



case studies

Jeff & Francis McSpedden

Springfield, near Bathurst, NSW

Acknowledgements

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NSW DEPARTMENT OF
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Jeff and Francis McSpedden's 490 ha property 'Springfield' is approximately 18km south of Bathurst. The original property was purchased in 1841 and Jeff is the fifth generation to manage it. The soil types on this undulating property range from sandy Bathurst granites to red loam soils (red solodics) on the slopes and black alluvial soils on the flats.

A large part of the McSpedden's enterprise is growing vegetables on the rich alluvial flats. 40ha is under lucerne, 80ha is improved pasture and the remainder is native pasture which Jeff has begun to pasture crop. Jeff and Francis run sheep and these are used at times to assist in stubble management.

Motivating factors

Jeff and Francis are always looking for ways to improve their farm business and through their own research decided to convert suitable paddocks to minimum till. They found however that their agro drill had problems with stubble flow. So they and two other landholders, with funding assistance from the Ben Chifley Steering Committee and the Central West CMA, purchased a John Deere 1590 disc seeding machine. This group purchase has allowed over 1000ha to be sown using minimum till.

Benefits

Major benefits have included:

- reduced soil erosion
- increased soil water holding capacity
- greater maintenance of groundcover due to the ability to get through more stubble
- greater flexibility in rockier paddocks with the use of their disc seeder.

Seedling emergence has improved dramatically due to stubble retention and greater control of seed placement. The John Deere 1590 counts seeds, and this allows Jeff to reduce seed input.

Minimum till techniques are an important part of Jeff's Quality Assurance system for the business as well as being a way of doing 'more with less'.

Unforeseen problems

Ground that has been disturbed in the past has been setting hard in recent dry conditions. Minimum till in these areas has not seen the same response as in less disturbed areas. With a continuation of minimum till and more control of traffic, Jeff believes that these areas will improve.

Plans for the future

Jeff and Francis plan to expand the area under minimum till, particularly in paddocks with native grasses and a potential for pasture cropping. They intend to continue pasture cropping with winter crops such as grazing wheat and barley.