

New technology helping to harvest the bottom line

On-farm application of GPS auto steer on combine harvesters can deliver savings of up to 12 per cent on fuel and labour costs.

For a number of years grain growers in Australia have commonly used GPS auto steer products for paddock preparation, planting and spraying operations. With many of the early adopters of this technology now taking the next step and choosing to auto steer their harvesting equipment, some interesting results and tips are emerging on how to maximise the potential benefits.

The Dunstan farming operation near Horsham in north western Victoria run by Tom Dunstan and sons James and Tom junior, fitted their Lexion 580 Rotary with a nine metre front and a steer kit to accommodate their Beeline Arro 10 cm auto steer system. This auto steer system had previously been used for sowing and spraying on their Cat 55 tractor.

Tom Jnr takes up the story: "We bought the Lexion as it appeared to be the easiest to convert to three me-

tre centres without having to perform major work on the machine. We were keen to incorporate the harvester into our farm's controlled traffic system because when it is full of grain it comes in at around 28 tonnes. It's the heaviest piece of equipment to move across the paddock so we needed to be able to auto steer it to minimise soil compaction.

"Initially, as we were mainly using it on our legumes, we saw that not having to worry about watching where the end of the comb was meant we could concentrate on the platform height. This gave a close and consistent shave to the ground. Given the recent dry seasons this was really important as most of our lentils and chickpeas were short.

"Before auto steer and harvesting with a nine metre front, we would tend to have around at least a foot of the comb hanging out of the crop.

"Now we have the front completely full the whole time, even when it is really dusty and visibility is bad. Over the

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2430 hectares we farm, that does start to add up in savings on time and fuel."

In retrospect Tom does think they will do some things differently in the future: "We had the header on large radial tyres and we did have some rough tracks to follow. As the Lexion filled we would see the tyres start to balloon sideways and the auto steer was having to work extremely hard to keep the machine on track. We will go to duals on the front of the machine this year, with the inside tyre over the three metre mark and just decrease the pressure on the outside tyre so it can act as a stabiliser."

"With our field peas now planted with the auto steer, we will be able to come back in with a set of crop lifters between the rows. That will give us an even better feed next time round."

"We would not be without the Beeline Arro auto steer gear – our next step will be to fit our John Deere 8000 series tractor with it so we can spray and/or spread fertiliser while the Cat 55 is also operating."

Wide and successful application

The Beeline Arro range has been successfully fitted to over 130 different makes and models of agricultural equipment, and can now 'plug and play' on the Case IH and John Deere range of auto steer ready machinery.

The patented cab kit and VIU design enables a single controller and screen to be moved between equipment in under five minutes without tools or recalibration of the unit.

This equates to a saving of around 75 per cent on the cost of auto steering an additional tractor, spray rig or header.

For further information on the Beeline Arro Universal range go to www.agline.com.au or call (02) 6792 1988 ■



Arro comes with a variety of terminal options to suit your needs that are all easy-to-read and user friendly.

The way to smarter farming

Investing in two-centimetre RTK auto steering allows farmers to implement smarter farming techniques.

Adam Hutton, gps-Ag sales and marketing manager said base level auto steering provided growers the ability to steer their tractors and reduce application overlap and operator fatigue, but where there was the need for repeatability to achieve improved farming productivity, 2cm RTK auto steer was the winner.

"It gives farmers the ability to chase moisture and/or nutrients in the rows from the previous year – or, in heavier country and stubbles, to sow in between the rows," Adam said.

"Techniques like shielded spraying with 2cm RTK are taking farming applications to an even finer degree. Growers basically have better accuracy available to make these types of decisions. Without 2cm RTK, you can really only just let the tractor drive. It's accurate, but it doesn't provide these benefits."

"RTK is on the mark every time, and you can recall that mark and nudge over or run straight on top of it again, he said.

Benefits seen this year

The benefits of seeding next to or in last year's stubble rows using high accuracy autosteer systems – and where this has occurred from driving freehand – have been recognised in numerous crops this season.

Some of the best established crops this year have been

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The difference in crop establishment between that sown in last year's rows on the left, compared with that sown between the rows on the right, pictured on the join of an up and back pass.