

Record Dry Adding Technology to the Toolbox

The Jimbour Plain, north of Dalby QLD, long admired for its rich, black open cracking soils, has still managed after 76 months of continuous below average rainfall in the region to produce a dry land farming finalist in the 2006 Australian Cotton Industry Awards.

Richard and Julie Dowsett of "Wyobie", Jimbour are one of five finalists in the Monsanto Grower of the Year and AgriRisk High Achiever of the Year Award to be presented during the annual Cotton Conference on the Gold Coast in August.

It has been noted that all of the finalists this year have integrated into their farming systems row crop GPS Auto steer technology as just one of many tools leading producers are using to manage the difficult market and growing conditions experienced in Australia's cotton regions in recent years.

Richard explains what the benefits have been to their business since implementing 2cm Auto steer operations.

"My first thought would have to be our ability after planting on six rows with the auto steered John Deere 8320 to come back in with our 4 row pickers and effectively pick across the guess row. The maths are pretty straight forward on what this contributes in savings on labour and fuel costs."

"Since putting the equipment in we are increasingly planting at night and able to shield spray at much greater accuracy within 2cm of the plant while reducing the risk of spray blight. As the 2cm GPS guidance equipment takes the operator back into the correct row without having to get out to check it means around an extra 30 hectares of spraying per night gets done. Now we do nearly all of our broadacre spraying with the JCB at night."

"We can also improve our water effectiveness by using the topographical information logged by the BEELINE to generate elevation data to laser level areas of past ponding and flooding without the expense of using a surveyor."

"I would say that if you are in broadacre wheat I don't think a cost benefit analysis would justify the expense of a 2cm GPS Auto steer unit but for us in row crop cotton it is definitely well worthwhile."

When Richard was asked what growers should put at the top of their list when selecting initial or additional auto steer equipment he had this advice.

"Three things: accuracy, repeatability and local expert service. You cannot get the full benefits of any of the precise operations if your equipment is not sub 2cm repeatable. The picking across planted guess rows could not happen without true repeatability and accuracy. On the service side if they offer a preseason check schedule this is a good way to go."

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