



CPA NEWS

Advertising feature

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What you don't see...

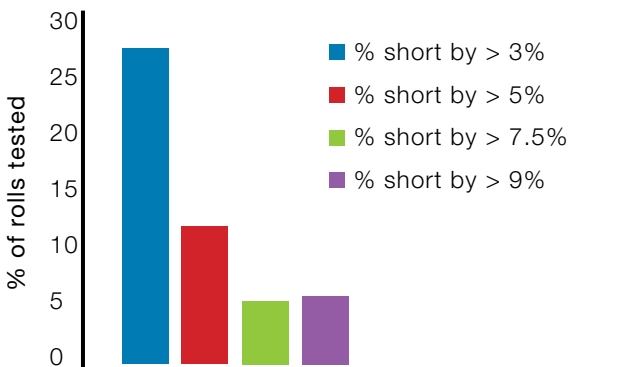
The economy has probably forced all of us to make some changes to the way we live and work, as the recession bites. In efforts to try and reduce costs, it is easy to think that a change in purchasing habits could be thought of as the easy answer...a 'quick fix' perhaps. However, we would all do well to remember that familiar phrase "buyer beware".... What, exactly, are your options if you think that buying cheaper is a wise decision to reduce your business costs? What exactly are you likely to get for your money?

It should be pretty obvious to all of us that price savings must come at a cost...in other words, if it's so cheap and seems too good to be true, then it probably is! Something has to give, somewhere.

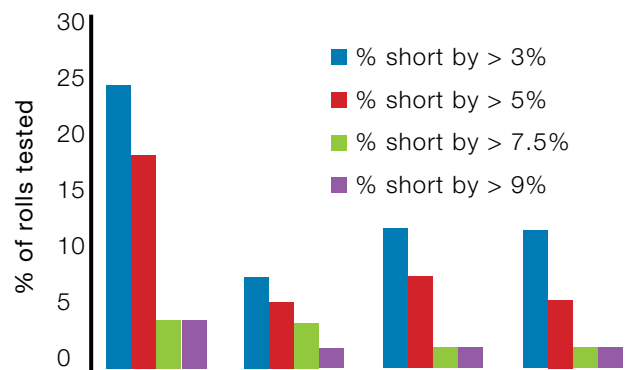
"We need to know the market, where netwrap quality is concerned; it is our business and we would be foolish to not keep abreast of what goes on. Year on year, we make it a practice to purchase rolls of netwrap in the marketplace, of many different types and brands, in order to evaluate and investigate what is available in the market" says Graham Robson, Tama's Technical Manager. "These tests are exhaustive and extremely comprehensive, involving considerable quantity of net each year, which bring in valuable information on what customers are likely to get for their money and how the different types of netwrap compare".

Tests carried out in late 2011 showed that over 25% of all the rolls tested turned out to be shorter than their stated length. Even allowing for a small % tolerance, 12% of all the nets (or more than 1 in 10 rolls) were still over 5% shorter than stated. Worse still, half of these were almost 10% shorter than their brand packaging claimed, meaning that your money is only buying 90% of what you hoped for! Now we can understand why some netwraps cost less than others...they are cheating on the length!

To make the situation worse, 15% of those 'cheating' nets were found to be alarmingly weak. One roll in every six of the nets tested was found to be weaker than 230kgf. This is a very poor comparison to the market expectation of 250kgf minimum strength and considerably weaker than the leading netwrap, TamaNet, TamaNet Edge to Edge Marathon, with Bale+ technology, which has a minimum guaranteed strength of 270kgf. Clearly, if your netwrap is that much weaker, more wraps of net will be needed to hold the bale securely. "It would appear that some producers have not made any moves to develop their product with market demands over recent years, remaining with 'standard' type product, with no features or length benefits either, and these seem to be the nets which are at the bottom end of the quality scale" says Graham Robson.



Netwrap comparative benchmarking summary 2012
The above table shows the amount of nets tested that were short length, and by what % short of their stated length



The numbers above clearly show the segment of 'worst results' were in the shorter lengths from some of the cheaper priced imported netwrap types.



Now we see the 'wise decision' of buying the cheaper roll of netwrap begins to fall down, as having to use more net on every bale means a higher cost per bale and, of course, fewer bales possible from every roll, so more rolls are required. A wise decision to buy cheap..? We think not.

These detailed tests also provided valuable data on the raw material and extrusion qualities that the various producers use, which can have great influence on how the net will perform in a baler. The amount of friction in the net is a significant factor in allowing trouble-free operation, especially if considering those balers where

the roll is free turning in a net box and then passes over or through various tension and spreading bars. A high friction net can easily be damaged, so weakening the threads that it may require an extra turn of net to withhold high density or heavy bales. The test survey result showed that certain manufacturers were consistently at the bottom end of the quality scale, often those that were also short length and weaker. Suggesting a lack of quality control or, perhaps, a blatant attempt to offer a 'competitive' market price. Though, as this clearly shows, to buy cheap is not, necessarily, the best option.

2012 crop packaging – buy it now!

Prices for Twine, Stretchfilm and Netwrap will all see some small increases at the start of this season, and are likely to continue to rise as the season progresses. So make sure you get your orders in early!

Continuing increases in the cost of raw materials (remember that all crop packaging products are made from virgin polymers), combined with the continued uncertainty in the market and the Euro, could well result in further increases in all Crop Packaging goods as the season goes on. The best advice we can give at this moment in time is to place your orders early, whilst remembering a golden rule of buying. Always buy the best product you can from a trusted manufacturer, through a reliable supplier at the best price!

How valuable is your bale ...?

Austerity is biting hard and we are all trying to get more from what we have. In foraging and baling we've been on that track for some time now, if one considers just what we are able to pack into a round bale nowadays, compared with a decade ago.

Consider this, it was not so many years ago that a 'good' silage bale would be one tipping the scales at 400 – 500kg, nowadays you'd likely turn your nose up at such a bale, when modern high density round balers are able to pack up to a tonne of forage into the 1.2m

x 1.2m cylinder. As a result of expensive 'hardware', greater precision chop and higher density capabilities of the baler, in real terms the average silage bale is now worth a lot more than in the past. So, for the same volume, you are packing almost double the value into the bale, feed value as well as monetary value, if forage is being sold on. So, are you considering the actual value of the bale? You do things the same way you ever did, but now are making something worth almost twice as much as it once was. So, what of the way you make the bale ?



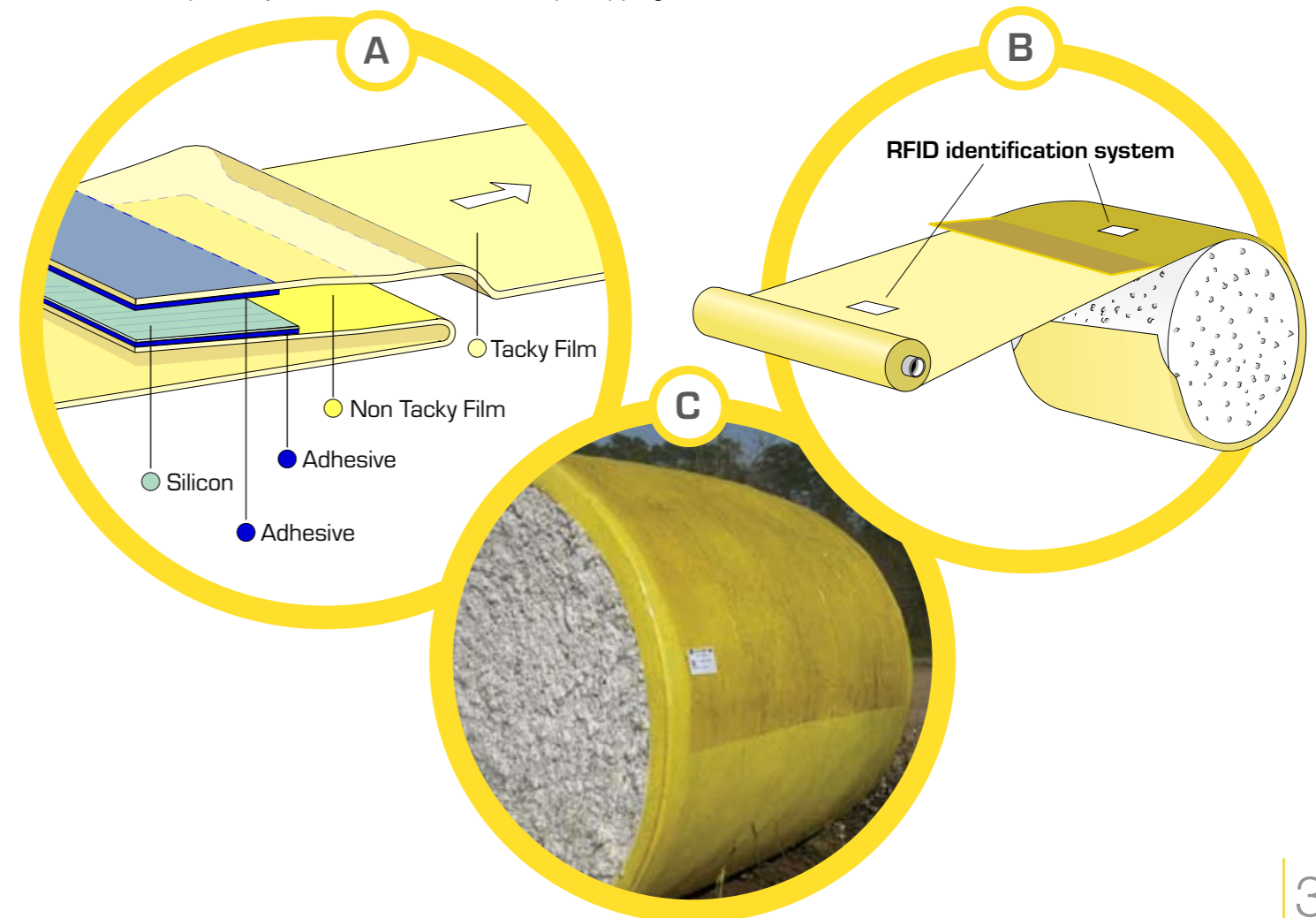
How much more value is there in this collection of bales, than the same amount 10 years ago?

With twice as much value in the bale, are you treating the packaging in the same way? The bale dimensions may be the same as ever, but the weight and density are far greater, so too should be the amount of net put on the bale. An outcry I hear...double the amount of net ? Perhaps not exactly double, but it should surely be a consideration to increase the wraps of net on the bale, to protect what has, in effect, doubled in value. Likewise the amount of film on the bale too, after all, the extra expense of adding to the net or film on the bale is a lot less than the increased value the better bale has brought you. As a percentage, the extra cost of the crop packaging is almost insignificant compared with the value a well wrapped and protected bale will deliver you.

Twelve years ago Tama brought you a revolutionary development in netwrap, when they designed and introduced the unique Edge to Edge netwrap, a net that did exactly what it said on the packet - and no other producer can say that. It might be a surprise to know that Tama are not simply a netwrap producer, but are the world's leading agricultural packaging specialist. They are responsible for some of the most innovative packaging solutions available today, and there is nothing more innovative than the wrapping system they designed for John Deere's revolutionary non-stop cotton harvester. This utilises the Tama Round Module Wrap™, a special wrapping material with a unique design which was developed specifically for the 7760 cotton picker system. This is the ultimate crop wrapping

material, made of 22 pre-cut wrap portions in order to eliminate the danger of plastic fragments, of 21m length, that each incorporates a number of materials and systems to complete the process of protecting each ultra-high value cotton bale. Every wrap portion is made of two segments, the first is a non-tacky film with particular properties which prevent cotton from sticking to the wrap, whilst the second and third layers are a special formulated film which is tacky on one side only. Uniquely, the leading edge and tail of each Tama RMW™ portions are tapered to insure proper feeding, the wrap goes over the bale edge to minimize cotton waste and exposure to rainfall and a special automatic Z-LOCK™ system is used to close and secure the wrap material when the bale wrapping is completed. Finally, every wrap portion includes 4 Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) tags to track the individual module through harvesting and processing, all integrated with the electronics system of the 7760.

This is a very special wrap indeed, designed to ensure that the value of the bale is not compromised. This season, consider the actual crop value within each bale, as well as your huge cost throughout the year, and give this expense some respect and do not compromise your work and living by cutting corners. Everyone in the 'chain' of harvesting is striving to maximise what they have, and the value of your bale should be no different!



Is your netwrap up to spec?

Are you getting the netwrap length and strength you pay for?
We quiz an industry expert

As a qualified industrial engineer, with a dozen years of experience in markets around the world, netwrap product manager Yair Arzi knows what farmers and contractors want and how to ensure they get it

Is the tough economy affecting the length and strength of netwrap sold in the UK?

"Yes, we are certainly seeing that. The most obvious change is less netwrap being supplied on a roll than stated, as some producers sell shorter rolls to offset their own rising costs. Some are also reducing the grade of raw material used, in order to save on cost, resulting in a weaker net, which is less able to hold the bale together. Customers are finding they have to use more layers per bale as a result."

What evidence supports those claims?

"We have been running an annual benchmarking exercise for more than five years now. Each year we take a quantity of different makes and brands

of netwrap from specific markets and test it in our headquarters laboratories and on our own farm using different types of balers. It is a big exercise, and it is costly. But we think the results justify this as it is important that customers are made aware of the variations that exist."

So what should farmers and contractors do?

"The risk is that some buyers may be tempted to pay less for a lower cost product. But if they get less netwrap and weaker netwrap on each roll, they will need to apply more layers per bale. More layers per bale means a lower number of bales are wrapped per roll. So it's a false economy! It is not so much about what the netwrap costs, but what payback you get from it, in terms of the number of bales wrapped and the quality of the forage and straw you preserve. It will definitely pay for contractors and farmers to buy brands they trust."

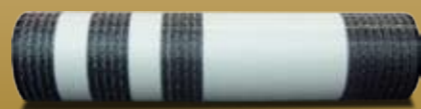
How much does length vary?

"Netwrap is elastic, so measuring it is not straightforward. If you measure it under tension, as in the baler, it is going to measure longer. One producer is even referring to roll length as measured under baler tension, which means 5-10% elongation. Different manufacturers are using different approaches, which makes a difference to the number of bales you can really wrap per roll."



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Can roll length ever be guaranteed?

"Yes. Tama understands the basics of netwrap, so use quality control processes in the factory to ensure the length on the roll is what is stated on the packaging, as a minimum. Other manufacturers may state an average roll length, or an average plus or minus 5%. So, whilst our benchmarking shows more and more rolls are falling below those stated figures, our end users have the reassurance that Tama does not work to tolerances or averages, but guarantees a minimum roll length instead. The accuracy of that guaranteed minimum length is endorsed by tests undertaken by German farm standards organisation DLG."

What about net strength?

"Competitors talk about an average net strength, or make no comment. But average is not good enough. If lower grade raw materials are used netwrap strength can reduce and become more variable, requiring more layers per bale. Unstable production processes might result in a large variation in netwrap specification and especially netwrap strength. So, there might be parts of the net which are much weaker than the average. Our benchmarking shows many producers are providing netwrap with a strength of 220-230 kilogram-force (kgf), which may be acceptable on average, but we are guaranteeing a minimum of 260kgf on all our netwraps and 270kgf for our Bale+ netwraps."

How do you manufacture accurate length and strength?

"There are two factors – consistently robust manufacturing process and regular quality testing. At Tama we use the highest quality raw materials and run stable manufacturing processes that do not deviate from target parameters. And we have developed rigorous sampling, testing and monitoring procedures. Using the DLG length test is helping us verify these



procedures, ensuring we produce to the right length. By being very strict about our sampling and testing procedures, we are able to provide a guarantee that the declared specifications are what arrive in the market – as a minimum, not an average."

Can contractors and farmers check netwrap length and strength themselves?

"It is very difficult for end users to make such measurements, almost impossible. Due to the elongation of the netwrap in the baler and some overlap which always exists between the layers of netwrap on the bale, any theoretical calculation for the usage of net per bale might not be too accurate."

"For length, an end user might put two different rolls through a baler on the same setting and count the number of bales. For example, a customer might use two rolls of similar 'stated' length from different producers. If one roll provides more bales than the other, it is pretty clear that the other roll was shorter."

"For strength you could send the netwrap for laboratory analysis. But that is costly. In our experience end users are wise enough to recognise weak netwrap and are then forced to increase the number of wraps used on the bale. What they should take into account is that by doing so they are adding to their cost."

What is your advice to users?

"UK netwrap users know they can trust Tama. Tama is the netwrap market leader, the most professional player in the world-wide netwrap market, and provides peace of mind for a trouble free baling operation. Taking into consideration the factors I have mentioned, Tama netwrap is probably the most cost effective netwrap on the market."



Quality Counts

Quality netwrap is key to cutting sweat and stress." says Cheshire contractor Sam Waller. DON'T let netwrap quality jeopardise your baling operations, urges the Cheshire contractor who produces up to 20,000 bales of silage, hay, straw and haylage a year.

"People say a roll of net wrap is a roll of net wrap, but it isn't. Quality makes a big difference. You can either be sweating and stressed or getting on with the job," says Sam Waller. "I've tried all the nets on the market over the years, and while different people say different things, and dealers try to sell cheaper product, 80% of the time I'm let down," says the Congleton contractor, who has 25 years of experience as SJ Contracting (which also provides a contract feeder wagon operation for three nearby dairy farms and offers umbilical slurry spreading in the area).

Sam's biggest baling frustration is nets that fail to feed through the aluminium and rubber rollers on modern balers. "I had some cheap foreign wrap last year, which the dealer said was the same as the brand I usually used. It wasn't. I was 20 miles from home and it wouldn't net properly, it was wrapping around the rollers, it was doing anything apart from going on the bales.

"Every other bale I was having to stop to clean the rollers, unthread the net and apply talc to the rollers. I've been doing the job long enough to know what's right and what's wrong. It would do another two or three bales and then wrap the rollers again."

With baling at a standstill he phoned his supplier for help. But none was forthcoming, prompting Mr Waller to switch up to £30,000-worth of business to a merchant who could supply his preferred brand.

"I know Tama costs a bit more, but it's worth it. Tama's



better quality means I can get more bales out of a roll and it copes much better with grass that's a bit damp and picking up on the rollers. With a typical output of 5-600 bales per day I don't reckon I get off the tractor more than three times a day using Tama."

Tama's Edge-to-Edge net wrap does just what it says, he stresses, covering the full width of the bale, which makes wrapping more efficient, so improving final forage quality. But getting that message across to customers is not always easy. "There's a lot of cheap net around, and people think cheaper is better. But it makes a real difference. I'm a real believer in using the right materials, it means less hassle for me and for the man I'm doing the job for."

Mr Waller also questions the specification of cheaper brands. "I looked at some Eastern European product last year. You could tell just by picking it up, it didn't feel right. It said 2800m, you could tell straight away that it wasn't that length".



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BUYING netwrap isn't like buying a commodity. You need to be confident it will work, and you need to be confident that if any problems should arise they will be sorted out fast.

It's all about after sales care, says Warren Tatton Regional Technical Manager for Tama UAT in the UK and Ireland. "We will work to establish the cause of any issue, resolve it, and hopefully prevent it happening again. It's Tama's ethos. We're not like other suppliers who would rather send two free rolls, or a credit note, and call it quits."

Nine times out of ten problems lie with baler set-up, or a change between crop type, he notes. "Tensioning springs are a prime example. They get worn, and if tension is poor there can be problems with net cutting, net feed into the bale chamber and net wrapping around rollers."

Close collaboration with baler manufacturers ensures Warren and colleague Andy Lanczak are well placed to make the required adjustments. "Very often we can resolve issues over the phone, but if a site visit is needed we will arrange it, at the farmer's convenience, sometimes the same day, and usually within a day or two," Warren explains.

"Our competitors don't offer that, they don't offer anything near that level of service. It is something we want to emphasise."

Free on-farm trouble-shooting brings real customer loyalty, notes Andy. "Last year I had a late Friday call from a farmer with problems getting net to spread across the bale. He had a serious amount of baling to do over the weekend and couldn't afford to be stopped. I was there for 6am on Saturday, we found there was a clod of soil jammed down the inside of the baler, which was pushing the net out of position. Once it was removed everything ran smoothly. He had assumed nobody would be bothered to come out at the weekend, so was very happy indeed.

"Another time a contractor was suffering similar problems and at first we couldn't fathom the problem. But we found one of the side rollers was extremely hot, because its bearing was seizing. The part was swapped and the baler ran like a dream. The contractor admitted he'd never have imagined it was a £3 bearing causing the problem."

All too often the assumption is that the net is faulty. "I'd say 99.9% of the time it is not the net, but something that a typical user might not spot," says Andy. "If we can pinpoint that, it can save the user the cost and delay of calling out a mechanic."



Speedy diagnosis is all the more likely thanks to Warren and Andy's wealth of experience, access to a global technical manager, experts in Israel and even e-mailing of digital images. "In the middle of the season time is money. We want users working again as fast as possible."

On the rare occasion that a roll may be defective, its identification number is taken, so that any problem can be traced back through the supply chain. "It's the Tama way. We want to resolve all issues so the customer is completely satisfied."

A Suffolk experience highlights the value of the service to distributors too. "Having purchased 12 rolls of netwrap, a user was pleased with performance apart from the final 30-40m of the roll, at which point he was constantly on and off the tractor trying to reset the baler, as the netwrap kept picking up on the rollers," explains Warren.

"He rang his supplier who contacted us. Having listened to the issue I visited the user, and spent the best part of the day checking his baler, and basically re-setting it, making the necessary adjustments until it ran smoothly."

The distributor was extremely impressed: "Sometime afterwards I had a call from the customer, who did nothing but sing the praises of Tama UAT – one very happy customer, who will hopefully remember such a valuable service."

So, can you really afford to run the risk of using netwrap with inadequate after-sales support?

Twine grows up...

We have all grown used to the ever increasing length of netwrap rolls, as manufacturers strive to offer customers better options for non-stop baling. Even stretchwrap joined this game recently, though restrictions on roll weights because of the wrapping machines' mechanics have limited things a little. The obvious for non-stop baling is, of course, Large Square Baling, where the baler never stops and, if the operator can manage it, with enough spools loaded and threaded up, the days really can become very long indeed!

As demands from higher density balers increase, so the need for stronger twine also increases and twine manufacturers need to react in order to keep up with the market. Stronger twine means a thicker yarn to make the twine stronger – this is the simple science of twine making. As the weight and dimensions of twine spools used in the UK have remained the same for many years, thicker twine, for increased strength, has meant less feet in a pack. Remember, the 'original' 8,600ft per pack big-bale twine was soon over-taken by demand for the stronger, but shorter, 7,200ft pack – same amount of plastic, but a thicker and stronger yarn. With higher density balers becoming more common, the need for even stronger twine is more important than ever. However, to make even stronger twine in the existing UK spool size would be hardly worthwhile, the length would have to be shorter still, bringing the need

to change spools even more often than now, which is already too often for most professional users!

This season, Tama will introduce a new Big Bale twine in a 'Big Spool' format, specifically to cater for the demand from professional users. The Tama Big Spool, single-spool pack, will significantly increase the output of the baler by maximising the available space in the twine box and so reducing downtime re-stringing new spools. And, to further cater for the increasing demands of the professional high-density baler operators, Tama's new Big Spool is now almost 20% stronger than the existing '7,200 type' Big Bale twine, giving a minimum knot strength in excess of 215kgf – a considerable increase in strength on current market options.

Tim Carr, Tama UK's Sales Manager, says: "There has been interest in the concept of a bigger size spool for some time now and we wanted to get things right before rushing to market, unlike some foreign importers who confused the market in recent times with big spool sizes, without any clear indication of what type or strength of twine it is. Tama is one of Europe's leading twine manufacturers, we don't only make netwrap and this longer and stronger concept is a natural step, following our successful netwrap developments in this direction".



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