

# **A 20 Year Journey from Conventional Farming to Controlled Traffic**

**St John Kent**, Farmer, Jimbour QLD

I farm 800ha of black soil country on the Jimbour flood plains, 30km north of Dalby growing dryland cotton and various grain crops.

To us, early controlled traffic data appeared to be encouraging, however it was not overly successful at first with 30% of the field being compacted by tractors on 2m spacings, the spray rig on 1.6m and the header on 3m. As a relatively small operation we could not justify some of the initial costs associated in completing the adoption of controlled traffic farming by converting all machinery to 3 meters.

To gain some economies of scale, we have formed a unique partnership with our neighbor by sharing and modifying the use of one set of suitable and desirable equipment for the two smaller farming enterprises. Initially we used wheel spacers to modify tractors to fit the 3 meter centres, but mechanical problems continued. As a result we followed the lead of Jamie Grant and extended our axels, now a common practice in the region.

Today we experience improved soil health with the disappearance of long fallow disorders, earthworms have returned, overland flooding of the old ages are just a memory as water infiltration has improved dramatically. Our mechanical operations are substantially more efficient and less time consuming. Our operational costs have been reduced with the elimination of larger, more powerful tractors and less wear and tear on all machinery. All of these have significantly impacted on gross costs and therefore net profits.