

# WEED IT AND REAP

GIUSEPPE TAURIELLO

A South Australian company helping farmers win the battle against weeds is taking its technology to the world, launching a new product designed specifically for northern hemisphere conditions.

Seed Terminator has revealed a new version of its non-chemical seed-killing mechanical device, developed specifically for a new range of combine harvesters being manufactured by agricultural machinery giant New Holland.

Seed Terminator units are designed to fit inside a combine harvester, pulverising weed seeds at the harvesting stage, before they get the chance to grow and run riot across crops.

Local manufacturing of Seed Terminator 2 – the second iteration of the platform developed for New Holland – will begin at the company’s Lonsdale facility in January.

They will then be shipped to New Holland’s factory in Belgium, where they will be fitted to harvesters as they are being built on the assembly line.

Seed Terminator co-founder Mark Ashenden said the company had been working with engineers from New Holland for four years to develop the final product.

“In the European climate, and across the northern hemisphere, the crops are greener, wetter and heavier,” he said.

“New Holland wanted to have the harvest weed-seed control device fitted at factory for the future generations.

“The unit will allow farmers all over the world to access a non-chemical weed-killing solution that specifically targets herbicide-resistant weeds, which costs farmers billions across the world.

“The ultimate ambition for us is to have global adoption of harvest weed-seed control from right here in SA.”

Seed Terminator 2 was recently showcased by Mr Ashenden and business partner and nephew Dr Nick Berry at the Agritechnica event in Germany –

a global agricultural machinery trade fair held every two years in Hanover.

Dr Berry designed and built the first Seed Terminator prototypes in 2016.

The company has gone on to produce more than 700 devices currently in operation in Australia and overseas.

It estimates that over the past seven years the devices have avoided close to 12 million litres of herbicides from being used, and reduced carbon emissions by more than 127,000 tonnes.

Mr Ashenden said the environmental benefits of Seed Terminator had generated strong interest across the industry.

“The appetite for that type of innovation in Europe is just leaving Australia for dead, quite frankly, because they’ve developed schemes and methods where they’ll actually support the farmer for the purchase of these items,” he said.

“It’s not about the retailer or the wholesaler. They (farmers) get a direct rebate back to the farm once they’re under an acknowledged or certified product.

“And they’re also supporting manufacturing companies to actually get these products out, because they know they’re good for the environment, they’re good for sustainability and, critically, they’re good for food production because less chemicals is better than more.

“Australia produces about 3 to 4 per cent of grain, so there’s a big market offshore and that’s why Seed Terminator 2 – a global product with ag-tech from Australia – is compelling.”

Seed Terminator employs more than 40 workers at its assembly and manufacturing site in Lonsdale, while also outsourcing component manufacturing to a range of local suppliers.

Earlier this year, it opened a European office in Belgium, where it will supply its weed-control device to New Holland’s agricultural machinery production facility.

Mr Ashenden said the company would later supply its device to a second site in the US, operated by New Holland’s sister brand, Case IH.

“To give you some idea of the enormity, the two factories make 14,000 new combines a year, and they expect that by 2031 somewhere between 61 per cent and 64 per cent will have these automatically fitted at the factory,” he said.

“This is a game-changing technology, and a product that’s going to redefine agriculture.”