



James Mayes

James Mayes talks about his career with Sentry, from joining as a trainee to progressing to a farm manager

I joined Sentry in June, 2004 as a Trainee Farm Manager in Suffolk. This was a contract farming operation covering four different locations over a 30 mile radius. My initial main duty was that of managing a high value potato enterprise, following the season through from the planting to the harvesting of the crop. This was successfully completed and a promotion to the position of Assistant Farm Manager followed. This role expanded into one of managing operations on multiple farms and liaising with farm owners.

In 2006 I was promoted to the position of Farm Manager on a 510 ha farm near Woodbridge, Suffolk. Coupled with looking after this farm I was responsible for preparing budgets, cashflows and regular farm reports.

2009 presented me with an exciting opportunity to progress my career further by accepting the position of Farm Manager across 1100 ha in Bedfordshire. During this time the business has changed with the addition of two extra farms in Hertfordshire being incorporated into the business. I am fully responsible for all cropping, machinery and agronomic decisions as well as negotiating sale contracts for all crops for all businesses under Sentry Bedfordshire.

I prepare annual budgets for each farm, providing financial information to our internal accountants and monitor cash flows on a monthly basis, and keep all field records on our Gatekeeper software, complying with cross compliance and legislation. I have encouraged and developed the farm staff to increase their knowledge and levels of responsibility which has led to greater benefits to the business.

I have undertaken professional qualifications and have achieved both FACTS and BASIS certification. I became the first person to win both the prestigious Barrie Orme Award and the BAYER Best Farm Manager Award for excellence in the BASIS crop protection exams in the same year.

The confidence and skills gained from taking these qualifications helped me to make the finals in the 2013 Farmers Weekly Awards in the Arable Farmer of the Year category.

Achieving these high standards has enabled me to train and assist Sentry's younger generations of aspiring farm managers through the transferring of knowledge and skills. I now direct Sentry's agronomic practices and explore ways of producing better crops, both in terms of increasing yields and margins. With encouraged access to further training and career development I have been able to develop a senior management role within Sentry.

2015 will once again provide me with an opportunity to progress my career further with the appointment to a large family owned Essex estate.

Our client has taken the decision to put into place an effective succession plan that will enable the next generation to become involved in their family business. I will have the enjoyable and challenging job of restructuring and developing the business so that it can face the challenges ahead and operate in a sustainable manner. I will be able to provide the services of a professional farm business manager, who also has the benefit to call upon with the support of a wider company structure that contains a number of industry professionals.

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