

ACTFA ‘CTF in the LRZ’ Project

ACTFA is leading a new \$2.25 million project titled “Application of CTF in the Low Rainfall Zone (LRZ)”. This is a five year project (2014 – 2019) funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) and co-funded by all the participating partners. The project aims to answer many of the questions being asked by growers about the practicalities and economics of Controlled Traffic Farming in this zone of lighter soils, large farms, wide equipment and low input systems. Growers need answers to those questions to make informed decisions about whether or not to invest money and effort in changing their systems to full CTF.

ACTFA put together a consortium of nine project partners from across the entire Southern Region Low Rainfall Zone to tender for this project. The project covers three States and could affect an estimated 5 million ha of crop over 1500 kilometres of distance, from Minnipa in the west to Condobolin in the east.

The project partners who have joined with ACTFA are Department of Environment and Primary Industries, Victoria (DEPI); South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI); Birchip Cropping Group (BCG); Eyre Peninsula Agricultural Research Foundation (EPARF); Upper North Farming Systems (UNFS); Mallee Sustainable Farming (MSF); Central West Farming Systems (CWFS) and Precision Agriculture Australia (SPAA).

The most important grower questions and issues identified by GRDC’s Southern Panel and LRZ Regional Cropping Solutions Network concern the effects of machinery wheels on LRZ soils and crops. Do LRZ soils suffer compaction damage from heavy machinery, and what effect does that have on crop yield and profit? If a grower adopts full CTF, will any such soil damage “self-repair”, or will it require remedial action?

The project will also address several other important issues identified by LRZ grain growers. These include the compatibility of CTF with very wide seeding equipment, wheel track erosion and weed growth, and the economic effects of CTF such as costs of adoption, improved operational timeliness, increased yield and profit, and reduced fuel and input costs.

Four detailed Research Sites (“R” sites) will be set up on typical LRZ soils, on which detailed soil physics and crop production work will investigate the effects of compaction on soils and crops. To answer many of the other questions, the Farming Systems Group project partners will set up a range of Development Sites (“D” sites”) on which growers, with full help from the project, can answer their own questions about CTF related issues that are important to them.

There will be plenty of opportunity for LRZ growers to engage with, and take part in, this project, which is designed to answer questions which they have said are important to them on their farms. For more information on this exciting project, or to find out how you can have input or be involved in it, contact your local Farming Systems Group project partner, or the project leader whose details are below.

This project is funded by Grains Research and Development Corporation with approximately equal cash and in kind contributions from the nine project partners.

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