

The Conference attendees passed a resolution that “networks of 2cm GPS base stations be established across all cropping districts”. CTF Solutions has undertaken to progress this resolution.

An associated Standard relates to the comment “access the best people, access the best advice”. Agriculture is increasingly limited by the brain drain from the bush, and by the skills and competencies of advisors and suppliers.

Soil health

Rapid benefits to soil health were reported, within one season. And these were across all soil types. Obvious and measurable benefits included repair of soil compaction, soil animals and biology (worms etc.), trafficability, access and timeliness (don't slip off the wheel track!), and the responsiveness to amendments and fertilisers. These can be easily assessed by grower's observations. For example, soil compaction repair is clear from walking over the soil and from fuel measurements on the cabin monitor.

The change and the rate of change have been massive, and the expectation is for these to continue. Change towards CTF has

also increased growers capacity to change, to take on the big challenges. Individually growers are more skilled and more confident, and co-operating in groups has been a very powerful support and functional approach.

I think that co-operative approaches will increasingly drive business improvements as CTF growers see mutual gains from group contractors, suppliers, marketing and lobbying.

An overwhelming conclusion was that CTF is a strong unifying influence. The Conference successfully brought growers from the extremes of cropping and they easily talked about common issues and common solutions.

Everything was relevant to everyone. There is enormous potential to direct this unity and energy to issues of mutual concern. The base station network will be an interesting first step.

Clay Mitchell from the United States took us by storm, or more descriptively, by cyclone. As an “alternative” farmer in the wide community of USA farmers, Clay is committed to CTF and new technology,

and is successful. He blew us all away with his mastery of technology (his father in the home office can over-ride the controls of the spray-rig he is driving by internet connections) and his analysis of climatic and spatial impacts. Four New Zealanders contributed in a quieter but still effective fashion.

We were fortunate to celebrate two milestones. Scott McCalman addressed us the day after being selected as 2005 NSW Farmer of the year and Jeff Tullberg, the grand-father of controlled traffic in Australia, announced his retirement from the University of Queensland after 35 years research and teaching the science and engineering of CT.

What's next? In 2006 the CTF06 Conference will be in Victoria (probably Ballarat). CTF Conferences are attractive to all cropping sectors and we expect an even larger attendance next year.

Find out more:

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Young CTF association formed

A KEY outcome from the National Controlled Traffic Farming (CTF) conference at Gatton Qld was the initial steps toward an Australian Controlled Traffic Young Farmer Association. Precision Agriculture Agronomist Andrew Whitlock called for interest after the final session of day one of the conference, and the response was overwhelming. Thirty-five people signed up and many more expressed an interest on behalf of their friends and neighbours.

The aim of a national association would be to support the learning and development of advanced controlled traffic farming CTF systems throughout the country. There is a need to support the innovative farmers who are paving the way for the future. The first step is to provide a network for sharing ideas and knowledge, and to then provide tools, funding and advise for continual development of farming systems.

The focus is largely based upon controlled traffic farming, as it is the obvious platform from which farming systems

can launch into the productivity improvements that will be required for a profitable future. From an initial adoption of CTF techniques, farmers can move down an exciting path of incorporating precision technology, advanced thinking and intelligent management into their farming systems. This will help them to ensure their ongoing profitability and sustainability.

A committee was formed comprising of two representatives from each State whose aim will be to develop an approach to service the needs of the young innovative farmers in Australian agriculture. When we say ‘young and innovative’ we are talking “young at heart” - in other words, enthusiastic farmers of any age who are serious about taking their farming system to the next level.

Some initial ideas for the association include an interactive website where members can link their farming system details to

a map of Australia, share ideas and propose questions in a chat room, and find links to relevant research, new technology and expertise.

Telephone conferences are a fantastic tool for delivering expert information and for discussion sessions with all members. Such conferences allow us to organise national and international expert guest speakers to address any group member who wants to pick up the phone and listen and ask questions.

A regular newsletter with updates from all States could provide timely and relevant information. Study grants could be used to encourage members to travel interstate and abroad to seek the latest information. Annual meetings could be held at the National CTF Conferences.

Find out more:

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