

Seddon and Sons – Grower Profile

The Seddon family have been farmers for generations. They have been based at their current site near Ormskirk, Lancashire since 1984, when newlyweds Gary and Margaret Seddon took on the tenancy of the farm at the tender age of 21 years.

A family business

After a number of years as tenant farmers Gary and Margaret were able to buy the farm and since then have expanded the business further, buying a neighbouring property. Their three sons Paul, Richard and James have also joined the farm, each bringing a particular skills set, along with new ideas and innovations. Paul focuses on the farm workshop and mechanical maintenance, Richard is the harvest manager and James is responsible for agronomy and sales.

Today Seddon and Sons grows approximately 180 acres of leeks, selling to wholesalers and caterers, with customers from across the UK spanning Edinburgh and Glasgow in the North to Bristol and London in the South.

The weather in Lancashire brings its own, unique challenges. Rain is a major factor, although the farm doesn't tend to experience flooding like those further to the East of the country and it rarely snows as the location benefits from the Gulf Stream. Climate change has seen the weather become increasingly unpredictable.

The working day

The farm employs around 28 staff drawn from the local area and recruited through the Seasonal Workers Scheme. Because of the markets that Seddon and Sons supplies there are no fixed orders or prices, meaning they have to be agile and responsive as a business.

Working hours span 7.30am to 4.30pm, with orders typically coming in at around 7am, but can be as early as 2am. The farm uses a mechanical harvester, with leeks then transferred to the packhouse to be washed, graded and packed.

Recent innovations

In recent years the farm has introduced innovative production techniques and moved to recyclable packaging. There are now solar panels on the roofs of a number of the buildings, providing energy to the farm and helping to reduce costs. While an investment into track machines means that the impact on the soil is minimised, reducing problems caused by compaction, resulting in improved soil health. The farm also has its own fabrication unit onsite, enabling the family to repair or customise farm machinery themselves.

Leeks feature in many of the meals enjoyed by the Seddons, particular favourites according to James Seddon are Chicken, Bacon and Leek Pie or a burger topped with Stilton and Leeks.

