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Record breaker

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SIPTM

SIP Strojna Industrija d.d.
Juhartova ulica 2
3311 Šempeter v Savinjski dolini
SLOVENIA

T +386 (0) 3 703 85 00

E info@sip.si

   @SIPslovenia

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Steven Vale

The Slovenian manufacturer's impressive line-up of 15m machines began with the Spider 1500T, 14-rotor tedder in 2011. At the time SIP said it would come with similarly wide rakes and mowers. True to its word, it not only showed the prototype of a 12.5m four-rotor rake at Agritechnica, but also its first 15m mower. The five-gang concept initially broke cover in the US in 2016, when the firm's North American importer Marloo Equipment installed five SIP mowers on an in-house-developed frame. The Slovenian company saw mileage in the system, but with its own frame, and the prototype was brought to Hannover.

Called the **Silvercut Disc 1500T FC**, one of the three pre-production models currently being made is heading to the US, and the second to



All four rear mowers are raised simultaneously at the headland.

New Zealand. The third will join the two existing European prototypes, and it was one of these that we saw in action in the Netherlands. This is the third time the monster mower has visited the country. The first time was a dealer day organised by Dutch SIP import-

er Zonna, after which it was back to the factory for a few tweaks. The second time was a quiet one-day visit in May this year. Operating at 15km/hr, it took a staggeringly short 20 minutes to knock down the 10.5ha field! Following a brief tour outing in Denmark, the



We arrived to find test pilot Alwin Ekkel making a few the final preparations. Satisfied with progress, it was not long before we were able to see it in action.

So, what can we tell you about SIP's new flagship mower? Well, for starters, the rear part, weighs just over 9.0t, and the 1500T has a minimum recommended tractor power of 268kW/360hp. Operating at speeds of up to 15km/hr, the manufacturer talks of outputs of up to 22.5ha/hr.

While called the 1500T, when allowing for an overlap, cutting width of the five 3.25m wide eight-disc mowers is 14.55m. All are standard Silvercut disc mowers i.e. the front mower is a Silvercut Disc 340F FC, and all five are powered from the tractor pto.

The combined length of the three pto shafts to each rear mower is around 6.0m, and we reckon the total number of pto shafts probably exceeds 20m.

GPS is a must to reduce overlap and achieve the maximum capacity, something that was not on the New Holland T8.420 which was supplying the grunt for the demo. "It is a long way to the edge of the outer mower, and without auto steering it is really difficult to match bouts," points out operator Mr Ekkel.

This summer's dry and hot nature meant the early July second cut was a poor one, and certainly did not stretch the 14.55m mower or the New Holland tug. But we can imagine that in hilly terrain and in a heavy crop then you'll almost certainly need all 360 horses.

The operator reckons one lap of the headland is sufficient to open a field, but two passes

Data sheet

SIP Silvercut Disc 1500T FC

Weight	9,100kg
Transport height, width, length	3.99m, 2.99m, 7.50m
Working width	14.55m
Power requirement (min)	268kW/360hp
Spec for each mower unit includes	
Number of discs	Eight
Conditioner	Five positions, nylon fingers, 2.67m wide
Swath width	1.60m-3.00m
Price	TBA

Manufacturer's information

market. And there is a hint of an ISObus version sometime in 2020.

Even so, the current control box provides numerous possibilities, and allows the four rear mowers to be simultaneously raised and lowered at the push of a button. It is also possible to raise the two outer or two rear mowers



The control box will almost certainly change on commercial models.

When it goes on sale, the starting price of the 1500T is expected to be around €120,000-€130,000.



mighty 1500T is once again back in the Netherlands, where it is expected to remain for the next few weeks. We finally caught up with the five-gang machine ahead of an evening demo in the east of the country, close to the German border.

would provide additional room to manoeuvre. The front-mounted mower is currently raised and lowered using a tractor spool. Like the rest of the machine, the control box for the four rear mowers is a prototype and will probably change when the mower hits the



The user has a good view out through the rear of the tractor, which is handy on the road.



When the tractor turns, hydraulic oil from the cylinder on the drawbar is diverted to the cylinder on the 1500T's wheels.



All five cutting units are equipped with hydro-pneumatic suspension to follow ground contours. Each rear cutterbar is relieved by six pressure accumulators and the front ones by two each side.



All hydraulic pipework and pto shafts are neatly concealed inside the main frame.

when finishing a strip, or raise the outer front and rear mowers independently to the corresponding mowers on the opposite side. The inner edge of each of the rear four mowers is fitted with an inclinometer (angle sensor). These prevent the pto from being activated until a certain angle has been reached.

The suspended frame has a steering axle, which works in a similar fashion to the active

steering on a forage wagon. When the tractor turns, hydraulic oil from the cylinder on the drawbar is diverted to the cylinder on the 1500T's wheels.

For transport the two leading mowers are raised vertically, and automatically locked into position by hydraulic pins. The two rear mowers first fold to the rear, after which another pair of hydraulic rams raises them vertically. A central cylinder on the rear of the

frame then folds both mowers forward. Curious to know how long it took, we timed the folding, and from the headland mode (all four mowers raised up clear of the ground), it took exactly 1min 30secs to fold the four mowers into their transport position – and a bit over three minutes to change from transport to mowing mode.

So, when will it be available, how much does it cost, and who is going to buy it? Exact prices have still to be released but as a rough guide will set you back around €120,000-€130,000 for a non-conditioner version. "The 1500T will also be available with finger and roller conditioners," said SIP marketing manager Mihael Miheljak.

The operator reckons one pass around the headland is sufficient, but two would certainly provide more space to turn to the next pass.



As to who is going to buy it, the Dutch importer reckons it is not only aimed at contractors but could also be justified by a dairy farm with just 150ha of grass: while many of these farms have gone down the contractor route, some continue to mow their own grass. As to availability, the Dutch importer is already seeking customers, and the plan is for the first commercial models to arrive sometime early in 2019. There is no news on when the mega mower will arrive on this side of the North Sea.

Summary: SIP has said it was coming with wider working grass kit since it introduced the 15m Spider tedder model in 2011, and the 14.55m five-gang mower is part of this bigger portfolio. Bearing in mind that we saw the prototype, SIP appears to have done a good job. The hydraulic piping is neatly concealed, the four rear mowers fold and unfold with the minimum of fuss, road visibility through the

folded mowers is good and the manufacturer's impressive claim of 22.5ha/hr appears to be a sound one.

SIP is no doubt curious to find out whether the concept will be more successful than the 14.0m self-propelled Claas Cougar and an alternative in a largely Krone-dominated market. The only potential fly in the ointment is

that you really need fields with a minimum size of 10ha to get the best out of it.

A Big M or tractor-mounted triple mower is a more flexible alternative for smaller and awkward shaped fields. Where the 1500T has the clear advantage is on larger plots. Travelling at 15km/hr, from a capacity point of view, there really is nothing to beat it.



All five mowers are standard Silvercut disc versions, and when the 1500T goes on sale it will be available with and without conditioners.



The two front mowers are raised vertically for transport, and secured in position by hydraulic locking pins. When folded, the two rear mowers rest on two V-blocks on the main frame. On-road dimensions are impressively compact, with a height of 3.99m and width of 2.99m.



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SIP Strojna Industrija d.d.
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SIP Strojna Industrija d.d.
Juhartova ulica 2
3311 Šempeter v Savinjski dolini
SLOVENIA
T +386 (0) 3 703 85 00
E info@sip.si

   @SIPSlovenia

www.sip.si

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