

MEDIA RELEASE
Zero tillage has many benefits on South Coast



Photo caption: Nick Ross, Jerramungup Enterprises, Kojaneerup farmer Leon Slattery, Neal Hall, salesman for Esperance machinery dealer PH Kerr & Co, and Tim Ellett and Peter Stoney, who work on the Slattery's 'Chalgrain' properties, pictured with the family's Ezee-On 8550 Coulter Drill.



Photo caption: Gairdner farmer Glenn Calvert and Nick Ross check the good emergence of a crop sown by the Calvert's new Ezee-On 8550 Coulter Drill.

TWO South Coast farmers who made the move to a zero tillage sowing system this season have praised its advantages for handling summer weeds and stubble, penetrating hard clay soils, its associated fuel savings, and also for leaving paddocks firm for subsequent machinery passes.

Mark Slattery, Kojaneerup, and Glenn Calvert, Gairdner, both purchased an Ezee-On 8550 Coulter Drill from local machinery dealer Jerramungup Enterprises leading into this season.

The precision, single disc opener sowing system is a five-row machine featuring single ram depth control; a 67-centimere (27-inch) underframe clearance; 20cm (8in), 25cm (10in) or 30cm (12in) tyne spacings; rubber or steel press wheels; easy levelling adjustments; flex-wing hinge points; and a narrow contour depth. The coulter assembly on the machine can be adjusted to provide for a more aggressive cut.

Mr Slattery sowed 4860 hectares (12,000 acres) to canola, barley and wheat with the Ezee-On Coulter Drill on the family's 'Chalgrain' properties this year.

He said the machine was vital for sowing into a heavy wireweed burden – as well as other summer weeds – in numerous paddocks this season, where tynded implements would not have been suitable.

“With some big stubbles to handle from last year as well, we got through paddocks that we would have never got through before unless we burned them,” Mr Slattery said.

“We have a big range of soil types from sticky clays to gravels and deep sands, and different systems have their place depending on the seasonal conditions,” Mr Slattery said.

“The Ezee-On Coulter Drill showed that it could dry-seed into heavy clays. The discs were going in where it was rock hard. It is the sheer weight and strength of the machine that gets it in, and the discs and bearings are strong enough to handle it.

“The machine also works quite well for minimum disturbance on non-wetting soils, although if it was dry on top with moisture underneath I would go with the tynes.

“Working on hills in non-wetting soils can result in some wheel slip, and hair-pinning of stubble can occur.”

Ezee-On (Australia) general manager Stephen Brown said effective stubble management following harvest was necessary in preparation to use a disc sowing implement.

He said the 8550 Coulter Drill was also compatible for use with liquid nitrogen fertiliser.

Mr Slattery said all crops sown with the coulter drill had germinated well, even in thick clover pasture paddocks that the cultivator would have “balled-up”, and there had been less weed germinations.

“There’s also a big advantage with the coulter drill in getting back on paddocks, which we had trouble doing last year.”

“We used 30-40 per cent less fuel as well, especially in clay soils, and the tractor works easier.”

He said the attractive feature of the Ezee-On 8550 Coulter Drill was that it was simple, with one disc and one set of bearings, compared to others that had many pivot points resulting in greater wear and tear.

Mr Calvert at Gairdner upgraded to the Ezee-On Coulter Drill from a Forward Engineers 853 combine and sowed 1215ha (3000ac) with the machine to canola, barley and oats this year.

He said despite the difficult start to the season in the area, the coulter drill had performed brilliantly and crop germinations were good.

“It performed particularly well in the clay. It got into it effortlessly, which really is a factor of its weight,” Mr Calvert said.

“We did not have to burn header trails, the machine worked well through melons, and it has been easier getting back onto paddocks for spraying.”

He said it was excellent to hydraulically control sowing depth with a disc machine, and the single disc opener design also meant less moving parts.

“It has far exceeded my expectations. About 70 per cent of the machines operating in the Gairdner district are discs, and while some perform better on sandier soils and others on clays, the Ezee-On Coulter Drill is suited to both.”

Jerramungup Enterprises principal Nick Ross said he was now receiving further enquiry for the Ezee-On 8550 Coulter Drill, with growers especially interested in its trash handling ability, performance on heavy country and low maintenance design.

Esperance machinery dealer Brian Kerr, PH Kerr & Co, has also identified benefits with the Ezee-On Coulter Drill – as well as the company’s 7550 Air Drill – for managing the big crop stubbles throughout the region.

“Crop yields are increasing, but at the same time stubbles are getting harder to manage, and growers are looking to get the right equipment to go through stubbles,” Mr Kerr said.

“Even if stubbles are managed from soon after harvest, it can still be tough to get tynes through them.”