

## Overview of CTF activity in Canada

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*Peter Gamache was born in Cass Lake, Minnesota. The family moved to Alberta, Canada in 1960. Peter is a graduate of the University of Alberta, Edmonton with a Masters of Agriculture. He worked on farms in Southern Alberta after graduation and was a district agriculturist for five years. He was team leader for the Alberta Reduced Tillage LINKAGES (RTL) program for 15 years. He is currently working as the project leader for Controlled Traffic Farming Alberta, a farmer led initiative to assess CTF in Alberta.*

*Peter lives in Edmonton, Alberta, Canada. He is married to Doreen and has two adult daughters and two granddaughters.*

**ABSTRACT:** Controlled Traffic Farming is in its infancy in Canada. As far as we know Alberta has the only project in Canada. As well to our knowledge there are no research stations or scientists working on CTF. However one bright spot is a grad student in Manitoba who is proposing to do a thesis on CTF. You could say that we have a clean slate to start with.

Our interest in CTF started when we invited Robert Ruwoldt of Horsham, Victoria, Australia to Direct Seeding Advantage 2008. Robert was supposed to speak on no-till and he did, but his real passion was controlled traffic. A couple of years later in 2010 Robert spoke at the FarmTech Conference in Edmonton. That fanned the sparks from before and one of our farmers began pulling together interested parties. A one year project led to a three year project. 2012 was our second field season.

Controlled Traffic Farming Alberta (CTFA) was developed to assess controlled traffic farming in Alberta conditions, help farmers make informed decisions about adopting CTF, reduce the risk of adoption and help farmers increase their economic competitiveness. Our business is to assess, evaluate and extend CTF systems through on-farm, field-scale projects with Alberta farmers. Our objectives are to assess the agronomic and economic viability of CTF under a variety of climatic and soil conditions; to increase awareness among Alberta farmers; and to build a resources base of advocates.

The project is farmer driven with help from industry and government. Each of our cooperators works with a private industry agronomist.

We have chosen to assess CTF using field-scale sites with farm-scale equipment. There are substantial climatic and soil differences between the sites.

Challenges – Most of our challenges have revolved around getting the system and all of its pieces to function, whether it is GPS or equipment widths. Other challenges include the lack of interest in the research world, the push for bigger and bigger equipment and the general scepticism about the impact of traffic on our fields since frost cures all things.

While it is too early to make any definitive observations we are beginning to see things that our Australian advisers suggested would happen such as fuel savings, yield increases and ease of operations. However the jury is still out due to our limited data.

There are only a handful of farmers that have started to adopt CTF in Alberta and very few across Canada. We have five cooperators and there are a few more farmers who are pushing ahead in adoption.

Some of our cooperators are also integrating precision agriculture techniques such as variable rate fertilizer/pesticides into their systems. The Canadian Prairies have picked up on guidance and autosteer very rapidly. I have never seen so many guys who can drive as straight as an arrow.

It is a little uncomfortable coming to Australia knowing we are only 15 years or so behind, but then again you are helping us make some big steps.