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ARGO Tractors is the tractor engineering and manufacturing division of **ARGO SpA**.
AgriArgo UK is the distributor of **McCormick** brand tractors in **Great Britain**.

PRESS RELEASE – October 2013

McCormick dealer celebrates century sale with Powys organic dairy farmer

- Powys organic dairy farmer buys HJR Agri's 100th new McCormick tractor
- Joins an existing McCormick machine for all yard and field loading duties
- Brown Swiss and Montbéliarde breeds feature in high welfare dairy herd

Organic dairy farmers Merfyn and Beryl Edwards will raise a glass to their local tractor dealer following a presentation to celebrate a sales landmark.

Terry Hughes of HJR Agri handed Mr Edwards a bottle of fine whisky after he took delivery of the 100th new McCormick tractor supplied by the Oswestry-based business since it started representing the marque just four years ago.

"It's a bit of a landmark that we wanted to celebrate and I'm delighted that it was Mr and Mrs Edwards who ordered our 100th new McCormick tractor," says Mr Hughes. "Merfyn and Beryl, and their daughter Sarah, who is a partner in the business, are hard-working farmers who have a genuine feel for what they're doing in producing milk to organic standards."

The 101hp McCormick X60.30 performs all handling and loading work on the 500-acre farm at Llanrhaeadr Ym Mochnant in Powys, 12 miles west of Oswestry. It joined a three-year old McCormick MC110 of the same horsepower that handles trailer and field work on the farm.

"After buying the McCormick MC, I wanted something smaller and lighter for our loader tractor," says Mr Edwards. "But I made a mistake – the machine I bought was too light for the job; I didn't like it, and Sarah, who mostly drives the loader tractor, didn't like it either.

"So we changed it for the McCormick X60, which is a far more suitable machine," adds Mr Edwards. "It handles the loader well with better stability and I like having the similar control layout across the two tractors."

The two McCormick machines provide the muscle for all work on the farm except operations put out to contractors, such as making silage for the 100-cow Brown Swiss and Montbéliarde dairy herd.

These Continental breeds have a good temperament and suit the necessities of organic production, says Mr Edwards, who is experimenting with Belgian Blue and more recently Hereford bulls to produce appealing beef calves, especially from the dual purpose Montbéliarde.

“The Holstein doesn’t suit our system, which needs to project a ‘pastoral’ image, with high animal welfare standards and as much outdoor grazing as possible,” he comments. “We’ve lost some milk by changing to these Continental breeds but we’ve gained in terms of animal health – the cows are better on their feet, for example, so our foot-care costs have reduced.”

The herd currently averages 7000 litres, with all milk supplied through the Omsco co-operative to customers across the country and abroad. Unlike some organic sectors, which have seen demand slump because of the difficult economy, demand for organic milk has remained strong.

“It’s been a challenge switching to organic over the past eight years but also rewarding,” says Mr Edwards. “We don’t miss the fertilisers and spraying now, and it’s been amazing to see so much clover coming back into swards naturally.

“White clover and slurry are the secret ingredients for getting the forage we need,” he adds. “And it’s been interesting to see that the lack of really lush swards has meant fewer foot problems in our sheep flock.”

Feeding silage is kept simple by stringing an electric fence across the clamp face, so the workload for the farm’s two McCormick tractors amounts largely to mowing ahead of the contract team, spreading slurry and yard muck dug out with the loader tractor, and handling the big square bales of straw that provide bedding.

“Tractors are getting bigger and our two McCormick machines have to fit into our cubicle shed passages and older buildings – which they do, just,” notes Merfyn Edwards. “They’re solid tractors and I like the familiarity across the two different models; that means a lot.”

As for his McCormick X60 being of special significance, he congratulates HJR Agri on their success. The business was formed in 2008 by former Burgess employees Terry and Alan Hughes, Melfyn Jones and Andy Roberts; they took on the McCormick tractor franchise a year later.

Their original McCormick territory covering west Shropshire and mid-Wales was recently extended across north Wales on the strength of their parts and service performance.

“The personnel at HJR Agri are friendly and respond quickly to any queries or problems,” says Merfyn Edwards. “That’s important at any time but it’s crucial when we’re mowing ahead of our silage contractor; they always respond very well.”

Ends



McCormick X60 + MC – Merfyn Edwards 003.jpg

Merfyn Edwards (right) receives a celebratory bottle of whisky from Terry Hughes, managing director of HJR Agri (Oswestry) Ltd, after purchasing the 100th McCormick tractor supplied by the dealership.



McCormick X60 + MC – Merfyn Edwards 006.jpg

Merfyn Edwards (right) receives a celebratory bottle of whisky from Terry Hughes, managing partner of HJR Agri (Oswestry) Ltd, after purchasing the 100th McCormick tractor supplied by the dealership.



McCormick X60 + MC – Merfyn Edwards 010.jpg

Merfyn Edwards: "It's been a challenge switching to organic over the past eight years. But also rewarding; we don't miss the fertilisers and spraying now, and it's been amazing to see so much clover coming back into swards naturally."



McCormick X60 + MC – Merfyn Edwards 018a.jpg

Putting the Brown Swiss and Montbéliarde cows to a Hereford bull is producing some appealing beef calves.



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