

Controlled Traffic Farming – from research to adoption in northern Europe and its future prospects

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Abstract

Controlled traffic farming (CTF) has developed in response to research evidence of widespread soil damage from compaction due to field traffic. The history of research on soil compaction is explored and found to be a relatively new phenomenon. Controlled traffic farming as a topic for research did not appear until the 1980s although its benefits were well established before then. Research expanded over the next decades but changed subtly to more reviews on the topic as well as emphasis on environmental deliverables and some economics studies. Few if any researchers attempted to develop on-farm systems using existing machinery until the mid 1990s.

Despite changes to extension services in northern Europe at the turn of the century and a move to subsidiarity, this did not alter the model of CTF adoption which mirrored the Australian experience. Although CTF is well established in some countries in northern Europe, its future is far from assured but environmental legislation could change this situation dramatically.

A plea is made for more farmer and researcher partnerships that improve the quality and effectiveness of research and assist with its more efficient uptake. The future of CTF is explored and uncovers major potential in wide span machinery systems.

Keywords:

controlled traffic farming, increased crop yield, reduced carbon farming, wide span vehicles, extension, adoption