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Farm a Fine Line

AutoFarm introduces RTK AutoSteer for sub-inch accuracy in the field. Dan Crummett

If you want GPS control of your tractor, sprayer or harvester down to less than an inch accuracy, AutoFarm has an improved system--RTK AutoSteer--that will fill the bill.

The AutoSteer system uses real time kinematics (RTK) to gather GPS satellite signals and correct them through a base station to keep your farm implements on track—with less than an inch tolerance—out to 6 miles from the base station. Repeaters are available to help you keep your accuracy in areas where terrain, grain elevators, timber or other obstructions might hamper the base station's signal.

The extreme accuracy of AutoSteer makes it a practical tool for row crop planting, listing, bedding, strip tillage, ridge tillage, cultivation, post-emergence spraying, banding fertilizer, side dressing and harvesting row and speciality crops.

A sunlight visible monitor programmed for both English and Spanish, makes the RTK AutoSteer system easy-to-use and transferable from one implement to another.



Unlike many other GPS-based steering programs, AutoSteer works in forward or reverse, is accurate with heading information from a dead stop up through field speeds, and is designed to be used on a variety of brands and types of farm equipment. If you want to lay out a field with a tractor and bedding equipment,

then swap the system to a sprayer or cultivator, and then later in the season put the system on a harvester—it's an easy switch with RTK AutoSteer.

The system includes a base station (for fixed applications or mounted on a tripod for field-to-field use); a modular two-dish satellite antenna for the cab of the vehicle, an onboard sunlight-visible interactive touch monitor, and a proportioning valve to fit the vehicle's steering hydraulics. AutoSteer also uses a wheel position monitor to keep track of its performance.



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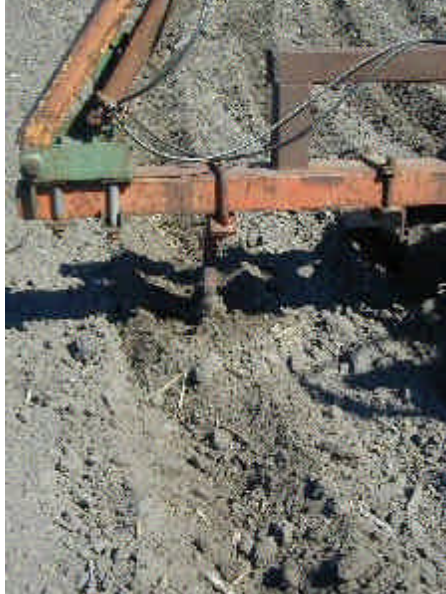
Corn	198-2
Soybeans	525-6
Soybean	157.1
Meal	162-4
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Rough Rice	329-4
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Once row width and field patterns are selected for fixed or custom row patterns, RTK AutoSteer allows an operator to eliminate guess rows. For instance, if one is pulling 12-row equipment and at the far side of a field there is insufficient room for a full pass, AutoSteer allows the operator to "nudge" the system to complete sufficient rows to fill the field and keep all rows parallel—with no visual guesswork.

This photo demonstrates the AutoSteer system's capability to lay out a circle, and bring the tool "hands off" exactly on line with the original furrow. This demonstration in South Texas was done at the request of Farm Progress Cos. and involved a 100-yard diameter circle.



The system is popular with irrigators who farm in circles. With the circle established in the AutoSteer memory, the tractor will steer itself and bring the tool back to a perfect match of the original point of "tool drop."

AutoSteer also allows a driver to follow contour lines, do boxed rows, or fill an irregular field shape with "fan rows."

In addition, the system is sensitive to roll, pitch and yaw, which allows control through the vehicle's computer assisted network (CAN) to correct for crab angles on hills. The same technology is also useful if an operator wants to use AutoFarm's AutoLevel system for land leveling. There, the signals that steer the vehicle with AutoSteer, control the height of a scraper blade with accuracy down to .03 percent of grade.

Prices for the new system start at \$25,000 for the vehicle components for selected tracked models up and range up to \$28,000 for wheeled and articulated machines. The base station starts at \$6,500 for mobile configurations.

For more information contact AutoFarm, a division of Novariant Co., at www.gpsfarm.com, or call (866) 4AUTOFARM.



An improved antenna array takes signals from AutoFarm's

base station and available GPS satellites to provide sub-inch accuracy of tractor/tool placement within 6 miles of base station. The antenna module is easily moved from tractor to sprayer to harvester.



One key difference with AutoFarm's RTK AutoSteer and other systems, is the ability to control tractors, sprayers or harvesters of many different brands and models. Here, a proportioning valve installed in the tractor's steering hydraulics handles "hands-off" steering chores, directed by signals from GPS satellites and an on-board computer.



One thing many growers notice is the lack of use of marker booms during field operations with AutoSteer. The system allows a number of work patterns within the field, from box rows, to fan rows, to circles, all at the touch of a button on an interactive video screen in the cab.

