

# Young farmers prove to be a real success story

With the average age of UK farmers creeping up towards 60 it is refreshing to see a couple around half that age making waves as first generation farmers and farm contractors.

Oliver and Hannah Arnold, who started from scratch in 2000, now have a 130-cow suckler enterprise, manage more than 1,500 acres and look after a team of 10 employees.

But it is the couple's contracting business, Spring Farm Partnership, with a constantly increasing equipment pool which is the real success story.

The most striking pieces of equipment in their impressive arsenal of machinery are undoubtedly two muck spreaders – “the best money can buy” – which cost close to £500,000.

“These are the latest self-propelled Terra Gator models with full GPS technology,” said Mr Arnold. “It might be a bit of a cliché, but we see muck as a fertiliser. We therefore think our customers need to know where we've put it and in what quantity.”

Spring Farm Partnership, which is based in Felthorpe, near Norwich, includes baling hay and straw, baling and wrapping silage, maize cereal and beet drilling, foraging, ploughing cultivations and low loader 44t haulage work.

Oliver, 35, and Hannah, 34, also run a mill mix service producing on-farm animal feed with a state of the art Buschhoff machine which works, like

By **MICHAEL POLLITT**  
Agricultural editor

most of the other machinery they own, all over East Anglia.

“We spread 130,000 tonnes of muck a year, and are spreading more and more compost and lime too. These machines allow us to offer a full NVZ-compliant service to our customers while enabling Hannah to include a GPS-based computer printout of what we've done, with every muck spreading invoice we issue.”

The couple have a particularly strong relationship with Clydesdale Bank, and their agribusiness partner, Nicholas Hunt. “Clydesdale is very much a ‘yes’ organisation; definitely switched on,” said Mr Arnold.

“We certainly feel that Clydesdale is the bank for farmers. Our previous bank understood money but didn't understand our business.

“When we first came to Clydesdale, we didn't own our farm and had no assets apart from what we were asking them to finance. They still backed us on the evidence we were able to give them regarding our business projections. They definitely know what they're talking about.

“You hear these stories about banks not being prepared to back businesses in the current climate but that's never been the case with Clydesdale. The muck spreaders are a great example of the bank backing us so we can now offer a unique service with these machines in the UK.”

Mr Hunt added: “It is rewarding to know that through some common sense banking decisions we have been able to assist Oliver and Hannah in successfully building up their business over the last four years.

“It is certainly exciting working with people who are always looking to expand their operation further and are never content to rest on their laurels.

“Oliver's drive to push the business forward and Hannah's exceptional office skills are set to see more new projects being taken on by this dedicated hard working couple. People talk about farmers needing to diversify and the Arnolds are a great



**DRIVING FORCE:** Hannah and Oliver Arnold have built their business up from scratch and are now a real success. One of their enterprises will be a biogas plant, fuelled by their own maize and grass silage. Oliver pictured, below, last August, with Oliver Knowland and Joachim Lukas with the crop.



case study for others looking to take that approach.”

And to endorse Nicholas's comments further, the Arnolds are close to having a one megawatt biogas plant built on their land,

which they will help to fuel with maize and grass silage themselves. It will help to power 2,500 homes when fully operational and the Arnolds are working closely with a company to build more plants in East Anglia.

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