

CROPLANDS PRESS RELEASE

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Croplands Unveil New WEEDit PhantomDrive at Farm Fest

Australian owned, agricultural spray equipment manufacturer, Croplands has partnered with autonoTRAC to marry the hugely successful WEEDit optical spot spray technology with PhantomDrive - a smart autonomous, driverless platform kit that can be “added-on” to current model tractors with CVT transmission.

Croplands adopted the WEEDit technology from Europe over 5 years ago and it is now in use by some of Australia’s leading broadacre farmers to improve the efficiency of their herbicide spraying. The results have proven to be excellent in chemical savings, combating hard to kill weeds, lowering weed seed banks and retaining soil moisture.

The WEEDit sensors detect weeds by recognising the active chlorophyll present in all living plants. A signal is then sent to a solenoid to activate the correct nozzle as it passes over the target weed - minimising the amount of herbicide that is applied to bare ground. Croplands have engineered spray systems that not only maximise the efficiency of the WEEDit sensors, but withstand the rigours of Australian broadacre conditions.

Croplands are excited to unveil the new WEEDit PhantomDrive, as it is named, at this year’s CRT Farm Fest and will be performing demos at the event over the 3 days.

Croplands Northern Regional Manager, Jeremy Rennick is based at Croplands Toowoomba headquarters and was heavily involved in the project.

“Making the WEEDit autonomous was the next logical step for us with this product and we see it suiting medium to large scale farmers trying to get more efficiency into their operation either by giving themselves more time for other tasks around the farm or through better utilisation of their existing workforce”

This versatile toolbar kit allows your machine to not only perform autonomous tasks on demand, but also allows for normal use of the tractor when other jobs around the farm require it.

Croplands 12 metre WEEDit toolbar kit has been a great success in irrigation and smaller broadacre applications throughout the Darling Downs region since its release in 2015.

Croplands are expecting existing toolbar owners will be the first in line to upgrade to the autonomous platform technology, enhancing the use of their current machine.

Croplands' intention for the WEEDit PhantomDrive is to allow farmers to do more, at a higher level of accuracy, within a limited time frame – a factor that will contribute to improved fatigue management and monetary savings associated with labour costs.

The platform can be accessed remotely on any smart phone, tablet or computer with internet access. It monitors both the tractor and sprayer and any issues with either will be alerted to immediately through the warning system.

It has weather station capabilities for monitoring environmental conditions at the site of application and the system will stop operation if preset weather parameters are triggered.

The Croplands WEEDit PhantomDrive also incorporates a collision avoidance system, to eliminate any accidents on farm with people, animals or foreign objects.

Creator of the platform, Luke Schelosky brands the PhantomDrive as a truly autonomous drive system.

“We understood that an autonomous tractor by itself is simply a novelty so we had to provide a truly integrated system that not only gives excellent autonomous performance but also monitors and works in conjunction with the implement. Things like an on board weather station, SMS warning system for both the tractor and implement, tyre pressure monitoring and the ability to successfully steer around obstacles in the paddock were all critical in making the system a success.”

Weather conditions permitting Croplands WEEDit PhantomDrive can work 24 hours a day, with the option to travel slower and improve chemical application technique, while maximising your ha/day – also eliminating extreme boredom for the operator which can occur when travelling around the same paddock at low speeds!

Luke is excited about the prospects for farmers with the new technology.

“PhantomDrive relieves farmers from spending long hours on farm machinery – it will take farming to new levels of efficiency and productivity.”

Croplands released the WEEDit PhantomDrive to its local dealer network last week and it is safe to say many were impressed by the new platform. Michael O’Hara of Black Truck & Ag in Dalby was one of the dealers that attended the launch.

“Although slightly sceptical at first we’ve been impressed with what was shown to us and believe that we now have a system we can take to the market. I particularly like the idea of it being mounted to an existing tractor platform, making the unit a lot more versatile for the owner as it can be used for other jobs on the farm when not being used as a spot sprayer.”