



on track to improved profit and lifestyle

CTF UP-2-DATE newsletter

July - August CTF Solutions team highlights

- **CTF 05 Conference a success**
- **Launch of Topographical Mapping and Yield Monitoring service**
- **Preparation for new satellite imagery captures**
- **CTF Solutions opens new office**

CTF05 Conference

a Success

“Just do it” and “don’t muck about, do it right” were the slogans that came out of the Australian Controlled Traffic Farming Conference at Gatton, Queensland in July.

CTF05 was a wonderful success bringing together elite growers and support people from the grains, cane, cotton and vegetable industries and across the nation. They had common interests – optimum use of natural and purchased resources, improvement in their environment and lifestyles, and the belief that CTF was the way forward.

And growers from all industries have similar needs in terms of machinery and technology. The Conference brought all this together and started discussions that should lead to much more robust, standardised and flexible systems. Future conferences will progress this theme and **CTF Solutions** is keen to support discussion in between conferences. Thirty-eight papers were presented, 26 from growers describing their journeys to profitability and sustainability, and 12 technical papers. The dominant themes across all speakers were - past experiences have made the mistakes and clarified the future, CTF benefits and how to achieve them, making the most of new technology, machinery and technology standards, improving soil health, change, and groups. And there were a few from left field, like driverless tractors!

Lessons learned. Plan for the next 5 years, have only one set of wheel tracks, use 2cm guidance and have accurate layouts. There was a strong view that a 3m wheel track is best but the need to use main roads etc. in the cane and vegetable industries suggests that 2m will be as wide as they can go. Most irrigation and fodder cropping also suits 2m. Can we standardise on 3m and 2m wheel tracks? Manufacturers need this direction. Can we develop new combinations for farms with mixed enterprises such as dryland and irrigated, cane and grain, grain and fodder?

CTF Benefits. Very large increases in yields and profitability were reported. CTF

supports a whole new agronomy and new agronomy is needed to maximise the benefits of CTF. Many benefits are based on 2cm GPS providing permanent wheel tracks and accurate guess rows – inter-row operations such as seeding, fertilizing, weeding, spraying; wide multi-module machines; stubble handling; all summed up as “know where you are farming”. On-farm research is easy with defined strips, same width harvesting and automated recording (yield monitoring, imagery, data logging). “You can’t manage what you don’t measure”.

New technology is a tool to support CTF goals and CTF is a great platform for new technologies such as GPS, GIS, imagery, auto-steer, precise management, knowledge management, etc. CTF and GPS/GIS technologies are very complementary and these tools are good investments to optimise CTF systems.

The big challenge now is to link these paddock technologies seamlessly into the farm office for record keeping, performance assessment, marketing and managing farm operations.

Standards. Standard widths for wheel tracks and equipment modules are just common sense and the “in-the-paddock” changes will see enormous benefits for agriculture. The 3m “bed” system, e.g. 3m wheel tracks and 9m, 18m and 27m equipment, is proven. But how to go wider? 12m harvesting fronts are available but are messy in the system. 18m planters are expensive and only suit trailed equipment. Can we work through the options and agree on just a few best bets? Then CTF growers can collectively approach contractors and say “this is what we want”.

Standards for our new technology are urgently needed and we are again being limited by incompatibility among equipment. This seems easy to fix, and more pressure from growers can only encourage manufacturers and suppliers to move quicker.

The Conference attendees passed a resolution that “networks of 2cm GPS base stations be established across all cropping districts”. **CTF Solutions** undertook to progress this resolution. Some progress has already been made following discussions

with Government surveyor groups in Victoria and Queensland. Watch this space!

Improving soil health. Rapid benefits to soil health were reported, within one season. And these were across soil types. Obvious and measurable benefits included repair of soil compaction, reduced fuel use, soil animals and biology (worms etc.), traffickability, access and timeliness (don't slip off the wheel track!), and the responsiveness to amendments and fertilisers.

International input. Clay Mitchell from USA took us by storm. As an "alternative" farmer in the wide community of USA farmers, Clay is committed to CTF and new technology, and is successful. He blew us all away with his mastery of technology (his father in the home office can over-ride the controls of the spray-rig he is driving by internet connections) and his analysis of climatic and spatial impacts. We look forward to on-going interactions, Clay plans to come back for a longer visit later this year.

Four New Zealanders also made a great contribution and further cooperation "across the ditch" is assured.

What's next? The CTF06 Conference will be in Victoria (probably Ballarat) next year. Following the success of CTF 05 across all cropping sectors, we expect an even larger attendance next year.

Conference updates will be posted at www.ctfsolutions.com.au.

New base station near Wowan/Dululu

CTF Solutions has worked collaboratively over several months with Fitzroy Basin Association (FBA) and Wowan Dululu Landcare to aid a group of farmers to purchase and set up a 2cm shared community base station. Three growers are now using auto-steer for farm operations and with CTF Solutions are using this new equipment for topographic mapping of their properties and the whole district. The information will be used for integrated drainage and farm and paddock layouts.

Topography and yield monitoring

CTF Solutions has launched both its topographical mapping service and yield monitoring hire. Topographical mapping was completed last month on properties near Rockhampton and over the next two months will continue at Wowan Dululu and Eastern Darling Downs.

CTF Solutions has purchased a yield monitor to encourage growers to trial this technology and to get key data from on-farm trials. The yield monitor is a RDS brand, is easily moved between headers and will be available for hire throughout this harvest season. Yield monitoring is scheduled to

begin in Central Queensland soon. CTF Solutions will assist with setup to ensure minimal fuss for the farmer. The data will be fully analysed at the end of the season for around \$1/ac. For queries regarding either of these services, please contact Tim.

Dalby Office grows

Dalby will become the new centre for CTF Solutions' operations with the relocation to a new office by mid September. Also, to meet the growing demand for services and ensure a more prompt service, CTF Solutions will be employing new staff over the next couple of months.

Satellite Image Capture

Successful image capture over the last two months has occurred in grain areas on the Eastern Darling Downs, central New South Wales and Central Queensland, and in cane in North Queensland. The captures coincide with peak growth in winter grains and pre-harvest for cane. Tim spent two days in the Burdekin with the Upper Haughton Harvesting group examining our first current cane image. In the near future, other image captures of grain will be occurring west of Geelong.

Publications

We have prepared articles for Australian Farm Journal, Grains Business, the GRDC Update at Trangie on 13 September and the Precision Agriculture supplement in Ground Cover. These should be printed soon and will be put on our website www.ctfsolutions.com.au. We will also be posting the proceedings of CTF 05 on the website ASAP.

CTF Solutions plans for September/October

- Project work supported by Fitzroy Basin Association at Wowan Dululu (topography mapping, farm and district layouts, yield monitoring) and at Clermont and Orion (using current satellite images to monitor crops and plan responses).
- Project work supported by Condamine Alliance at Eastern Darling Downs (topography mapping, current satellite imagery, compare IKONOS with SPOT imagery)
- Project work supported by growers and GRDC in south-west Victoria (obtain and deliver current imagery, monitor crops and trial responses)
- Visit growers in Condobolin, Warren and Walgett, and present talk at Trangie GRDC Update.
- Establish the yield monitoring service
- Set up the Dalby Office

CTF Solutions is a grower-orientated organisation. We need your support and input to provide the service excellence that we strive for.

Please contact us with your comments and ideas. This is your Newsletter, please tell us what you'd like to see more (or less) of!

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