

## Buying Your Dream Machine Ken Van Hazinga, TioGrain Farm

If you are going to grow grain you will need to purchase some special machinery. A primary piece of equipment that you will need for your grain enterprise is a combine. Combines are not all that common in the Vermont farming landscape. However, with a little effort they can be located quite easily.

### **Finding a Combine**

If you live to the North and can muster doing business on both sides of the border head to Canada. Quebec has an excellent grain infrastructure and combines are plentiful. If you head to New York or Pennsylvania you can find a plethora of used grain machinery. It is also a good idea to locate ads from farm papers in these areas and follow the prices. Then when a machine comes up for sale you know the approximate worth of the particular make and model. Two great sources of grain equipment are the Northeast edition of FastLine (800-332-7854) and Country Folks (518-673-2448). Many people have also told me that the internet is a great way to find machines. Talk to the locals because often you can find old combines and other equipment stashed away in sheds around the landscape.



### **Be Prepared When Opportunity Knocks:**

If you are looking for a combine try and read the owner's manual for several different machines. This will provide you information on how different models operate. Although not the most stimulating reading, if you can go through the adjustment procedures on a machine you are considering buying you will have a good idea of the condition of the combine and how hard it will be to operate and repair. And believe me you will be repairing it! Parts availability is also of prime importance. It is a good idea to purchase a parts manual so you can give the part number to a local dealer. Chances are the local parts guy has never heard of a "lower tailings auger slip clutch". There are a number of tractor and farm machine junk yards throughout the Midwest that are an excellent source for used parts.

### **Combine Checklist**

Always test drive the machine before deciding to purchase. Look to see if all the drive systems work including the brakes, steering, clutch/hydraulic transmission. The machine has to drive forward easily to work properly. Run the combine at full speed and listen for bad bearings, loose belts, and other machine parts knocking. Check the condition of the belts. You will have to repair all worn belts before operating. Look in the grain tank and on the augers for rust. If the combine is not cleaned, the grime and dirt will hold moisture and rust through the body parts (fiber glass is a good fix for this). Check and make sure there is a place for a fire extinguisher on the machine. Combines do burn up from time to time. Oil soaked grain dust fires are nearly impossible to put out with water. Check out a combine junk yard and you will see that more combines end up there due to fire than over use. It is always a good idea to hire someone with combine experience to check over a machine before you make a big purchase.

### **Getting the Machine Home**

If the machine is close to home drive it. Since the machine is oversized it will cost \$1000 – \$2000 or more to move by truck. It is worth paying a professional to transport the combine. Bad things generally happen to good combines due to “no ones fault”. Remember if it falls off the truck half way home it’s the truck driver’s mess to clean-up not yours.