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THE FARM MACHINERY MAGAZINE

Pöttinger Novacat X8 Collector ED:

A passion for collecting



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A passion for collecting

Triple-gang mowers that place all the crop into a single central swath are becoming very popular in the UK and Ireland. Pöttinger's version is the Novacat X8 Collector – here's what we found after field testing

Like most machinery, Pöttinger's X8 is a product of evolution. Its roots are in the 8600, which uses two seven-disc, 3m wide Novacat mowers in 'butterfly' configuration to deliver a working width of 8.3m. To these the X8 adds a Novacat 306 Alpha Motion front unit, cutting at 3.04m. Given a 2.2m gap between the rear beds, the overlap ends up at over 450mm each side. That's enough to cope with normal work, but, where banks are a feature, the maker recommends fitting hydraulic stabilisers to the tractor rear linkage.

Want to put 8.3m of crop in a single swath, in one pass? The Pöttinger X8 Collector does that and more besides. Pictures: CB, ST.

Innovation – and the X8 Collector's name – comes from tacking a pair of conveyers on the rear mowers. These are carried by a self-contained framework with its own suspension, hydraulic pump and drive motors. Arching across the rear hoods, the Collector positions a synthetic belt below and behind each conditioner; the belts move crop to the centre, adding it to the output from the front mower to create one big swath. Retrofittable to existing X8 combinations that have Pöttinger's optional Power Control cab unit, the Collector system hikes a new X8's price by a further £23,135. Roller accelerators can be added to the belt ends at extra cost.

That's the basis; here's some detail. The rear combo's Cat III headstock has a small problem, in that the top link point is set well back from the lower link attachment points. Consequently a long top link is needed; this also needs to be hydraulic to make hitching-up easier. Cat IVN linkage is a potentially useful option, given the mower/collector combination's weight: the three mowers total 3.6t and the collector adds another 1.18t, bringing the overall figure to a substantial 4.79t. This was enough to take the test's 200hp MF 6497 tractor over its allowed 12t gross weight, so checks may be prudent before you buy.



The test mower controlled bed pressure hydraulically. The Collector rides on coil springs.



The headstock looks suitably stout. That's good, as the Collector adds another 1.18t. Depending on the tractor and tyres, the unit's lower link pick-up points might need to be repositioned forward.



The test mower carried an optional accelerator roller at the inboard end of each belt. Like the belts, these are powered by the unit's own hydraulic pack.

Taking the machine from transport to work position and back again is simple, thanks to hydraulic latching and small rams that move the rear mowers' guards. This set-up is standard for the rear mowers but not the front, so to stay in the cab you'll have to tick that particular option box. To keep overall height down below 4m it's necessary to travel with the beds around 200mm from the ground, which doesn't leave too much clearance. It would be very handy if you could leave the

guards up for the first pass along a fence line, but you can't – they're plumbed in to the wing-fold circuit. The only way would be to run a separate supply from a spool.

Tractor power arrives at a central gearbox via pto shaft. Here the drive splits, going sideways to each bed by a clutch-equipped shaft and rearwards to an oil pump. This supplies the Collector's hydraulic motors. The X8 uses either springs for bed flotation,

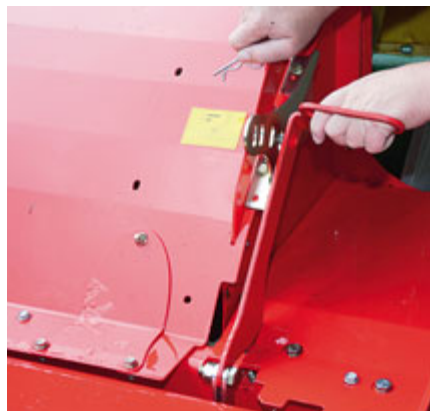
or as an option the same hydraulic bed suspension as the adjustable-width V10 combo, a machine we covered in profi 09/09. The test model came with hydraulic float, set up to give 75kg pressure by way of a multi-chamber suspension/lift ram for each wing. Bed pressure is adjustable on the move with this option; and while the factory setting proved fine, we weren't convinced that it was the same for each wing. Pöttinger adjusted the pressure in the system's nitrogen reservoirs, and all was then well. The tested ED-variant carried Pöttinger's 2.11m-wide 'extra dry' tine conditioner. This comprises 44 rubber-mounted steel tines disposed spirally in eight rows, and spins against direction of travel at either 940rpm (standard) or 710rpm. Speed is changed by swapping belt-drive pulleys. Crop leaving

TEST ASSESSMENT

How profi rates the Pöttinger Novacat X8 Collector ED mower

Design	
Attachment	⦿
Driveline	+
Bed	+
Conditioner	+
Collector	+
Guards	++
Break-back	+
Setting	
Attachment/removal	⦿
Transport/work conversion	++
Cut height	+
Ground pressure	++
Conditioner	+
Swath boards	+
Blade change	++
In the field	
Cut quality	++
Conditioning	++
Contour following	+
Output	+
Blade service life	-/++ ¹⁾
Transport	⦿
General	
Build quality	+
Paint	+
Maintenance	+
Handbook	++

Ratings: ++ = very good; + = good; ⦿ = average; - = below average; - - = poor



Conditioning effect is varied by moving a lever between four positions. Rotor speed change involves altering drive pulleys.



Novacat mowers are established units. Blade changes are simple and won't be needed so often now that tougher blades are standard.

unit. Two people can take it off in around 30mins, relieving the tractor of just over 1t. Its stands are reasonably effective, and the hoses carry permanent markings. Each of the Collector unit's two variable-speed belts is 2.15m long, 1m wide and driven by a hydraulic motor. Consequently the belts can be run at different speeds, which can be handy on slopes to maintain an even swath; their speeds can be subsequently equalised by the touch of a button. Central swath boards limit how far material from the wings overlaps the front mower's swath. Hydraulically-driven crop accelerators can be added to the ends of the belts. The test

the tines passes over movable plates, which either spread material over the mower's working width, or can be set so the outer pair pushes crop towards the centre when swathing. While plates are easily adjusted to one of four positions using a sturdy external lever, changing rotor speed is more of a faff. Set up properly, the 'extra dry' conditioner does a good job. RC machines swap this for meshed polyurethane rolls, intended to boost crop flow in long-stemmed material. If needs be, either version can carry an accelerator roller behind the conditioner unit to move material on to the collector belts. Where all crop is wilted it might not need intensive conditioning. In such cases the tines are essentially just moving material, so for reduced power requirement it might make sense to provide quick speed adjustment via a more complex gearbox. Pöttinger disagrees with this view, saying that crop flow would suffer.

Now we come to the big feature – the Collector. As mentioned, this is a retrofittable



Pöttinger's Power Control box (right) is a minimum specification requirement. If you opt to handle mower function through the tractor's ISObus unit (left), then Power Control's functions include an area meter.

machine had them: Pöttinger says they help where a narrow swath has to be made to suit the particular forager. A bearing failed in one so we didn't use it, but by winding up the main belt speed the crop could still be thrown far enough to compensate. The Collector's belts can be swung in and out of work independently, switching off as

MEASUREMENTS

Pöttinger X8 Collector

Dimensions

Working width (m)	8.30
Overlaps (mm)	2 x 450
Transport width f/r (m)	3.0/3.0
Transport height (m)	4.0 ¹⁾
Conveyor w/l (m)	1.00/2.15

Weights

Front mower (t)	1.18
Rear mower (t)	2.43
Collector (t)	1.18

Tractor axle loads f/r (t)²⁾

without Collector	4.14/8.15
with Collector	2.86/10.60

¹⁾ At 200mm ground clearance

²⁾ On Massey Ferguson 6497

they lift. This is a neat touch, as crop from the outer mower bed can be moved away from a boundary during the first headland run. Independent bed operation, combined

with each mower's variable conditioner setting, also lets you leave three tight swaths or three dispersed swaths. You can also put three swaths into one, or spread crop across two-thirds of the outfit's width.

At minimum the Collector requires Pöttinger's Power Control cab unit. This has plenty of functions accessed from a limited number of buttons, yet operation is still reasonably straightforward. With it the operator can raise one bed independent of the others, time the sequence of front/rear mower lift, bring the crop accelerators into play and much more. If you have an ISObus tractor like the test's MF 6497, the whole combination can be controlled through the tractor. In such cases the Power Control unit serves as an area meter, and the operator can program mower lift by distance travelled as well as by time.

More in brief:

- Auto-reset allows the rear beds to swing up and back by 50° maximum
- Bed side guards sit close to the ground, so can be bent in rough going

- The Collector belts have their own non-adjustable spring suspension
- With the Collector in place, bed pressure might need adjustment

- As yet the mower can't be stored folded up. Some of its five stands aren't simple to reach

- Belt drive pulleys have scrapers and are adjusted by pin-and-hole.

Summary: Pöttinger's Collector did an excellent job in different crops and conditions, adding significantly to the X8 combo's abilities. Self-contained, it's easy to put on and take off, though you'll need to watch that its extra mass doesn't push the host tractor on gross weight.

But extra operational flexibility comes at a price. A Novacat X8 ED (tine conditioner, 8.3m working width) lists at £39,750 before VAT. Power Control is standard in the UK, but then the Collector set-up adds £23,135. Specifying roller accelerators for the belts brings the total to a hefty £65,285.

HW



The rear mowers and Collector weigh in at 3.61t; the front unit adds 1.18t. On some 200hp tractors that might be too much.

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NOVACAT X8 collector

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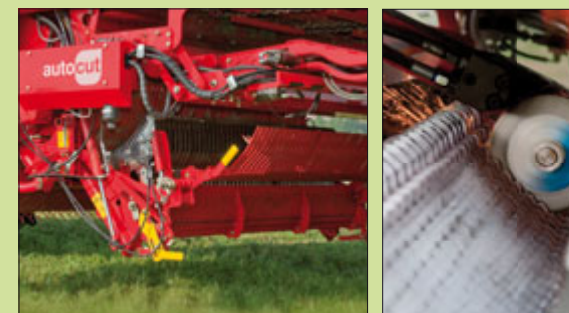
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