

Turkish Thresher Great For Small Bean Plots

Mike Reeske's Turkish-built mobile grain thresher can process everything from small sesame seeds to large Fava beans. Reeske says he couldn't find any other machine like it when searching for a thresher for his heirloom beans.

"I only have a few acres of heirloom edible beans so I couldn't justify a combine," explains Reeske. "This unit runs off a tractor pto and was just the size I needed."

Already planning a trip to Turkey and Greece, the retired school teacher took a side trip to Konya, Turkey, home of NCK Agriculture Machines Industry Co. (<http://cetinkayalar.en.busytrade.com>; ph 011 90 332 2489-238).

Once there, Reeske was taken on a tour of the factory where everything but the tires is fabricated and assembled. Much of the work was done by hand or at a forge.

"It reminded me of what shops would have been like in this country in the 1930's," says Reeske. "The craftsmanship looked really good."

Reeske ordered the NCK1 for delivery summer 2013. It arrived in California and was assembled at his farm. The single axle unit is 12 1/2 ft. long, 6 1/2 ft. wide and 7 1/2 ft. high and weighs about 3,100 lbs. According to the company, it will thresh out about 4,800 lbs. an hour.

It came with 2 screens for the beater, one large and one small. It also came with half a dozen screens for the final winnowing to

match the various size seeds and grain to be threshed.

Once he figured out the right tractor speed, the only problem Reeske found was some bean splitting. The beans had dried down too much, having been cut and stockpiled in a shed 3 to 4 months earlier.

"Last year we cut the beans when half the pods were dry, a quarter were yellow and the rest were green," says Reeske. "We let them dry for a week and ran them through the thresher, and they were fine."

Reeske says the beans do have to be forked in at a steady pace so they don't overload the beater with its 44 knives. The final product is not perfect, he admits.

"The thresher is just the first step," says Reeske. "We bag the beans and then run them through an old Clipper seed and grain cleaner to remove weed seeds and fine trash."

After several years of growing small amounts of heirloom dry beans in garden plots, Reeske had expanded to a nearby small farm. When the thresher arrived, he had just harvested 2 acres of beans. In 2014 he harvested 6 acres of organic beans, and this year he will harvest 15 acres of beans and several of sunflowers.

"We grew out 15 varieties of beans," says Reeske. "With heirloom beans, you have to introduce them and build awareness before you build demand."

He sells his beans locally as well as through his website. They are available in 16 oz. and



Mike Reeske couldn't find a thresher for his heirloom beans so he ordered this Turkish-built mobile grain thresher. It can process everything from small sesame seeds to large Fava beans.

5 lb. bags.

The large number of varieties means many are grown in small areas. In the case of one type of beans, he has 5 varieties on a single acre. Even as he expands acres, and he hopes to double them soon, large equipment wouldn't make sense.

"The NCK thresher is perfect for someone like me or other entry level grain or seed growers," says Reeske. "We can pull it to the field and thresh out the beans there or we can bring the beans to the thresher."

Reeske says he paid about \$6,000 for the machine and another \$3,400 for shipping, plus port fees of \$800 to \$900 when it arrived at Long Beach, Calif. The company also makes a larger machine.

Check out a video of the NCK1 at farmshow.com.

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Sean O'Donnell bought this Sussex Little Giant stationary grain thresher at an auction and uses it to harvest small fields of wheat.



In addition to wheat, O'Donnell also raises edible soybeans and 4 heirloom dry bean varieties. He uses this American #2 stationary thresher for smaller fields and plots.

He Uses Old Grain Threshers Great For Small Plots

Sean O'Donnell uses a Deere 3300 combine on his wheat fields, but when it comes to small fields and test plots, he turns to one of his stationary threshers. When dealing with only a few bushels of grain, it simply isn't worth it to clean out the combine before and after. That is especially true when dealing with test plots.

"There are definitely situations where you've got too much grain for hand threshing, but not enough for a combine," says O'Donnell. "Then an old stationary thresher is just right."

O'Donnell is part of the rebirth in wheat production in Maine, once considered the breadbasket of the Northeast U.S. An organic farmer, he and several others are working with new wheat varieties that show promise for organic farmers.

"A couple of the varieties I've been working with look good for organic production, where we can't use conventional fertilizer and pesticides," says O'Donnell.

He picked up a Sussex Little Giant threshing machine at an auction. The thresher

is only 3 ft. by 16 ft. and about 5 ft. tall. It was a junior version of larger threshers used on larger farms. He figures it will be ideal as he grows out select varieties.

"Nobody seemed to know what it was, and I got it for only \$100," recalls O'Donnell. "I've been playing with it since. Last year I used it on some Red Fife (heritage variety) wheat, and it worked well."

O'Donnell likes the idea that most parts are wooden, so he can fashion replacements as needed in his wood shop. He notes that the wooden bolts and joints have dried out over the years in storage.

"It wobbles, so I plan to build a steel frame to give it more stability," says O'Donnell. "Some of the threshing spikes were gone, but I can buy after-market spikes for older combine cylinders and make them work."

In addition to wheat, O'Donnell also raises edible soybeans and dry beans, including 4 heirloom dry bean varieties. He sells to market and produces seed for other growers.

"You have to be gentle with many heirloom varieties," says O'Donnell.

He explains that a combine concave spins at 700 to 900 rpm's while a stationary grain thresher concave will spin at 400 to 500. A dedicated bean thresher spins at only 150 to 200 rpm's. On his larger fields of beans, he uses a Bidwell Bean Thresher, an early pull-type combine with a pick-up head. He finds an American #2 stationary thresher is fine for smaller fields and plots.

"They were commonly used for up to 5 acres of beans," says O'Donnell. "I threshed out black beans with it last year and got 150 lbs. in roughly 2 hours. I just stuck the bean plants in the front and lugged the chaff away."

Although the no. 2, like the Sussex, was originally belt-powered, O'Donnell adapted it for use with a pto. He notes that the early threshers were all designed to use flat drive belts.

"If I was going to use them a lot, I would probably convert them to V-belts," he says. "Flat belts are still easy to find at auctions, and you can get them new, but they can be a pain when they slide off."

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