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Weed control at Sandfields Farms Ltd

April 13 2015

Micron has recently introduced Varidome 100HiFlo and Varidome Hybrid models for onions and asparagus respectively – innovative, easy to use band sprayers that enable farmers to reduce their herbicide and water usage, cut costs and improve weed control – whilst being better for the environment. Simon Stockdale from Sandfields Farms Ltd reveals why Varidome is their preferred choice for weed control...



"Sandfields Farms Ltd is owned by G's and we are based in Warwickshire and Worcestershire. I drive innovation within the business and we have bought 3 Varidome machines, two for asparagus and one for salad onions. In Warwickshire, we grow 400 hectares of salad onions and 200 hectares of asparagus along with approximately 250 hectares of legume crops. We also grow 200 hectares of salad onions in Kent through The Lettuce Company and I am the general manager of this business. G's Growers, the PO, have purchased a fourth Varidome that we operate in Kent in the salad onions.



I started working with Micron on the first Varidome sprayer for asparagus nearly three years ago. There was no other company offering what Micron did. We wanted a machine for weed control post-harvest (in June) without getting chemical onto the asparagus foliage. Up until the point we have finished harvest we are not able to control any weeds by which time we have problems with thistle and mare's tail - both of which are very hardy plants. However, at this time of year the asparagus fern is very soft and sensitive to any application of chemical which meant we were having to hand weed areas of this crop which is very costly.

With Micron's Varidome machine, we are now able to control weeds under the asparagus canopy, right up to the base of the asparagus plants and over the entire contour of the beds by using 3 different domes set at different heights. With the nature of the high clearance of the Varidome shields, we are able to subsequently make second applications when the fern is high, with little or no damage to the fern.

In 2014, Micron advised me of the new narrow Varidome 100HiFlo shields and we started considering a machine fitted with the narrow shields for use within our onion crop. We are mindful of the fact that we will be losing some valuable weed control chemicals in the next year or two and that the alternatives, when trialed, were very hot on the crop and led to leaf damage.

With the Varidome 100HiFlo, we are able to apply these chemicals directly onto the weeds without contact onto the flag leaf and subsequent crop damage, whilst achieving good control.

We were also hand-weeding certain problem areas within the onion crop as we couldn't control them when the crop was established with an overall spray. Using Varidome 100HiFlo means we no longer have to do this, saving us both time and money.

Due to Varidome's flexible design, we can raise the shields to allow us to apply tebuconazole (fungicide) to the base of the

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plants rather than the overall flag leaf. We are also looking at using higher application rates of chemical in between the rows and a lower dose rate on the actual crop by using the Micron Dual Spray Tank we have purchased. The dual tank will also be used to apply a fungicide and an herbicide at the same time reducing the number of passes we are required to make.

Furthermore, the Varidome has also increased the window of opportunity for us to spray the crops as it is not affected by wind. We looked at alternative machines and were of the opinion that Micron offered a good quality build of the machine and a much more advanced parallelogram system on the individual carriages with the narrow domes. The unique rubber shrouds on the bottom of the shields could not be matched by any other manufacturer either.

We estimate all the four machines will have paid for themselves within two years."

Simon Stockdale, Sandfields Farms Ltd

Related Information:

[Varidome](#)

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