

... Thor Oechsner, farmer, NY State



Greetings from the Finger Lakes region of New York State.

My name is Thor Oechsner, and I operate a certified organic arable farm and small artisan flour mill.

My state is known mostly for its biggest city, The Big Apple, a five-hour drive from my farm, but New York State is predominantly rural and agricultural, with over 35,000 farms. Nationally, it ranks third in dairying and second in apple production. Historically, New York was the breadbasket of the young nation, and it still grows 130,000 acres of soft winter wheat.

I'm a first generation farmer who started part-time in 1991 on two acres of vegetables using a 1978 Deutz 4506 and an old three-bottom Ford trip plough. After that, I financed my way into full-time farming by running a VW-Audi service shop, which is where I developed my appreciation of European design and technology. The 70s and 80s era air-cooled Deutz tractors were familiar to me, since I worked with air-cooled

Caption competition

'Tractor bolts from fiery baler date'

Among the entries for this month's competition are 'Baler ready to be baled up'; 'Great bales of fire'; 'Sticks won't break my bones, but stones just might...'; and 'Problems arise with mobile straw burner'. However, the winner of this month's competition is



profi reader Barry Tomlinson, who sent in the caption printed above the picture. Mr Tomlinson receives a selection of profi merchandise.

Please send in your June caption competition entries (06/18 p6) to us here at the editorial office: profi international, Caption competition, Kelsey Media, Cudham Tithe Barn, Berry's Hill, Cudham, Kent, TN16 3AG or email: profi.ed@kelsey.co.uk

Please mention the picture to which you are referring.

German engines and Bosch diesel systems on VW-Audi cars.

I now farm 1,200 rented acres across 25 miles. Contrary to the visions you might have of large-scale agriculture in the American Midwest, my area is hilly and largely wooded, with fields more like postage stamps. One of our biggest harvests by weight are the stones we have to pick off the land each year to get fields fit to plant.

After college in 1986, I worked on a potato farm in Hjo, Sweden, where I gathered up stones with a Volvo/BM payloader and Vretten stone fork. This was amazing to me, as back in my area we picked stones

by hand. When I started farming on my own, I imported a Vrettran fork and modified it to fit a New Holland L785 skid steer still used today. This turned my neighbours' heads and these style Swedish forks are now common on US farms.

Land here is very difficult to row cultivate, so instead of the corn/soybean rotations of the Midwest, we rely mostly on small grains and hay. When I began farming, I focused on growing feed grains for the organic dairy industry. Feeling strapped by commodity pricing and struggling to gain a land foothold, I looked into adding value to the grains that I grew by processing and

direct marketing. This was the beginning of our mill, Farmer Ground Flour.

Our farm's seven-year rotations require planting, cultivating, and harvesting at much the same time through the season. Sometimes my 17 tractors don't seem enough. The fleet includes seven Deutz, five Massey Fergusons, two New Hollands, two John Deeres and a Case/IH Steiger 9350 articulated. As an enthusiastic profi subscriber since 2001, I'm looking forward to telling you more about my equipment, farming practices, and value-added operations in future columns.

Thor Oechsner

Now covering 1,200 acres the farm uses a mixed bag of tractor makes to establish small grains destined for its own mill, Farmer Ground Flour.

