

It is believed that long before Australia was mapped by European explorers, Aboriginal people would congregate on the eastern slopes of Australia's Great Dividing Range to feed on the seed of two evergreen trees, one of which they called 'Kindal Kindal'. The genus Macadamia was named after a prominent scientist of that time, Dr John McAdam and now macadamia nuts are the only Australian native plant crop that has been developed commercially as a food. It is estimated that the current value of the Australian crop on the domestic and export markets is about A\$85m (farm gate), making it one of Australia's largest horticultural industries.

The Bundaberg region has ideal climatic conditions for the growing of macadamia nuts due to its balmy temperatures and free draining soil. Kevin Steinhardt, a Bundaberg local and traditionally a tomato grower, has made a significant investment in the macadamia industry with the establishment of 1000 acres of trees at Farnsfeild. On Wednesday the 1<sup>st</sup> of June, 2005 Kevin was the host for a meeting of the Bundaberg Macgroup for the Australian Macadamia Society, sponsored by Burnett Land and Machinery and Agline Distributors, the suppliers of Beeline Arro auto steer GPS guidance systems. The gathering was extremely well supported with over 45 current and prospective macadamia growers, nut processors and industry representatives, many having travelled from interstate and regional QLD to attend. A key drawcard was the in field demonstration of Kevin Steinhardt's BEELINE Arro guidance system that he used to establish his macadamia farm. Kevin was introduced to the technology 18 months ago by Chris Tramacchi at Burnett Land & Machinery and has seen first hand the benefits in his purchase of the BEELINE Arro auto steer unit and the potential savings to be made in labour and operating costs. Chris Tramacchi and Kevin have seen his New Holland TS135a tractor fitted with the BEELINE Arro CM system plant 10 acres of macadamia trees with pin point accuracy in the same time the traditional hand planting system with two men would take to complete ½ acre. As Kevin said, " A macadamia nut tree will still be there in 100 years, so if I can plant the trees in perfectly straight rows now with the BEELINE Arro all of my future spraying, harvesting and slashing costs can be significantly reduced into the future as the BEELINE Arro can support the accuracy required to perform these operations mechanically."

Also attending the meeting were other BEELINE Arro owners in the Bundaberg area, farmers and contractors alike, who utilise the technology across a number of industries, sugar cane, tomatoes, capsicums and grain crops. Local farmer and contractor Gary Walker kindly provided his Claas 656 fitted with a BEELINE Arro auto steer system for farmers at the meeting to take for a guidance test drive. Gary does work for Bundaberg Sugar who themselves own a number of BEELINE Arro systems and have the expectation that all of their planting contractors have BEELINE Arro guidance or equivalent fitted to their tractors. Given that the system is "colour blind" and can be fitted to almost any agricultural tractor its adoption in the Bundaberg region has been quite rapid. Frank Andriole, contractor and farmer in the Bundaberg region put it this way. "When I first bought the BEELINE Arro auto steer system for my Fendt 926 I was a bit nervous, \$65,000 +, is a lot of money to invest in having my tractors steer in a straight line. However now I could just about kiss the worked ground behind the tractor. The savings I have achieved in operating costs due to eliminating overlaps and reduced operating hours combined with the premium farmers are prepared to pay for the accuracy to increase their production yields have made this an excellent business decision. I am fully booked for the next 4 months and I have had to put the brakes on my advertising..."

Although there are other guidance systems on the market the BEELINE Arro range is the only guidance product in the Burnett region that has local fully comprehensive sales and service support provided by Burnett Land & Machinery. Felicity White, QLD manager for Agline Distributors, credits much of the BEELINE Arro's successful adoption in the region to the commitment of Chris Tramacchi at BLM. " I have had the pleasure at the field day today to see existing Arro owners volunteering their time, equipment and support to introduce macadamia nut growers to the benefits of auto steer guidance in farm operations. I have had many of the BEELINE Arro owners express how impressed they have been

by Chris Tramacchi's commitment to the product and his accompanying post sales customer service, their support today is an absolute credit to Burnett Land & Machinery and Chris's efforts to date."

Felicity White explained that Agline Distributors sponsorship of the Australian Macadamia Society's meeting and field day is part of its strategy to introduce precision farming practices and technology to a wider agricultural market. "Traditionally auto steer guidance and precision agriculture implements and equipment have been utilised by the Australian grain and cotton industries, however the forestry and horticulture sectors can also benefit enormously from applying this technology. Agline Distributors have a portfolio of products that a farmer can pick and choose from to ensure he is building a profitable precision agriculture farming system that can be readily serviced and supported locally via our national dealership network."

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