

# Knowing where your assets are is a vital and valuable part of managing your farm

Whether we are talking about mechanical equipment, vehicles, or livestock, knowing that they are where you expect them to be is a key part of your day-to-day farm management– the confirmation that all is “normal” is a great comfort. More importantly, however, is knowing immediately when they are somewhere, they shouldn’t be – it could be an accident or it could be theft – whatever the cause, being alerted to the ‘abnormal’ is a vital risk management tool.

Vehicle theft alone accounts for £40-50m per annum in losses, never mind the disruption to your business of being without the vehicle or equipment until a replacement is sourced. Whilst forensic tagging plays a significant part in being able to recover the asset once found, it is much better to prevent or “catch in the act”. To do that you first need to understand what is normal for the vehicle in terms of where it goes and at what time of the day it would normally be in work. This is best done through a tracker on the vehicle which uses GPS technology to monitor its location and build the picture of ‘normal’. Once that picture / those parameters have been set, it is then possible to spot anything abnormal, going beyond the normal range e.g. moving in the early hours of the morning, and raise an alarm.

GPS Tracking of assets isn’t just about theft prevention, it is much more than that. It gives you access to data that can give you automated insight into your farming practices and costs, allowing you to carry out meaningful benchmarking and make fact-based decisions on whether to own your own equipment or to contract out certain operations for example, see the report from the KTIF Foresight Farming Project for thoughts on this. Having a GPS tracker on plant and equipment means that the data can be recorded automatically and consistently, removing the need for filling in logbooks and transferring them to the computer.

Other examples include using the tracking data as input to a Nutrient Management Plan. Tracking the vehicle and knowing over what area it spreads each load of slurry or FYM is valuable input data to the Plan, which can be gathered automatically.



Farmers also use it to know when a job is nearing completion in a remote location and when they need to go to join the team to help with the next phase, saving time and resource.

GPS trackers come in many forms covering all types of application. Your choice will be driven by the use case to which you are applying it and how it can be configured. As most are battery powered you need to consider battery life and how often you are gathering and transmitting data. For tractors or ATVs, you would have the device set to sleep whilst the vehicle is static; wake up when movement is detected; and send data every 15 minutes until it is static again when it then goes back to sleep.

One thing to be aware of is that GPS is not pinpoint accurate. Typically, the error band is about 25m. This is the same for the SatNav in a car, but it just appears more accurate because the software forces your position to be on a road. Out in the field we do not have that good fortune. Consequently, you will sometimes see odd things, such as the tractor being shown on the other side of the wall! But that is just the GPS technology.