



News

November 2008

Calendar

28 January 2009

Conservation Agriculture and CTF, Denmark

4 February 2009

Opportunities and costs of RTK guidance systems, UK

15 – 19 June 2009

ISTRO conference, Izmir Turkey

22 – 24 June 2009

CTF solutions for intensive cropping systems (vegetables and sugar beet), Denmark.

More info:
www.ctfeurope.eu

The newsletters are available in English, Danish, German, Dutch and Slovak.

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The role of CTF in extremes of weather

Tim Chamen

In Europe we have seen both drought and flood and when you are in the middle of one or the other, there may seem little to be positive about, but now is a good time to reflect. CTF brings many advantages.

In the wet:

- Harvesters are supported on permanent tracks.
- Fields can be driven without widespread soil damage.
- Little or no tillage is needed for reliable crop establishment.

In the dry:

- Soils don't get too hard or cloddy.
- Implements can penetrate the soil more easily.
- Seedbeds can be produced with very little tillage and moisture loss.

The first step towards CTF is in the mind.

Future machinery replacement has to match track and operating widths.

The second consideration is auto steer to ensure that machinery runs in the same place year after year. Most farms find that machinery guidance pays for itself quickly and if combined with CTF, quicker still!

Bring your plans for CTF forward for discussion. Your farming will become less costly, more reliable and most importantly, more profitable.

Coming soon to CTF members: a menu driven route to CTF. Watch the website for details.



Ploughing problems can persist. Sinkage on wet soils can be a major challenge. CTF avoids this by using well managed permanent tracks.

CTF Europe enters Eastern Europe

Jana Galambosova

CTF Europe has spread to the East. The Slovak Republic is the first of the former communist countries where CTF interest has appeared. For 40 years Slovakian agriculture was dominated by cooperative farms with large and heavy machinery. A lot of fields suffer from soil compaction. Cooperative farms average 1,357 ha and many of them already use satellite guidance. The main challenge will be to match working widths and wheel spacing.

There are also many family farms with an average area of about 40 ha in Slovakia. The first Slovakian member of CTF Europe, Mrs. Slinsky, has developed a unique system for growing organic vegetables in circle shaped fields using gantry technology and mechanical guidance. We hope more farmers will soon follow the CTF route.

CTF students

Christoph Bommers

There is increasing interest in CTF from agricultural Colleges and Universities. In Germany alone at least three master theses are under way, with students based at Halle University, Humboldt University Bremen and TU München.



Vegetables in Min Till and 3,20 m beds

Sander Bernaerts

Seasonal CTF (sCTF) has big advantages and its uptake has been significant among Dutch vegetable growers. One experience is that water infiltration increases significantly with sCTF.

But still several farmers using sCTF have been disappointed with water appearing on the surface after heavy rainfall. This has caused organic farmer Alex van Hootegem to start with Min Till to get rid of the plough pan.

Min Till machinery has to be adjusted for use in organic farming. Weeds and green manure need to be killed and a perfect seedbed has to be made.

Alex has successfully accomplished his first year without ploughing. Different machines have been tested and a 3,20 m prototype machine is under construction. The plan is to manage spring tillage in one pass.



Seed bed preparation by Organic Min Till farmer Alex van Hootegem.

Shortage of radio frequencies may delay uptake of CTF

Christoph Bommès

Some auto steering companies in Germany have had difficulties in getting a radio channel to transmit the RTK correction signals. These signals are most often not standardised, so each company has to set up their own base stations. With a limited number of radio channels this has caused some companies to reserve channels for possible future use. We hope agriculture will start to use the available standards so multiple base stations are not needed. In Australia, Denmark and the Netherlands transmitting RTK corrections through the internet and mobile phones has been highly successful, so base stations may not be needed in the future. CTF Europe would like to help both farmers and suppliers to choose the most suitable technologies for future farming.

CTF Europe membership

As members of the CTF Europe Focus Group you will get:

- Information pack including examples of CTF systems.
- CTF "News" letters
- Invitations to seminars and workshops.
- Access to a member's area at www.ctfeurope.eu
- A chance to influence service providers.
- Access to top advisors.

The annual cost of membership is Euro 85, but £85 in the UK where CTF support is presently more developed.

Join at www.ctfeurope.eu or contact one of the CTF Europe partners.

Australian conference - the harvester has to be in the system

Hans Henrik Pedersen.

In August, 180 enthusiastic farmers joined the 6th Australian CTF conference. I was invited to speak about RTK and GPS possibilities.

CTF and No Till is the generally accepted sustainable farming practice. Both farmers and authorities are well aware of the harm tillage can do to the very susceptible dry Australian soils.

About half of the farmers using CTF in Australia do not harvest from the CTF tracks. The main reason is that CTF creates extra costs to haul grain from the fields. Several trials show that these costs can easily be covered by extra yields, so more and more farmers will change to full CTF. 10-19 t axle loads will compact even dry soils and remember harvest time is not always dry.

The next Australian CTF conference could be held in February 2010, to enable participation by European farmers.



Farm visit during the CTF conference. Conservation farmer of the year Scott McCalman.

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- CTF research, soil properties, precision farming,

All partners are helpful in basic CTF agronomy and technology.



Jana Galambosova is a new partner in CTF Europe. She works with CTF and is a precision farming specialist at the Slovak University of Agriculture in Nitra.