

What has CTF / Zero-Till done for my farming operation?

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Our farm is now a fourth generation family farm and is situated in the middle of Victoria (Australia) and in the heart of the Wimmera farming region. The farm consists of 7000 acres of cropping and strictly no livestock. We are lucky to have some of the best soils in Australia to farm, they consist of mainly heavy black clay soil types with good water holding capacity. Average rainfall is 16 inches a year of mainly winter rain and no reliable summer rain to count on. We grow wheat, barley, lentils, canola, beans and chickpeas in our continuous cropping rotation, this amount of options give us plenty of diversity in our system.

We started to direct seed our crops back in 1983 and have continued to advance the system ever since then. The changes continued at a very fast rate with many new herbicides coming onto the market as well as changing machinery and farming methods all at once. It was a struggle to keep up.

Every time we would change something in our system we would think that we had the game sown up, but when I look back now I have to laugh at myself and my ignorance (lack of knowledge) at that time of the development of the CTF No-Till system that we currently use today.

Change is the hardest thing for farmers to do as they have done it that way for so long and it worked most of the time, they are happy to keep getting the new tractor or truck but when change involves their farming practises they do not want to change.

Change will not happen until the pain of staying the same is greater than the pain of change.

There is always a better way to do things! The challenge is for us to work through the issues that come along to challenge our current system, we have to keep on top of these and continue to advance the art of CTF No-Till farming into the future.

Our current CTF No-Till farming system is setup on 30ft seeders and combines, 90ft SP boom spray and 30ft shrouded sprayer. All machines have 120inch wheel centres and we run them on a controlled traffic system every year. Row spacings are 15inch and 30 inch depending on the crops grown.

We have been using GPS (VRT) and auto steer systems for many years now and every crop is inter row seeded into last years standing crop residue. We are continually modifying machinery to do what we want it to do and to work with our soils and crops we grow.

What will the future hold for our system of crop production? When will we get to perfection? Who knows but I cannot wait to get there. Soil Compaction is holding world agriculture back from going to the next level!!

CTF/Zero-Till has transformed my agriculture into a profitable exciting way of crop production. We have learnt many things over the last 20 years of agriculture but none more than in the last few years.

By using modern technology we have been able to measure and record the information gathered to help make decisions to improve our management processes.

Since we have stopped our random traffic we have noticed reduced weed numbers, they seem to only grow in the tram lines, yes we still have some weeds but we can control them much easier and we do not get as much competition with the crops.

The continued low rainfall years have forced our hand to improve the way we have farmed which has been very good as we needed to lift our game. If we are not progressing we are going backwards!

The importance of improved water management is one of the most vital aspects to achieve if we are to stay farming successfully into the future.

Everyone seems to blame the lack of rain on their crop failures, but let me say that there is more to growing crops than rainfall.

We believe we have been doing that far better than in our old farming systems, and that is what has improved our water use efficiencies and produced higher crop yields. We have to grow more with less if we are to stay in business so let's get on with it. We use less fertilizer now than we have in the past.

The change in soil health has been one of the amazing things we have observed over time, it has made us look a lot harder at what we do and how it will affect the natural biology that exists in the soil and we continually look for ways to improve it. But you know the most important thing is to stop bashing the shit out of it and stop driving all over it.

These two seem very hard for people to accept and achieve and I do not understand. They seem to be looking for the magic pill or silver bullet that they can buy to fix everything in one day but that is not available, yet to change their farming system is the easiest thing to do and some people make it the hardest.

We have some consultants out there that do their best to stop the progression of agriculture and new technology, WHY ???

Where we go from here with our farming system I do not know but there is no doubt the system will change as the years go by. We need to keep an open mind to this potential change and continue to advance the art of Zero-Till farming.