



MacDon 61-ft. header center section moves up and down as the wings move up and down.

Headers Keep Getting Bigger

By Jim Ruen, Contributing Editor

Bigger-than-ever combines can handle bigger-than-ever headers, and MacDon and Nardi are making them. MacDon, a Canadian company, recently introduced the multi-crop FD261, a 61-ft. wide FlexDraper with 50-in. deep drapers. Meanwhile, Italian header maker Nardi introduced the SFH1500 Sunstorm, a 51-ft. header, the largest yet for sunflowers. With an average cutting speed of nearly 4 mph, the Sunstorm can cover almost 25 acres per hour.

“Our first header, the 963 30-ft., was the largest out there 40 years ago,” recalls Russ Henderson, MacDon. “When we developed the first 36-ft. FlexDraper, we could maintain the same weight but offer more capacity. The



Nardi header is designed for annual use on nearly 2,500 acres with minimal maintenance.

FD261 is almost double the size of the 36-ft. and has a 22% greater capacity than our 50-ft. FD250. We keep increasing header size to keep up with combine capabilities.”

Henderson explains that planning for the FD261 began when engineers designed the FD250. “They ensured the center section, drive systems, and the structure connecting to the combine were strong enough to support an even wider header.”

The FD261 maintains the MacDon signature balanced scale float, where the center section weight balances against each wing. The center section moves up and down as the wings move up and down. No cylinders or springs are needed, just linkage with low-friction pivots.

Like the earlier MacDon 41-ft. header, the 61-ft. width is designed specifically for growers practicing controlled traffic. “We wanted to give our controlled traffic customers a few inches more, so if a crop is leaning a bit, they won’t miss a strip,” says Henderson. “For everyone else, it’s another foot of cutting width every round.”

Nardi’s Sunstorm was introduced to the market this past year, following several years of development based on the earlier SFH1400. Its reel and auger had two lateral suspensions, which made it difficult to handle the larger amounts of biomass that come with cutting the sunflower as low as possible in the North American market.

“In other markets like Europe, farmers try to only cut the heads and leave the stalk in the field to be managed by the stalk cutter-chopper mounted under the header,” notes Leonardo Nardi, Nardi Harvesting. “Normally, high biomass had never been a problem for our headers. However, the SFH1400 did have a great frame and a robust transmission.”

The SFH1500 retains the frame and double transmission for the sickle but introduces a single central suspension for the auger and reel. Nardi also widened the header to 50 ft. It’s designed for annual use on nearly 2,500 acres with minimal maintenance, adds Nardi.

“We made similar changes to the SFH1400,” he says. “As far as I know, the SFH1500 is the largest sunflower header available. With the right combine, you can travel at more than 8 mph, reducing the time needed to finish the harvest. You can enter the field at 15 to 20 degrees with respect to the rows and use the entire working width of the header.”

When the new header was introduced to Europe and North America, a number went to General Implement Distributors (GID) in Salt Lake City, Utah. GID has distributed Nardi headers west of the Mississippi for the past 12 years.

“They’re very good headers and perform really well,” says Mark Tibbitts, GID. “They’re the largest pan-style header on the

market. Our customers like their simplicity and ease of maintenance, as well as not having to go with the row. Their headers function well and fit all makes and models of combines, just by changing adapters.”

Tibbitts notes that his customers also appreciate options like lifters for downed crops and Nardi’s brush kits. Their brush kits bridge between the pans to reduce the loss of sunflowers that would otherwise fall between them,” says Tibbitts.

The Nardi SFH1500 costs \$128,572. While the company has headers operating in Canada, it’s looking for a distributor there. FARM SHOW readers are encouraged to contact the company directly.

The FD261 from MacDon is available throughout the U.S. and Canada. The suggested retail price is \$224,871.

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, Nardi Harvesting, Viale dell’Industria 30/A 37040, Veronella (VR), Italy (ph +39 045 766 5570; info@nardi-harvesting.com; www.nardi-harvesting.com) or General Implement Distributors, 2955 W 2100 S, Salt Lake City, Utah 84119 (ph 800-767-0555; www.generalimp.com) or MacDon Industries, 680 Moray St., Winnipeg, Man. Canada R3J 3S3 (ph 204-885-5590; www.macdon.com) or MacDon, Inc., 10708 N. Pomona Ave., Kansas City, Mo. 64153 (ph 816-891-7313; www.macdon.com).



Nardi SFH 1500 Sunstorm header in action.

Repower Kits Available For Skid Loaders And More

North Country Ag Repair of Birnamwood, Wis., makes and sells engine repower kits for skid loaders and similar equipment.

“We took a time-consuming, thought-intensive, only-in-your-dreams idea and made it almost as easy to accomplish as installing a factory engine,” says company founder Ira Huber. “In short, we make it possible for almost anyone to replace a broken skid loader engine with a better option. Even one from a totally different manufacturer.”

Huber’s business began when he started selling used Kubota engines to upgrade older, factory-installed Kubota power units in Bobcat, older Gehl and New Holland skid loaders.

“New Holland owners with failed Shibaura motors started asking to get Kubota engines in their machines. I had installed my first Cummins engine in a Chevy pickup back in 2000, so the idea of a repower was nothing new.”

Huber first bought a New Holland LS170 skid loader from a customer who had blown numerous Shibaura engines.

“I had access to as many Kubota engines from Carrier reefer units as I could wish for. In 2017, I teamed up with a local machinist, and we built a couple of special parts for repairing farm equipment. Word spread slowly.”

By 2019, a farmer from Missouri sent in his Gehl 5240 for an engine transplant, sick of sinking money into engine parts he could hardly find.

“It opened my eyes to the fact that some of the simple parts we’d engineered would work for repowering skid loaders, mini excavators,

man lifts and trenchers, or anything else with a hydrostatic drive system.”

He took the professional leap in 2024 by signing with a business consultant.

“Now we advertise nationwide and have customers from Pennsylvania to California and Manitoba. Many customers can install it right on the farm, although independent repair shops and even OEM dealerships will handle the install, too.”

The parts within each kit are tailored to the specific machine application but usually include the following: flywheel to hydrostatic pump connection kit, motor mounts, turbo kit (lube lines, boost hose, manifolds), muffler and hardware-per application, engine oil cooler kit, water pump, fan belt, alternator, rear crank seal, block heater, oil pan kit, remote oil filter kit, dipstick adapter to reuse OEM dipstick, fan spacer to use OEM fan, hardware-bolts, most hoses and hose clamps, and an installation manual.

“Our goal is to make a repower so painless and such an upgrade that it’s a no-brainer,” he says. “We want to meet or exceed factory function and appearance as well as serviceability. Our steel parts are laser cut as much as possible. It’s a cost-effective way to produce a very nice product.”

He shares that the process is like playing with Lego blocks.

“It’s fun to observe patterns. I’ve found simple things that can be reused from the original machine to cut costs and make it easier to get replacement parts. A simple dipstick can cost close to \$300, so why not reuse it for free?”

Huber believes that many factors drive

demand for his repower kits, including fail-prone engine models, skyrocketing replacement costs, and increasing demand for engines that are time-proven and have an abundance of replacement parts available.

“There’s a growing appreciation for older, simpler machines. I think this is a great way to give them new life.”

Shipping for the rebuild kits is available across North America.

“We also love to do installations at our shop. In fact, we’ve expanded and have an Amish shop subcontracted in the Cashton, Wis., area that builds our remanufactured engines as well as some installation parts for the repower kit.”

In the long term, his vision is to build a national and even international installer dealership network.

“I love networking. It’s a real pleasure to support small businesses.”

Individual parts are also available for purchase, and the company can customize them according to request. Someday, Huber hopes to develop a website where clients can select parts and build their own kits.

“I get lots of requests for more machines for repower kits, but we only work so fast. If there are investors for capital or brains that would like logistic or development challenges, we have opportunities to harness their gifts. Feel free to connect.”

Contact: FARM SHOW Followup, North County Ag Repair, 236486 Hatchery Rd., Birnamwood, Wis. 54414 (ph 715-610-4621; ncagrepair@gmail.com; northcountryagrepair.com).



“There’s a growing appreciation for older, simpler machines. I think this is a great way to give them new life,” says Huber.