



Saving Time and Money Using CenterPoint RTX GNSS Corrections



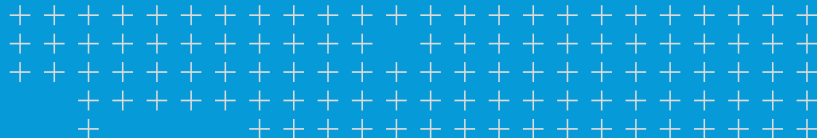
A South African farmer uses Trimble RTX technology to increase efficiency

Trimble's GNSS correction services enable farmers to improve productivity through precise accuracy.

Solution

Trimble CenterPoint® RTX
Correction Service

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overview

Zunckel Farms is a year-round farming operation on the eastern coast of South Africa, near the Drakensberg Mountains. The Zunckels grow corn, soybeans and irrigated wheat on a combined 2200 hectares (5500 acres) between two locations. Trimble’s GNSS correction services have improved the efficiency of their no-till farming practices, resulting in decreased costs and time savings.



TYSON ZUNCKEL
Farmer



CHALLENGE

When Egon Zunckel began farming near Bergville, South Africa nearly 30 years ago, the traditional farming practices he used quickly began to strip the soil of valuable nutrients and decrease his yields. After much research, Zunckel settled on no-till farming to combat the dry, windy environment he was working in and restore health to the soil. Today, Egon’s sons Tyson and Carl now run the farm using technological advances that greatly benefit their no-till practices.

Ask the Zunckels or any other no-till farmer and they will say that one key to reaping maximum benefits through no-till practices is applying seed and fertilizer in precisely the right spot, year-over-year. No-till farmers do not till a field in its entirety, preferring to leave the surrounding soil undisturbed and focus only on the row they are planting. Because the soil on either side of a row is left untilled, weeds and other plants grow wildly, making it difficult to find the crop row with the naked eye.

Although the Zunckels had successfully farmed using no-till practices for many years, performing field operations without a high-accuracy GNSS solution impacted their potential yields. Tyson Zunckel began searching for a GNSS correction service to increase the accuracy of their precision agriculture guidance equipment about nine years ago. He ruled out the option of building an RTK tower due to cost and eliminated another correction service after trying it and experiencing frustrating results.

SOLUTION

In 2011, Zunckel read about a new correction service from Trimble called CenterPoint RTX. After learning more about CenterPoint RTX from Trimble at the Nampo Farm Show, Zunckel was sold. They began using CenterPoint RTX on their sprayer that same season.

Right from the start, CenterPoint RTX impressed the Zunckels with its accuracy. Additionally, CenterPoint began to provide convergence times faster than those promised by Trimble—another plus for busy farmers with no time to waste.

Trimble CenterPoint RTX provides an alternative to traditional ground based RTK to achieve centimeter-level accuracy via satellite.

“When I’m working under an open sky, I check my diagnostics to see what type of accuracy I’m getting. Most of the time it’s somewhere between 0 and 2.5 centimeters.” Tyson Zunckel continues, “If we weren’t achieving that level of accuracy, we wouldn’t be hitting the rows properly with the planter and it would be highly frustrating.”

When asked about the normal convergence time he receives from CenterPoint RTX, Zunckel replies, “We literally start the planter up in the shed, drive five minutes to the field and start planting. We don’t even think about CenterPoint RTX’s accuracy or convergence time since we’ve never had any problems with it.”

Since 2011, the Zunckels have purchased several CenterPoint RTX subscriptions to add to their fleet of planters, tractors, sprayers and combines. In 2014 when they purchased a second section of farmland three hours away in Warden, South Africa, the Zunckels bought an additional CenterPoint RTX subscription to add to their new sprayer and quickly noticed another benefit to CenterPoint RTX—reliability.

“I can send a worker with the tractor or the sprayer up to the Warden farm without setting up anything on the machine and he can begin his field work straight away,” says Tyson Zunckel. “I don’t have to be there or worry at all about CenterPoint RTX working—and that farm is 150 kilometers away.”

Of all the benefits Zunckel is receiving from CenterPoint RTX, he believes that the most impressive feature is its year-over-year repeatability, which results in time savings and an overall peace of mind.

“We literally come back year-after-year without touching anything, hit engage and the sprayer finds the same line or the planter goes on the same line. You don’t have to change anything.” Zunckel continues, “Overall CenterPoint RTX is a brilliant product.”

RESULTS

Operating in an industry with so many uncontrollable factors-weather, crop prices and disease to name a few—is a labor of love for farmers. The Zunckels value CenterPoint RTX for the accuracy the service provides, the time they save in the field and the overall value the service brings to the no-till cropping practices used on their farm. Having a correction service that they can count on is vital to the success of their business.

“CenterPoint RTX works every day. We’ve never had any issues. It’s easy to install and really user-friendly,” says Tyson Zunckel. “I would say CenterPoint RTX is more than achieving what Trimble set out to do.”