

Going Straight – A Reporter’s Run Down the Tramlines

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ABC-TV’s Landline programme first heard about farmers putting permanent tracks or tramlines through their paddocks back in 1998 – and we were as intrigued as anyone. Thanks to the patience and professionalism of Doctors Tullberg and Yule we were able to explain it televisually to our audience in a way that made sense.

They had arranged a shooting schedule with a number of those early CTF pioneers in various parts of Queensland , as well as at the research hub at UQ’s Gatton Campu . We borrowed heavily from an in-house training video they’d already produced as well as those original graphics which frankly are still hard to beat .

But it was the testimony of ordinary farmers that carried the yarn along. They spoke about the changes they had to make to paddock layouts, equipment and mostly mindset. There was an enthusiasm we find among those on the leading edge of innovation that always makes for interesting telly. The result was an informative, educational and entertaining segment that proved to be one of our most popular.

Five years later we hooked up again with the good doctors at a CTF conference at Gatton, where we were able to show just what sort of inroads the approach was having – particularly among manufacturers, who rolled out a remarkable variable wheel-base tractor for our benefit.

We work on the theory that an ‘eyeful’ is always better than an ‘earful’ – seeing is believing and watching some of the most progressive farmers in the country kicking this thing’s tyres and checking out its satellite steering system was proof, for us, that CTF wasn’t a passing fad.

Now CTF is mainstream and it’s making a substantial difference across all sorts of farming enterprises, large and small. It’s vindicated all that early work by Tullberg, Yule and like-minded souls and I’m delighted to be involved – even peripherally – in their journey.