

## A dependable butterfly

Fendt has revised their Slicer mowers and the updates also include a new cutterbar. To find out how the revised machines perform in the field we ordered a triple combination for a full season test last year.

Fendt's 2023 disc mower models boast a number of new developments which center around the cutterbar, the headstock and the styling. The conditioner, by comparison, was improved only in a few details. Here, Fendt retained the conditioning elements which are spring tines rather

than V-type steel or plastic tines as on competitor models. To test the performance of these machines, we asked Fendt for a triple combination consisting of a Slicer 310 FKC front mower and Slicer 860 KC rear mowers and submitted these to a full season test. The letters KC in the badge indicate

that the mower has a tine conditioner and RC refers to a roller conditioner.

### RAPID ATTACHMENT

The front mower has a pivoting headstock which is raised by the linkage in the field. The mower bed is suspended by coil springs which are not necessary

The Slicer disc mowers produce clean and tidy cuts.





if the lower links have suspension. Fitting the suspension springs is straightforward and done without tools as they are simply hooked in place. The headstock on the front mower comes in two versions, either as the pivoting version or a 3D unit which raises the mower hydraulically and without raising the link arms.

Designed like a Weiste A-frame, the headstock is permanently mounted to the mower and offers several coupling positions for the top link and the lower links. If the machine has hydraulic curtains (option), the tractor will need one double-acting coupler up front.

The rear mowers can be stored in either horizontal or vertical position, the latter saving space in the shed of course. One two-legged kickstand at the rear and two telescoping stands at the front of the central headstock ensure good stability. There is only one coupling position for the top link and for the lower links. The tractor must have at least one sa spool for lift/lower in the field and one da spool for folding/unfolding. In addition to that, our rear mowers required one sa spool for the hydraulic transport locking system and another for the hydraulic curtains. If the top link is hydraulic, you'll need at least five spools at the rear – or T-fittings as an optional solution, in which case the mower and the curtains are raised/lowered in synch.

Although so many oil lines need coupling, attachment to the tractor is rather swift and takes about five minutes.

### NOT A HEAVY-WEIGHT

The total transport width of the combination is 2.99m as measured on the

### KEEPING IT BRIEF

**The disc mowers** in Fendt livery are badged Slicer. The letters KC or RC indicate the type of conditioner. The same models are also marketed in Massey Ferguson livery.

**Our test combination** had a working width of about 8.30m. Weighing in at 3.3t, it is quite a light-weight combination.

**The mowers** were tested for a full season. We particularly liked the quality of cut. Setting up the individual mowers is straightforward and fast.



△ The spring tines on the conditioner pull the material through an adjustable comb.

front mower. Folded to vertical, the rear unit measures 2.91m in width and 3.62m in height at a ground clearance of 42cm. As the 1.81m long front mower is likely to exceed the maximum 3.50m total forward length on most tractors, Fendt offers optional mirrors for €233 that improve visibility in awkward situations.

Tipping the scales at exactly 1,000kg (front mower) and 2,340kg (rear mower), the combination is nice and light-weight, so most 4-cyl. tractors including our Fend 516 Vario provide the necessary payload to handle the combo.

As for drivelines, all are direct and without belts with integral friction clutches in the pto shafts for protection from overload. An over-run slip clutch in the gearbox allows the cutting discs to run out after the pto is switched off whereas the conditioner stops nearly instantly. This way, operators can immediately raise the mowers after switching off the pto. Each of the three mowers has a cutting width of 3.13m, six discs, a top hat on either end, reamers under all discs for rejecting lumps of dirt and debris.

The beds are welded all-round, suspended on both ends and have life time lubrication. The drive power flows to the discs through one of the crop feeding drums on the discs (the inboard drums on the rear mowers). Fendt's selling points are the large-diameter and honed gears where 3 1/2 teeth are in mesh at any one time, which is reckoned to ensure quiet running. Indeed, we didn't notice any noise coming from the gears – not even after cutting 500 hectares.

### EASY SET-UP

Our mowers had the optional and higher wear skids (€95) that increase the cutting height to up to 9cm. The suspension pressure of the front mower is set by adjusting two chains that are



Photos: Huesmann

△ This mechanism adjusts the comb to one of four positions.

attached with shackles to the coil springs. The manufacturer says the ideal angle of these springs with the mower in work is 45° relative to the tractor. In our tests we were able to reduce the ground pressure to about 180kg, courtesy of the springs; and this can be further reduced by a hydro-pneumatic option, says the company.

The rear mowers mount in their centre of gravity and have hydro-pneumatic suspension. The current pressure is indicated by two gauges and is adjusted by turning two knurled screws on a valve chest and by operating the sa spool for lift-out in the field. Once the pointer reaches the target pressure you close the spools again. Two buttons on the chest allow operators to release the pressure in each system individually. The manufacturer recommends setting the ground pressure to 260kg on each unit (indicated by a red mark on the pressure gauge). The minimum pressure is 150kg and 800kg is the maximum. The optimum linkage height at the rear is indicated by arrows on the suspension system on the right-hand mower – a simple yet excellent solution. The



Photos: Huesmann

△ The rear-mounted mowers also lift out individually when cutting awkward areas. The function can be preselected on an electronic box.

◁ These keys make swapping blades a straightforward job.

break-back system that is integrated in the link arm couplers was never triggered in the test.

As for the (tine) conditioner, this has 8mm spring tines instead of those V-type steel or plastic tines you usually find on competitor systems. In total, there are 44 double tines arranged in four rows, spaced at 4.5cm and secured from working loose. As the grass is picked up by the tines it passes a conditioning comb that adjusts to one of four positions for varying intensities. We usually set it to one of the two mid positions for a sufficiently aggressive action.

### TOP-NOTCH CUTS

Each mower has deflector plates that control the swath width and adjust without tools. The front mower manages to group the cut material to a 1.22m swath for the tractor to straddle it. That's how we want it. The rear mowers, too, have deflector plates on the sides plus additional plates in the conditioner deck which are controlled by turning a knob. Yet, despite all these options, it is not possible to spread the cut material at a width wider than 2.04m, which is the measure of the conditioner's intake width. So, the total width of our combination was 8.26m, for which the rear mowers were suspended in the inner hole (wider is possible). Front/rear overlap is about 57cm on either side and enough for cutting curved lines. As for lifting, each of the rear mowers either needs a separate sa spool or you opt for an optional selector box, in which case one sa spool will do.

As for quality of work, the Slicer mowers gave clean cuts in all condi-

tions (standing crop), including in very low growth. Dips and ditches were handled well - thanks to an up/down travel of  $\pm 7.5^\circ$  at the front, and  $+30^\circ/-19^\circ$  at the rear, with the nearly 50cm deep mower bed guiding the blades at a controlled height for a clean cut.

We were able to cut low-growth grass at reduced and fuel efficient 850rpm. In the second cut in 2023, our Fendt 516 Vario consumed an average 5.2l/ha while working at a rate of approx. 5 hectares per hour and with the conditioner set to position 2. The other test tractor, a Fendt 718, guzzled about 7l/ha, covering about 6.5ha per hour in the first cut with the conditioner set in position 3. Good results.

### END OF SEASON

Summing up, the Slicer mowers with tine conditioners scored good marks in our tests. Changing blades is straightforward, too, and spare blades are stored in a box on each machine. Excellent. Nice and durable, two sets of

blades lasted for the entire season; something we can't say about the paint coat, which started peeling off on the conditioner decks. Yet Fendt says they have addressed this in the meantime.

As for prices, the tested combination costs €96,804 with €27,110 being charged for the front mower.

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### TECHNICAL DATA – FENDT MOWER COMBINATION

Models	Slicer 310 F KC	Slicer 860 KC
Test specification weight (kg)	1,000	2,340
Total length when mounted (cm)	181	208
Transport width when vertical (cm)	299	291
Width (mowers and end curtains lowered) (m)	3.58	8.75
Working width (m)	3.13	8.26
List price for base specification model*	€25,636	€65,465
List price for test specification model*	€27,110	€69,694

*top agrar; sources: top agrar measurements, \* manufacturer information*

◁ Weighing in at about 3.3t, the tested butterfly combination is rather light-weight.