

# The CTF Advantage and the Next Leap

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These are some pre-conference views, I expect the Conference to shape the future. I believe these views apply to all industries.

**We are on a good thing.** The simple choice of controlled traffic has had amazing consequences. It applies across industries, it has supported a massive array of improved practices, new technologies and innovative ideas, it has created opportunities across the board. Controlled Traffic Farming is farming systems built on the controlled traffic base, CTF is systemic, comprehensive, strategic and sustainable. We can be confident that CTF is on the right track, that CTF is the way of the future, we can “reach for the sky”. Don’t be a loner, seek discussion, advice and help.

Be serious about CTF, part of the future is still to get **all** the basics right. Often the early adopters make choices that end up being wrong, and these are difficult to change. My initial change was successful, why keep changing? Why not enjoy? If you stand still, you are going backwards. Use your experience to drive further change.

## What is this good thing?

- **Comprehensive Strategic Planning.** What do I want my farm business to look like in 5 years? Review annually.
- **Clear Action Plans to get there**
  - Never compromise on the strategic direction
  - Never take the mediocre option
  - Compromise on actions but understand the implications
  - Don’t be afraid to make mistakes, you can repair them.
- **What planning?**
  - Professional farm design
  - Paddock layout
  - Controlled traffic
  - Using CT to make CTF
- **What is comprehensive?**
  - Machinery
  - Resource management
  - Technology
  - Research
  - Productivity
  - Environment
  - Social
  - Economic

## The CTF Advantage

CTF growers have been successful. But how many are on controlled traffic? How many are pushing the agronomy? How many have continuous improvement programs?

- **The Machinery advantage.** Match **all wheels**, start with the harvester and associated haul out equipment. Narrow tyres. Match **all** implement and equipment widths, accurate guess rows are critical. When all implements are considered the options become more obvious. Use “standard” dimensions. CTF growers should drive the machinery agenda, demand from manufacturers what you need, don’t take what they have. Demand compliance from contractors and share farmers.

- **The Resources advantage.** Top quality soil in a stable landscape. Control of degradation and constraints, improved fertility and soil health, less variability, more options. High input use efficiency. High surface cover is the driver –infiltration, erosion, organic matter, fertility, biology. Controlled traffic makes all these possible, do not compromise on CT. One wheeling is enough and the more your soil improves the more damage one wheeling will do.
- **The Technology advantage.** CTF has developed massively since our last conference in 1998. Much of that is driven by new technology - GPS, auto-steer, GIS, satellite imagery, precision agriculture, zero till and weed control. 2cm guidance is a must. As a transition, hiring 2 cm for marking out of the wheel tracks and basic width is cost effective. A network of base stations is a must, the current duplication is holding back adoption. Use technology as tools for your CTF systems, and use CTF to make the most of these technologies. These technologies will automatically provide your farm records at a scale of a few square metres. CTF growers must drive suppliers towards technology compatibility.
- **The Research advantage.** Basic research methodology is plan, act, measure and review – the same methodology as adult learning and action research. CTF and new technologies mean that your research needs can be achieved by you on your farm. Use trial strips and measure with the automated, spatial technology. Use professional support for research planning, assessment and review. This should be the future role of most scientists, to support your on-farm research. Use the technology to understand the responses – yield monitoring for measuring, imagery for causes, GPS for topography, and GIS for recording, analyzing and reporting.
- **The Productivity advantage.** The singular aim of the cropping program is to turn these CTF advantages into long term, whole farm, annual productivity and dollars. We have barely scratched the surface of what is possible and CTF growers need to collectively drive the Research advantage to identify the potential and to change how science and technology is provided to you. Better soils = new opportunities - high yield, quality and reliability, high value crops. CTF soils are only a few years old and will continue to improve. CTF growers are the best in the pack. Should our best growers on our best soils produce commodity products or niche market products? Commodity products provide an outlet for “seconds” but CTF “firsts” are niche products. What are the niche crop opportunities? Feedlotting with manure spreading makes sense – value adds, reduces nutrient export, recycles organic nutrients, and reduces paddock variability.
- **The Environmental advantage.** Farming like nature. High crop activity, cover and soil quality, low runoff and deep drainage (erosion and salinity), balance between inputs and outputs, improving natural resources, whole farm planning, quantified and recorded performance. CTF supports catchment approaches and catchment authorities are approving CTF.
- **The Marketing advantage.** CTF provides quantity, quality assurance, reliability, variety. If purchasers want product identification, you can provide, through the Technology advantage, the best PI in the World, and you can do it now. Can CTF products be marketed like organic products? There are Marketing advantages that haven’t been exploited and this requires cooperative approaches.
- **The Social advantage.** These CTF advantages add up to a Social advantage. CTF systems will improve the lifestyles of farm families and improve the environment of rural communities. The change to CTF has built skills and confidence, the capacity to change more and to tackle big issues. And this leads to continuous improvement. The future needs **cooperation with independence.** IKONOS imagery and shared base stations encourage cooperation. Independence is a strength and driver of innovation but cooperation is needed to drive the machinery agenda, to get agency and service support, to share information, equipment and contractors, and for Marketing advantage. **Farm labour** is a national issue. To compete in the labour market, farms need to be profitable, fun and attractive to your children. The number of young and “next generation” people on CTF farms is a key indicator. **Contracting and share farming** are major issues for all industries. Contractors need to be partnered not tolerated, share farms need to be CTF. CTF systems can cross farm boundaries within catchments to increase efficiency and decrease environmental impacts. CTF growers should drive sensible, catchment wide approaches, effective cooperation and responsible

custodianship of the land. CTF can drive improvement of the standing of farming in the wider community.

- **The Economic advantage.** Higher income, lower unit costs, increased efficiency, higher farm values. Support from financial institutions.

CTF now has a critical mass and we need to use that critical mass to shape the future. I have suggested major opportunities but growers must express the direction and drive the process. This Conference is a place to start and we have created a program to encourage that. We will hold forums to plan future directions and to include annual Conferences to maintain the momentum. We need an initiative to drive CTF improvement and adoption. We need to use the skills and influence of growers at this Conference to manage our bureaucratic world.

CTF has come a long way but is still at the foot of the mountain of opportunity. We must work our way together up the mountain.