), breaking the previous record set by a UK farmer the previous northern hemisphere harvest. This was Watson's second attempt at the record, who says that wheat harvests of 14 or 15 tonne a hectare are not uncommon in his area, a few tonnes higher than the 12 tonne are the norm for irrigated wheat in New Zealand.

"Harvests like that are what we aspire to do, or even higher," said Eric Watson who manages his farm with wife Maxine. "We're always trying to get the highest yields possible."

Watson says that, while Darling's record barley harvest was part of his inspiration to try for the wheat record, what really gave him the push to make the attempt was encouragement from David Weith, a Regional Sales Manager with Bayer Crop Science.

“David was the guy who sort of looked after it all and helped me a lot. He said if somebody could do it, it would be me.”

Watson says that having people like Weith alongside him was essential, for a lot of preparation and planning goes into making a Guinness World Record attempt.

“We’re always trying to get the highest yields possible.”

“First, the field has to be surveyed by a registered surveyor so that you are harvesting exactly the right area. You also have to be careful with your inputs; in the Guinness rules you can’t use anything over the label recommendations for your country. You can’t use excessive herbicides, fungicides or growth regulators on your field. As well, the crop has to be regularly monitored and checked off by an agronomist whose qualifications are recognized by Guinness.”

For the attempt Watson used Oakley, an autumn-sown wheat variety developed in Britain and marketed in New Zealand by Carrfield Grain and Seed; the same company behind the variety used in Warren Darling’s record. It was planted in April of 2016 just before the start of the southern hemisphere’s winter.

“We had a pretty good autumn. It was dry, mild and very good sowing conditions, some of the best we had had for years. The winter was very kind too. In fact it was too good; the crop was a week or two too far advanced coming out of the winter, going into the spring.”

Fortunately, cold weather in October, November and early December slowed things down, so that the crop evened out and it became a fairly normal growing season for us, with adequate measures of rainfall and sun to support the record attempt. Watson says that there was nothing exceptional about the season, and everything unfolded “pretty much as expected.”

“The crop was very well looked after, but then most of our crops are. Paul Johnston, Arable Specialist with Yara Fertilisers undertook leaf analysis testing every fortnight through the growing season, just to make sure that it wasn’t short of anything. When needed, we applied trace elements to the crop and I think that certainly helped keep the crop very healthy.”

A week before harvest in mid February, Watson took a test cut out of the field and the results gave him hope that the record was within reach.

“My yield monitor on the combine was showing slightly less than I thought the crop was doing. It was reading about 2% lower, but it gave us a good idea of where we were at.”

When harvest day finally arrived on February 17, 2017, Watson’s farm became a hive of activity. “We had a great team of about 20 professionals and volunteers around us on the day. There were two justices of the peace to verify everything, a group of helpers from Bayer and two independent witnesses, one of whom was Warren Darling who had also helped with advice during the season. There was also a certified auditor from SGS, a big Swiss auditing company, to check the weighbridge and do all of the sampling. Finally, to provide an unbroken record of the attempt, we had to video the whole process. There was a camera in the field and a camera at the weighbridge, both manned during the whole harvest operation. There were also cameras in the harvester and in each of the chaser bin vehicles. There certainly were a lot of people here.”

After the harvest a team from Bayer helped to compile a comprehensive record to be submitted to Guinness of everything that was done to manage the crop. Completion of the paperwork, plus editing of the footage from the two cameras took about four to five weeks to complete but, once submitted it only took three days for Guinness to confirm that Watson had indeed broken the record.

Understandably proud of the achievement, Watson says that the record is not only a testament to New Zealand’s growing conditions, but also to the quality of people in the country’s Ag Industry.

“It’s a very good feeling to get the world record, but the record is also very important for our arable industry as it’s an under recognized industry in New Zealand. It may be very small but it’s very diverse and dynamic. We produce very good quality out of here, and we can grow a lot of products.”

And at the heart of that industry are farmers just like Watson who admits that he is always striving to do more and test the limits of what’s possible.

“I guess you could say I’m a pretty driven sort of a guy, a bit impatient. I always like to succeed at whatever I am doing.”

Watson says that his drive for excellence extends to all aspects of his farming operation, including finding the right machines to help him be profitable.

“I make sure to choose good equipment and look around for what’s available. To me the MacDon FlexDraper is a very good piece of kit (equipment). It performed very well in that record breaking crop. It is a great front.”

Watson uses his FlexDraper (mounted on a Case IH 9230 tracked combine) to harvest his wheat, barley, triticale and, sometimes, fava beans on his 490 hectare (1,211 acre) farm. He also grows a wide variety of grass and vegetable seeds including ryegrass, tall and fine fescue, plantain, chicory, spinach, radish, red beet, and all of his seed crops are swathed by Donald Love, a local contractor who should be familiar to readers of Performance Magazine (*Love at First Sight, Spring 2011, Issue 10*).

Apart from the FlexDraper’s ability to handle World Record wheat harvests, Watson says that he appreciates the way the header helps him recover lodged crops, a crop condition he works hard to avoid if possible.



David Weith, Eric Watson, Maxine Watson and Paul Johnston are all smiles in the field with Razza their Newfoundland Dog

“Keeping the crop standing, especially with cereals, is paramount. You just cannot afford to lodge a crop. It doesn’t yield and to me yield is king as far as profitability goes.

To prevent lodging we use plant growth regulators, which is very much standard practice in our area, to keep the straw strong and shorten the crop. That helps keep the crop standing.”

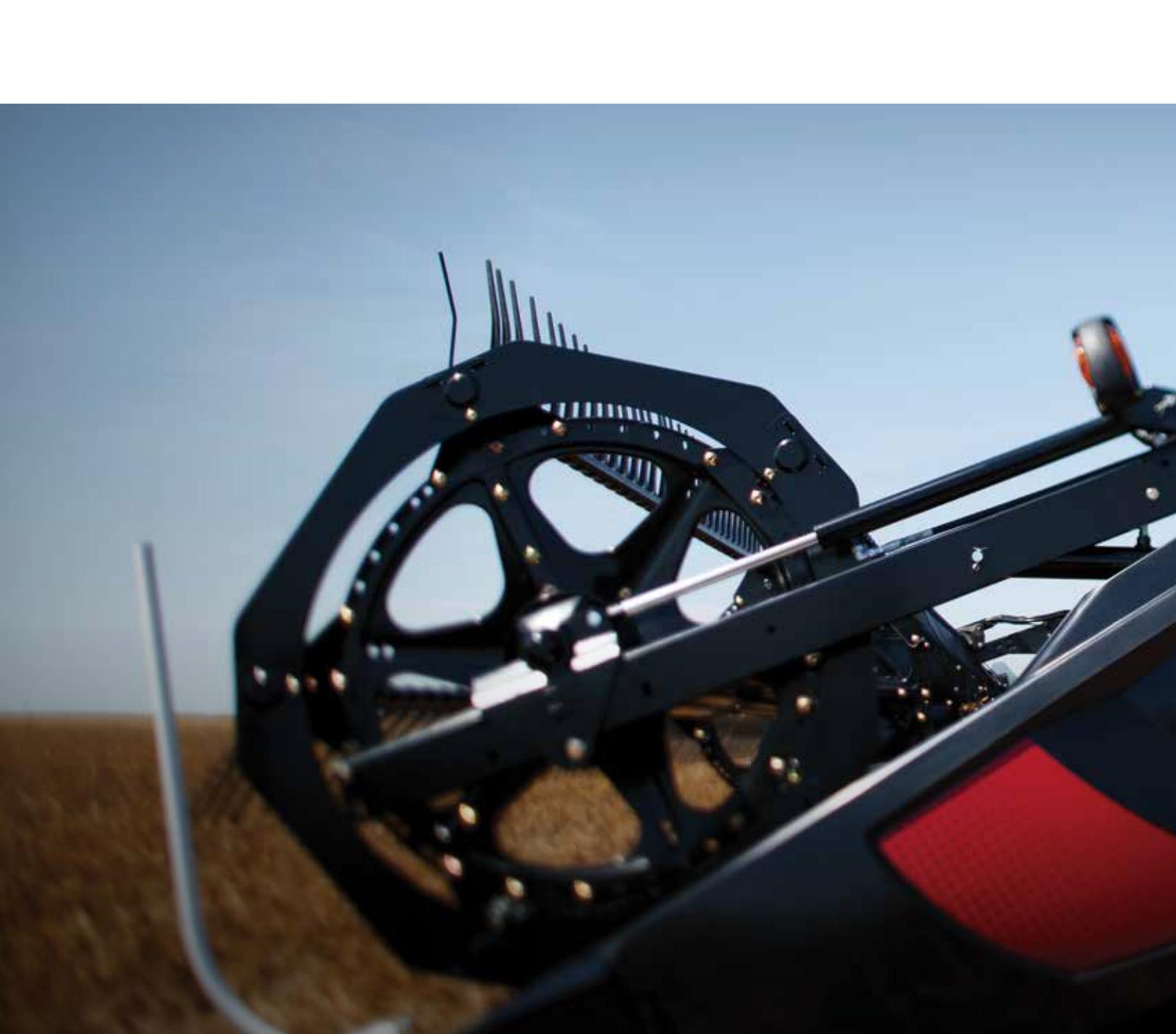
Still, Mother Nature doesn’t always cooperate and Watson is every now and then faced with the challenge of picking up a downed crop.

“Sometimes we couldn’t harvest flat barley with our old auger front. To harvest it we would have to get a windrower to run in front of the combine, but now we have no problem harvesting downed crop with the FlexDraper.”

Looking forward, Watson believes that his FlexDraper may be challenged by even larger wheat crops in the future, as he isn’t about to rest on his laurels.

“If the record is broken I would probably go for it again. Given the right conditions, 17.5 tonnes a hectare is probably achievable. Yeah, perhaps I am a bit competitive, although I don’t really care what someone else’s crop is yielding. I’m more competitive against myself than anything. You can always do better; that’s the way I farm.” **M**

“Now we have no problem harvesting downed crop with the FlexDraper.”



An Engineering Dream

MacDon's engineers get their way with the company's next generation of Headers and Windrowers



MacDon FD145 FlexDraper®

In the ongoing manufacturing battle between design freedom and cost control, MacDon's engineers have always had an unfair advantage. Because MacDon's success depends on producing harvesting equipment that are hands down the best at what they do - harvesting equipment that are so demonstrably better that they can lure farmers away from the mainlines - its engineers enjoy a certain amount of leverage over the company's accountants.

Take for instance the approach MacDon's engineers took in designing the all new M1 Series Windrowers. While most manufactures would be content with making a few modifications and upgrades to an existing design and then labeling the product "next-gen," the engineers at MacDon were given license to rip up the blueprints altogether and start afresh.

“Once we knew we wanted to push a bigger header out front, we had to strengthen a number of different subsystems in order to handle it.”

“MacDon has never been one to limit its engineers” said Ben Foster, Product Manager for MacDon's windrower product line. “Our culture is so product and performance driven that if there is a better way to do something we typically don't say no. As such, our engineers have a really hard time not going into redesign mode if they have an idea on how to do something better on one of our products.”

Foster says that as MacDon's engineers got into the M1 program they found that even though they had an excellent swather platform to begin with, it wouldn't be up to the task of what farmers will need in the years ahead to handle the larger volume crops they are already starting to grow.

“On a technical side, the deep deck, higher capacity headers our header team were designing really put a lot of extra stress on the windrower. Once we knew we wanted to push a bigger header out front, we had to strengthen a number of different subsystems in order to handle it. All of a sudden the Windrowers needed more power, more float capacity, bigger tires, new final drives and a taller, stronger frame.”

In other words, MacDon needed a new Windrower platform altogether. The resulting M1 Series is stronger, taller, faster, smarter, and more comfortable than anything MacDon has produced before.

Anyone familiar with the previous M Series Windrowers will immediately notice a number of significant changes when they view the new M1 Series for the first time. Perhaps most noticeable is the sleek new hood

design with the air intake vents placed forward, rather than at the rear of the tractor.

“The new air intake system is the result of customers who asked for a lot more cooling capacity. It features a new dual radiator design that draws air from the cleanest location, right behind the cab. We’ve also added a hydraulic-drive reversing fan to blow out dust and debris and keep everything running cool and efficiently.”

“Everything from how the windows are positioned for optimal sight lines to the design and placement of the seat, console and controls has been specifically designed for windrowing applications.”

Looking at the rear wheels, customers will notice MacDon’s completely new and patented CrossFlex™ suspension.

“Our CrossFlex suspension really improves ride comfort, removing a lot of the road shock and bumps, especially when you are travelling with one set of tires on the shoulder. Operators will also like the M1’s higher road speed which has been increased from 23 mph (37 km/h) to 27.5 mph (44 km/h); something that was driven by our customers who have larger farms or who do a lot of custom cutting.”

Less immediately noticeable is the M1 Series’ three inch higher frame and other changes designed to improve serviceability for the operator.

“The nice thing about a ground up redesign is that you can now incorporate a lot of the small things that would be complicated changes if you were just revamping an existing product. We’ve been able to add a larger fuel tank that can now be accessed from the ground. There are also more check level gauges that allow you to check oil and other fluid levels without opening the hood. Changes like that really aren’t feasible when you’re not starting from scratch.”

“The M1 has also benefited from the fact that MacDon’s only piece of self-propelled equipment is the windrower. That’s allowed us to be pretty uncompromising with the design of its cab. Everything from how the windows are positioned for optimal sight lines to the design and placement of the seat, console and controls

has been specifically designed for windrowing applications. Feedback from customers that have used the product has been really positive. The two comments that always come up are the cab’s comfort and how quiet the machine is.”

Of particular note is the M1 Series’ new harvest monitor which uses software written from the ground up by MacDon to give operators full control of header settings, operating speeds and pressures, and incorporates new features such as a new onboard maintenance tracker.

“Technology has been evolving more and more quickly, and can definitely improve the operator experience and awareness. When we started this program we had one engineer in our electrical department who was responsible for the whole M Series. Now we have more than a dozen people in that department working on electrical and software. They have been very focused on reducing the reliability risks that inevitably come with electronics systems. There are few things as frustrating as a sensor failure that puts a machine down, so we designed the M1 Series to work around those types of failures wherever possible. The priority was to keep the machine running no matter what.”

D1 & FD1 Series Headers

Upfront, MacDon’s engineers took an equally uncompromising approach in the imagining of the next generation of its very successful rigid and FlexDraper® headers. Here the focus was increasing capacity for both combining and windrowing applications.

“Around the world, new strains of crops are constantly pushing yields higher and higher,” said Mike Flintoft, MacDon Product Manager for its draper headers. “While MacDon headers have always been high capacity machines, we’re starting to see crop conditions where the header is being pushed to the limits of its capacity. Right here in Canada our Canola Council is striving to get our average yield up over 10 bushels an acre from where it is, and with that will come more volume and tougher harvesting conditions. Our new headers had to keep pace with these higher demands for years to come.”

For windrowing applications, MacDon’s all new D1XL Series drapers help farmers meet their growing capacity needs by getting much bigger where it counts; at the swath mouth opening and on the deck itself where the drapers have been widened to a full 50 inches (127 cm). That’s eight inches (20.3 cm) wider than regular D Series headers, which translates into a capacity increase of up to 30%.

“Most people that have tested the new headers in the field have been really impressed by the increased capacity, especially if they have run a D1XL Series side by side with our current product,” said Flintoft. “We like to think that we already have the best product in the field, but these farmers saw a significant leap forward with the new D1XL Series. We even had one guy who wouldn’t let us leave the farm until we finished.

“While the D1XL’s impressive size is likely the biggest change for the windrower customer,





MacDon M1240 Windrower

farmers should also like the many other improvements we've made to all D1 Series drapers including a new hydraulic attachment or hose management system, which makes it a lot easier and faster to attach and detach the header."

"Customers who've been able to test the D1XL side by side with our previous model have told us that when they went to pick up the swaths they could tell exactly where the new header had been. The D1XL's swaths were so well formed, more consistent and less lumpy than the swaths by other headers, that they reported being able to increase their combine's field speed by ½ to 1 mph (0.8 to 1.6 km/h) because feeding was so smooth. Reports like that are exciting because not only is the windrowing operation faster it can speed up the next combining operation, saving time in the field and hours on the combine."

For combining applications, Flintoft says the improvements incorporated in the FD1 and D1 Series headers are less immediately noticeable than those on the D1XL, but every bit as significant for productivity. Most important of these improvements was the introduction of MacDon's patented FeedMacX™ system, which custom tunes the header to the exact performance characteristics of the combine.

"Our FeedMacX system ensures that crop flows into the combine at the correct width and speed to maximize capacity. Depending on the model of the combine feeder house openings can range from less than 40" (102 cm) to over 60" (152 cm). Trying to feed a high volume crop into the wide

variety of openings requires significantly different feeding widths and speeds.

Flintoft says that tailoring the crop flow precisely for the needs of the combine lets the operator be more aggressive in almost all crop conditions.

"These headers are perfect for those with class 8 or higher combines in conditions where the header has been holding you back. Your ground speed could now be 20% faster with that change alone."

MacDon's engineers also worked hard to improve overall reliability with these new headers by applying some of the lessons learned on the previous series.

"We listened to what customers were having issues with, and talked to our dealers about what they have seen coming back. As a result we've made a number of changes including beefing up some of the drives as well as the retracting tine drum with a lot heavier duty components. We also added an additional pump for the draper circuit to allow us to have individual split circuits that are fully filtered for the hydraulics. It all adds up to less downtime, less overall time spent on maintenance."

While most of these performance upgrades may be hard to discern for the untrained eye, Flintoft says that there is one improvement that anyone familiar with MacDon headers should be able to see immediately.

"We have increased finger density on the FD1 reel, going from 6" to 4" spacing between the tines. That's 50% more fingers than before, giving the header significantly better performance in lighter

crops. One farmer in Australia cutting cereal crops with the new reel remarked that the extra fingers allowed him to cut two inches higher on the stem, because it did that much better a job picking up the crop. The result was increased capacity for his combine because he was not taking in as much straw."

"It all adds up to less downtime, less overall time spent on maintenance."

One more important change that's hard to miss, but only for MacDon windrower customers, is that for the first time ever they can equip their windrower with a 45' (13.7m) header thanks to the D1XL being made available in that size. Of course MacDon's combine customers have enjoyed the added productivity a 45' (13.7m) header can provide for years now.

"With this new generation of headers our engineers were particularly proud of being able to improve both capacity and reliability without having to increase complexity, or make the compromises you normally have to when designing equipment. That's a pretty good win-win which helps both in the field and when it comes time to trade." 



The Right Way, The First Time

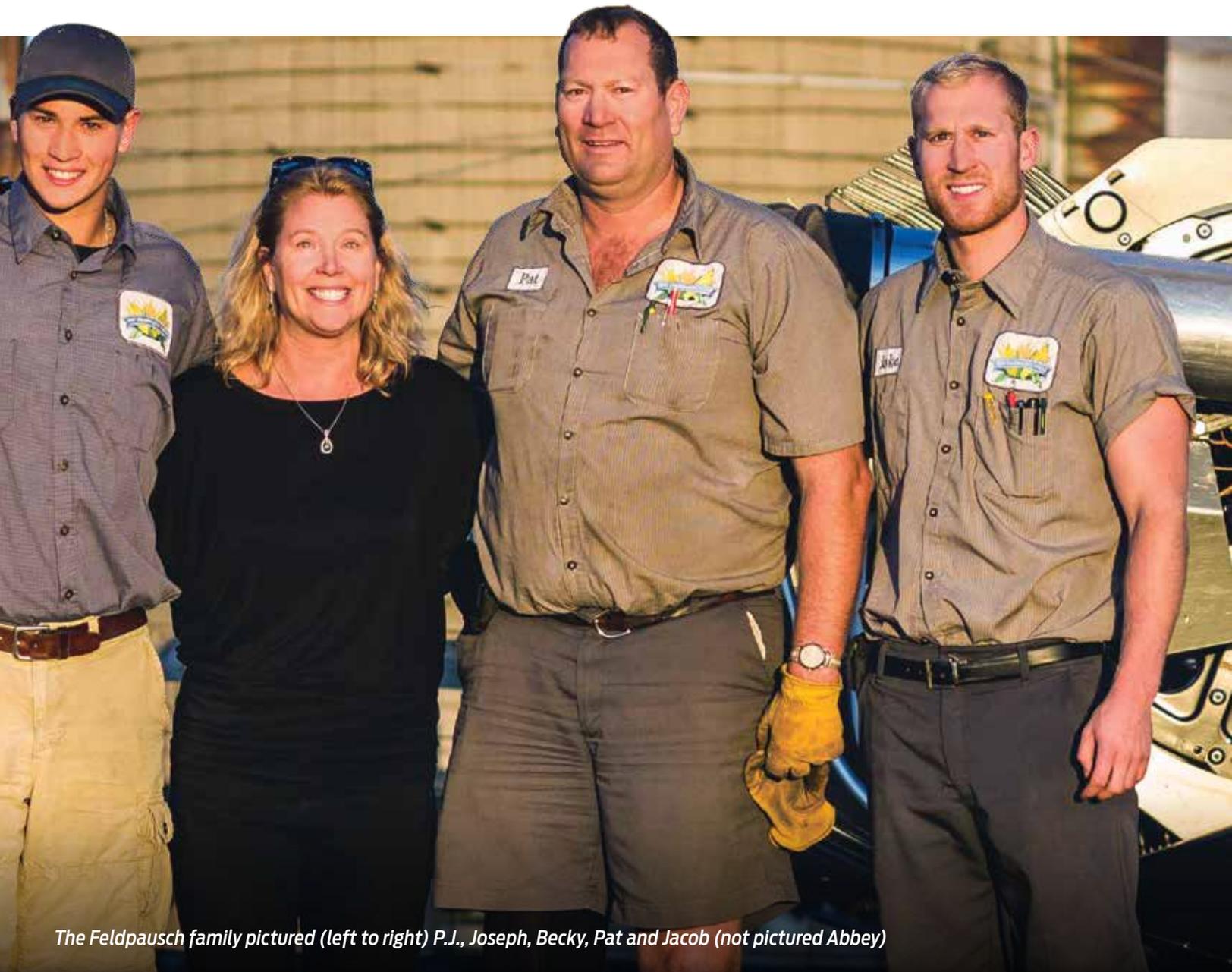
Michigan Farmer Pat Feldpausch has learned from experience to always put your best foot forward

One of the most valuable lessons Michigan farmer Pat Feldpausch ever learned came back in the 90s, early in his farming career. He had been trying to save time planting corn on neighbor Stan Dhelen's farm without first tilling, but it wasn't going so well.

"Now, sometimes no-tilling works, but that day I couldn't go more than a couple hundred feet before having to stop to correct things. Well, one of those times I was behind the planter digging, and Stan comes up behind me and watches me a while. Then he asked 'what are you doing?' I said 'I can't get this thing to plant right. I should have come in here first with a soil finisher, then it would be planting perfect.' Stan then asked me something I've never forgotten: 'why are you trying to do it the wrong way if you already know how to do it the right way?'"

Doing things the right way has become Feldpausch's mantra managing his family's 2,500 acre (1012 ha) farm of soybeans, corn and wheat, a thriving custom farming service, a Precision Planting Premier dealership, and as an independent sales representative for DuPont Pioneer. All four businesses are operated from Feldpausch's farm located near Fowler, Michigan, about 25 miles northwest of the state's capital Lansing. Feldpausch says that doing things the right way often means putting the customers' needs ahead of his own, and making sure that they are never left waiting or wanting.

"People might see me harvesting someone else's beans before my own and ask 'why are you doing that?' And I'll say 'because this guy needs to plant wheat and if we don't cut now we won't get the crop in on time.' Stan taught me that when you're doing custom work, you do just as good a job as if you are doing your own. That teaching has always stuck with us."



The Feldpausch family pictured (left to right) P.J., Joseph, Becky, Pat and Jacob (not pictured Abbey)

Feldpausch manages things with the help of his wife, Becky, and sons PJ (short for Patrick John) and Jake, plus eight dedicated employees. A daughter, Abbey, works in the medical field and a third son, Joseph, is still in high school and remains undecided about his future. It's a business that keeps everyone running hard and contributing equally, especially during planting and harvesting when 100 hour weeks are the norm for everyone on the crew.

"We have a team approach here. Everyone needs to work together and every job has importance. We really appreciate everyone and what they do for us."

The family's custom business currently amounts to around 5,000 acres under their care, with a good portion of that more than just combining.

"We have customers where we do everything for them: till, plant, fertilize, spray and harvest. There are a lot of dairies in our area with about 46,000 Holstein cows in our 24-square mile (62.2 sq Km) county. We do a lot of combining for those dairies which grow a lot of wheat, with the straw being baled for feed."

"About nine years ago, shortly before I bought my first MacDon head, our customers asked if we could start cutting the wheat three inches off the ground to retain more straw. Now, we grow anywhere from 85 to 120 bushel wheat here, so cutting tight to the ground means a lot of extra straw though the combine."

"We had been running competitive auger heads on our John Deere combines at the time, and we just couldn't get the wheat to feed evenly with the auger. Then a friend bought a new combine with a MacDon FlexDraper® head and I went to watch it run. It was like 'oh my, we have to have one of those'. Shortly after, we purchased our first MacDon FlexDraper."

PJ supported the decision to go with MacDon FlexDrapers. He had worked on a custom crew out west that also used MacDon FlexDrapers and was very satisfied with the performance.

"I had cut for two years on a harvest crew, harvesting about 110,000 acres between Texas and Montana," recalls PJ Feldpausch. "We ran nine combines out there, with me and another guy running MacDon heads and the rest of the crew running competitive drapers. The performance difference between the MacDon's and the other headers was huge in our eyes. I was lucky to be given a combine with a MacDon at the beginning of the season, and the option to let someone else run it was never given for the rest of the season. I wasn't about to let that happen."

Now, nine years later, PJ says MacDon FlexDrapers have become an integral part of their business, allowing them to do the type of job their customers depend on.

"We're a quality driven operation. I remember two years ago in the middle of soybean harvest Dad calling me to tell me that he had just seen a really poor job done by another custom cutter in a neighboring field. He said if we ever leave a field of soybeans looking like that when we finish a job, we will have to sell every piece of machinery because our business will be done."



"Then a friend bought a new combine with a MacDon FlexDraper® head and I went to watch it run. It was like 'oh my, we have to have one of those'. Shortly after, we purchased our first MacDon FlexDraper."

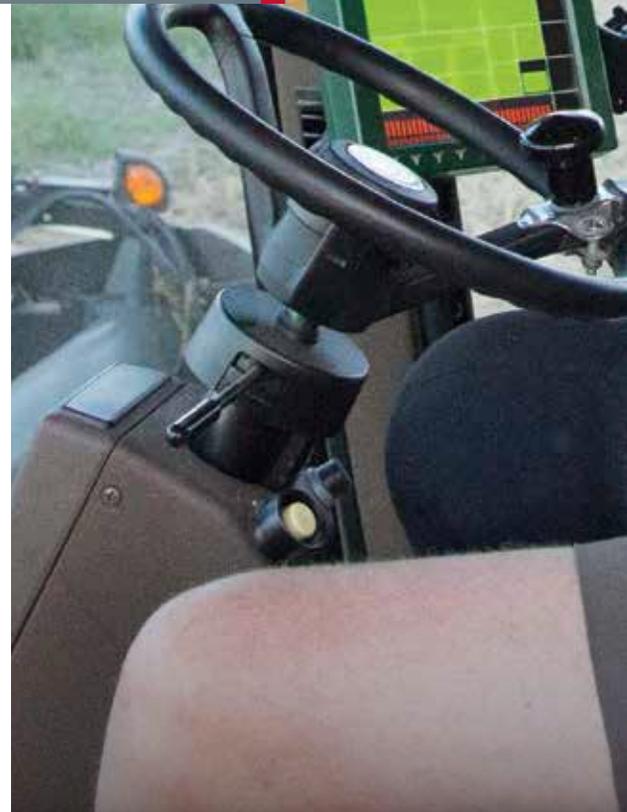
"Our MacDon headers do a superior job compared to others. The flexibility of how they work, the ease of the system and the lightness of the header; the even crop flow just allows us to run longer into the night and start earlier in the morning. If the moisture in the grain head is okay it really doesn't matter what the stock is doing, because the cuttability of the MacDon is so much greater."

For their own operation, about a third of the soybeans that the Feldpausch's grow is destined to become Pioneer seed. Pat says that their FlexDrapers have proven to be indispensable for achieving maximum quality in the finished product.

"When you are harvesting soybeans for seed you can't harvest them when they are too wet or too dry," says Pat. "If they start thrashing hard you can't just close the concave up and grind them out because you'll crack the seed coat. You have to be very gentle with them, and that's what we love about the MacDon's. They feed and cut so evenly that our seed quality has actually gone up and we get paid premiums for quality."

PJ adds that FlexDrapers have significantly decreased header loss or shelling of the pod, compared to harvesting with an auger.

"You don't have the stalks rolling around or flying through the air, especially when you get into dry pod conditions. When there are short soybeans the FlexDraper lets us tilt the head forward, or if we get into down crop we can hug the ground within an inch and cut the crop off clean. I don't know how much more seed the MacDon recovers, but it is higher."





Pat Feldpausch hard at work from the cab of his combine

PJ says that their FlexDrapers are even saving them in maintenance and downtime, which is remarkable given the abundance of rocks they contend with in their area.

"You would think knives are knives and guards are guards, but they're not. When we're cutting close to the ground, we don't shear knives off with the MacDon like we did with other headers. Although we do change out the bars probably twice a year with new ones, I bet we don't change ten knife sections a year between our two machines. It is amazing how well these headers can run so close to the ground and still avoid damage flexing over rocks, dirt mounds and other debris found in the field."

The Feldpausch's passion for MacDon is also shared by one of their employees, Scott Cole. Before joining the Feldpausch's, Cole had previous experience with draper headers and assumed they were all pretty much the same.

"My first experience running a MacDon was when I started working for Pat," says Cole. "After my first day with the FlexDraper I said to myself 'I'll never run another draper again in my life if I have a choice.' A MacDon feeds better, cuts nicer and is so much more user friendly compared to what I used before."

Cole says he has been particularly impressed by how well FlexDrapers perform when the elements turn difficult.

"I've run them in the rain quite a few times. Even the pouring rain just to get to the end of a field, and never once have I had a feeding problem."

Performance like that led the Feldpausch's to once again purchase FlexDrapers last summer when it was time to replace the old ones. Pat admits that they seriously considered competitive headers before making the decision, not because they had any serious complaints with their previous MacDon's, but because of the level of thoroughness they put into all their equipment purchases.

"Every single decision we make is based on doing it right," says Pat. "For example, we bought a new planting tractor last winter. We travelled to four different states looking for exactly the one we wanted. It was the same with our MacDon decision this year. We considered the competition, but we decided to go with MacDon again because of the way it feeds, how well it runs and how easy it is to maintain. As with all the equipment we have, we'll always choose the higher quality, more dependable and longer lasting product."

"It's just as Stan Dhelen taught me; no matter how you have to go at it, always do it the right way and you will always be successful." **M**

MacDon Family Day

The family culture stays strong at MacDon with events like Family Day.



With a forecasted high of 27°C (80.6°F), Saturday, September 9th, 2017, dawned brilliantly on MacDon's Family Day in Winnipeg, Manitoba. Arriving early at 7 AM at the Tinkertown Outdoor Amusement Park, MacDon President and CEO Gary Giesbrecht was surprised to find three cars filled with excited children already waiting in the parking lot. By the time the park's gates opened at 8:30 the number of people waiting at the entrance would swell to 600 or 700, just a fraction of the more than 4,500 people who would pass through it by the day's end.

"A lot of families showed up early, as they must have figured that it was better to have the kids waiting there than at home to control their excitement" said Giesbrecht. "I had one employee tell me that his kids couldn't sleep the night before at all. From when they put them to bed at seven or eight o'clock they never slept a wink, they were that excited."

Always eagerly anticipated, MacDon Family Days have occurred every three or four years since they first began back in the early 1980s. They are usually scheduled around important company milestones such as an anniversary, a plant expansion or a new product launch, but their primary purpose is always to bring MacDon families together for a fun-filled day that gives everyone a chance to meet and socialize.

"Family Day gives employees from across the company a chance to meet

each other's spouses and children and learn a little more about each other" said Giesbrecht. "The day is about honoring MacDon's past, present and future, and the role we all play in MacDon's success. It really helps to strengthen the fact that we are all in this together."

MacDon's Vice President of Global Sales and Marketing Gene Fraser sees Family Day as a continuation of the culture established by company founders Joe and Anne MacDonald back in the 70s.

"Meeting the people behind the employee was very important to Joe and Anne," said Fraser. "They considered an employee's spouse and children part of MacDon's extended family. I think that the family culture that they created has helped MacDon enjoy a higher level of employee loyalty than other companies might. Family Days reinforce that culture, and the idea that a job at MacDon is about more than just money, more than just benefits."

The 2017 edition of Family Day was held to celebrate the launch of MacDon's next generation of equipment including the all new MI Series Windrowers and FDI and DIXL headers; with all products present to give employees the chance to show their work to their families.

"For the day I wanted our past product to be lined up side by side with our new products so that the employees could see our progress as a manufacturer and the positive future of MacDon," said Giesbrecht. "We had picnic tables out in front of the machines where I had a chance to sit and



watch employees explaining the equipment to their families and their roles in making it. Justifiably, they showed immense pride in their work, as their contribution is not only important for the success of MacDon but also for the success of farmers around the world.”

In addition to the opportunity to enjoy Tinkertown’s many amusement rides, the day also gave guests the chance to get a little closer to farm life through a special display set up by Agriculture In The Classroom.

“We had Ag In The Classroom educating the children, even some of our newer employees, about some of the aspects of agriculture they might not know,” said Fraser. “For example there was one station explaining how canola seed is pressed and turned into oil for food, or how wheat is turned into flour. Information like that helped bring the whole farm story home to many of these families so that they could better understand the connection between their parents work and the food on their tables.”

Other popular exhibits included the Fit Kids Healthy Kids Motion Zone, supplied by Sport Manitoba, as well as a petting farm provided by The 10 Acre Woods Petting Farm filled with farm animals. One of the day’s biggest highlights was supplied by the Prairie Wildlife Rehabilitation Centre which released two rehabilitated hawks to the wild.

“For many of the families these exhibits were a chance to see some of these animals, especially the farm animals, up close for the first time,” said Giesbrecht. “The rehabilitation center even brought about 10 or 12

“Family Day provides us the opportunity to appreciate the number of lives our Company touches”

chinchillas that they were trying to find homes for, and every one of them went home with a MacDon family. Things like that really help bring agriculture closer to the heart of the kids.”

Giesbrecht says that of the many memories that were formed on the day, perhaps the most lasting impression is just how many people are part of the MacDon story.

“Family Day provides us the opportunity to appreciate the number of lives our Company touches,” said Giesbrecht. “Every employee requires the support and understanding of their family to do their jobs well, and Family Day gives those families a chance to understand a little more about the world of MacDon.” 



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