

# case studies

## Scott & Sally Oehm

### Mayfield, near Gilgandra, NSW

Scott and Sally Oehm live on 'Mayfield', about 40 km north of Gilgandra. They farm in partnership with Scott's parents on the 2070 ha property which has been in the Oehm family since 1911.

The property is undulating with some steeper areas. The soils are self mulching clay, red clay loam and sandy clay loam with acidity at depth. Average rainfall is 525mm and is erratic with no clear summer or winter dominance.

Approximately 1300-1450 ha is sown to crop each year and 600 ha is either established pastures or fallow. This provides a 70%-30% split. Their sheep enterprise consists of 2300-2500 breeding ewes and allows for 2300-2500 prime lambs and first cross ewes per year.

### Motivating factors

The Oehm family wanted a more profitable farming system given the increasingly erratic climate. They could see that conventional cultivation was leading to hard pans and poor infiltration which prompted a move to direct drill and chemical fallow in 1994. After going to conferences and talking with other farmers and with agronomists, in 2004 Scott started using controlled traffic. In his system, Scott deep rips where necessary every year, soil tests religiously to monitor nutrient and pH levels and adds soil ameliorants on a 10 year rotation or as soil testing shows need.

### Benefits

Following 14 years of direct drilling with stubble retention and 4 years of controlled traffic as part of the system, soil structure has greatly improved and water infiltration has virtually eliminated runoff. This system has all but removed wind and water erosion.

Controlled traffic has limited traffic to 10-20% on cropping paddocks and allows timely operations. This system has reduced fuel consumption and allowed inter-row

sowing. Combined with solid crop rotations, a more simplified and easier system has been established.

### Unforeseen problems

Stubble management was a problem initially. Scott built his own 9m parallelogram seeder. Using controlled traffic he has had to use machinery that suited this system. This has led to a 9m seeder, 27m sprayer and 9m harvester on 2m wheel tracks.

### Plans for the future

Scott wants to investigate using a harvester on 3m wheel tracks and a disc seeder suitable for his soil types. This would help stubble management and speed up operations at sowing time.



*Scott wanted a more profitable farming system given the increasingly erratic climate.*



### Acknowledgements

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