



The big switch made easy with Grains BMP

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The Grains Best Management Practice (BMP) program has been a game-changer for Mark and Helena Collins, who made the big switch to zero till and controlled traffic farming with the support and incentives provided by the program.

Mr Collins said the conversion to zero till was always a long-term goal on the family's mixed enterprise, 3245 hectare property "Unumgar", 30km west of Moura, but the program gave them the motivation and financial impetus to make the switch sooner rather than later.

"The Grains BMP program and Australian Government incentive funding has helped us adopt controlled traffic farming much quicker and with minimal capital cost," Mr Collins said.

Mr Collins can now see the long-term benefits of controlled traffic farming through improved sustainability, efficiency and production.

The program enabled the Collins' to purchase new equipment including a 10.3m trashworker which they converted into a zero till planter with hydraulic tynes. These modifications allow them to retain winter wheat stubble during summer months resulting in less runoff.

"The stubble cover this year has done a magic job of holding the top soil together on these paddocks," Mr Collins said.

"Overall, less soil disturbance has reduced the movement of excess nutrients and chemical residues into nearby waterways, even during periods of heavy rainfall, and has improved fallow efficiency."

The changes to their farming systems have also meant higher cropping frequencies.

"More groundcover in the paddock means more rainfall is converted into soil moisture over a shorter period of time," he said.

"The hydraulic tynes have provided higher breakout pressures and allowed us to moisture seek when planting. We now expect to be able to increase our production from eight crops in 10 years to 12 crops in 10 years by taking advantage of summer cropping options instead of relying on winter crops alone."

Mr Collins said the new system and increased capacity in their new air seeder will also help reduce costs by cutting down planting time from a fortnight to three days.

Mr Collins is one of more than 269 grain growers across Queensland taking steps to improve on-farm management practices with the support of the Grains BMP program, a joint initiative between the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, AgForce and Fitzroy Basin Association with funding support from Australian Government Caring for our Country Reef Rescue initiative.

Grains BMP is free and provides a number of training opportunities and funding incentives to help landholders benchmark and adopt best management practices. Workshops for new and existing Fitzroy grain growers will begin in July, for more information contact Hayley Eames (DAFF) 07 4992 9115.

For more information or an interview please contact: AgForce Projects communications officer Madeline Cooper (07) 3238 6060 or 0488 002 091