

LEARNING PLAN

SEPWA's BEYOND THE FARM GATE GROWERS' TOUR AUGUST 2005

Tour Participants

A total of 32 people, from throughout the Esperance Port Zone, attended the tour. Refer to Appendix 1 for participant's names and contact details.

Tour Itinerary

The program for the tour was as follows:

Date	Time	Activity
Monday 15th	7 am	Depart Esperance for Perth
	5 pm	Arrive Perth
Tuesday 16th	7 pm	Dinner and presentation by Rinex Technology
	9 am	CBH Metro Grains Centre, Forrestfield
	10.30 am	Joe White Malting, Forrestfield
	12.45	Australian Grains Centre, Forrestfield
Wednesday 17th	4.30 pm	Swan Brewery, Canningvale
	9 am	State Agricultural Biotechnology Centre, Murdoch University
	12.30	Allied Mills, North Fremantle
	2 pm	Premium Grain Handlers, North Fremantle
	3.30 pm	Challenger TAFE, Aquaculture Tour, Fremantle
Thursday 18th	7 pm	SEPWA Sponsors Dinner
	9 am	Bureau of Meteorology, West Perth
	11.30 am	Nufarm Chemical Manufacturing Facility, Kwinana
	2.30 pm	Summit Fertilizers, Kwinana
Friday 19th	7 pm	Rabobank Dinner
	8.30 am	Department of Agriculture, South Perth
	12.30 pm	University of WA Field Research Station, Shenton Park
	1.30 pm	Grain Biotech Australia Canola Breeders of WA COGOO, Shenton Park
	3.30 pm	AWB Ltd, East Perth
Saturday 20th	5.45 pm	Footy – Fremantle Dockers v's St Kilda, Subicao Oval
	7 am	Depart Perth
	5 pm	Arrive Esperance

For Tour contact details, refer to Appendix 2 and more information about the tours, refer to Appendix 3.

Learning Objectives & Activities

- To increase growers knowledge about the effect different grain quality standards can have on end use products and how growers can improve their grain quality**

Growers gained further insight into grain quality and its effect on end use products by visiting the following industries during the tour:

- CBH Metro Grains Centre
- Australian Grains Centre
- Joe White Malting
- Swan Brewery
- Allied Mills
- AWB Ltd

The emphasis on grain quality can also be taken back several steps to the breeders and visits to breeding and research companies where participants were addressed on the importance of breeding varieties suited to different environments and varieties that can stand up to disease and other agronomic issues. Participants were also briefed on promising varieties that are still in the pipeline, as different varieties can have different quality attributes.

In the post tour questionnaire, participants were asked to “describe two different practices or changes that they can make on farm to improve grain quality”. Some of the specific answers received included:

- implement Quality Assurance on our farm
- purchase dedicated pickling auger to meet Quality Assurance standards
- keep more records for traceability and Quality Assurance
- be more scrutinizing when selecting wheat varieties for future growth based on better understanding of quality testing
- grow suitable varieties suitable for the area
- keep varieties segregated
- ensure no wheat, barley contamination
- protein management
- malt process – how important it is to grow good size grain
- our farm is capable of increasing quality and quantity when we implement management changes learned on the tour

According to one of the Tour Coordinators (Beaumont farmer and SEPWA Executive), Lyndon Mickel, “the main points coming from the tour, being that we are part of the food industry and the quality of our grain is of the utmost importance, particularly to the end users and processes. Most came back with the realisation that Quality Assurance is not a waste of time, but a necessity if we are to remain a force throughout the grain markets, whether they are of a domestic or international nature”.

As indicated from the post tour questionnaire, other significant learning's for the tour participants, related to grain quality, included:

- need to maintain malt barley purity for malsters
- the importance of producing quality grain with good hygiene
- quality control and traceability (Quality Assurance)
- WA has a clean green image and everything should be done to keep it that way
- traceability of products from the farm to consumer is going to become standard
- milling and malting barley qualities

Therefore it can be summed up, that tour participant's knowledge about the importance of grain quality was increased through discussions with processors and grain marketers. In terms of improving their grain quality on farm, participants believe they can do this by choosing the right variety and by also adopting Quality Assurance measures on farm.

2. To increase growers knowledge of the different ways in which grains are value added and made into different products

Growers' learnt about the different ways in which grains are value added and made into different products by visiting the following industries during the tour:

- Joe White Malting
- Swan Brewery
- Allied Mills
- Premium Grain Handlers

From the pre tour questionnaire, it appeared that a lot of the participants were attracted to the tour because they wanted to increase their knowledge of grain handling from the farm gate to the end product and to gain a better understanding of downstream processing (how the raw product is handled throughout its processing procedures) and value adding.

Tour participants were asked in the pre tour questionnaire and the post tour questionnaire, “what was their level of understanding of different grain processing methods”? The answers are as follows:

Possible Answers	Pre Tour questionnaire answers	Post Tour questionnaire answers
1 – very little	3	
2	4	
3 – average	21	4
4	1	11
5 – very good		10

Further to the results above, we can conclude that the tour did increase grower’s knowledge of the different ways in which grains are value added and made into different products. The process of how flour is made and how barley is processed into malt sparked a lot of interest from the participants as several of them noted them as a significant learning from the tour.

3. To increase understanding of grain breeding and encourage interaction of farmers with grain breeders

Growers learnt about grain breeding during the tour by visiting:

- Department of Agriculture doubled haploid breeding laboratories
- State Agricultural Biotechnology Centre
- University of W.A. Field Station – Barley Germplasm Breeding Program
- Canola Breeders of W.A.
- COGGO

During these visits they spoke with plant breeders, pathologists and biotechnologists.

Comments from the pre tour questionnaire indicate that the tour participant’s wanted to identify research and development issues and to understand the new technologies in the industry. Participants expected to learn about how grain breeding is controlled, about different varieties, potential and the direction of plant breeding and gain a better knowledge of plant breeding.

Prior to the tour and following the tour, participants were asked “what was their level of understanding of grain breeding”, following meeting with researchers and breeders on the tour? They answered in the following way:

Possible Answers	Pre Tour questionnaire answers	Post Tour questionnaire answers
1 – very little	7	
2	8	
3 – average	12	11
4	2	9
5 – very good		7

Participants were also asked in the post tour questionnaire “what are the two most significant things you learnt as a result of the tour”. Some of their answers that relate to plant breeding are as follows:

- how much research and development is going on to improve our industry
- what goes on with plant breeding
- new avenues and progress in breeding technology
- new varieties coming up
- don’t take for granted statements on new varieties, double check
- researchers limited to what they can do because of budget and processes
- complexity of plant breeding
- selecting a specific trait and breeding it, as a new variety takes a long time
- a reasonable amount of broken linkages in plant breeding to many bodies

- how the double haploid breeding process is carried out
- biotechnology – molecular markers speeding up breeding
- plant breeders have an almost impossible task of producing a wonder variety

Therefore it can be said, that the tour participants did increase their understanding of grain breeding and also interacted with grain breeders and researchers, as a result of the tour. In fact it appears that the participants had very little to an average knowledge of plant breeding prior to the tour and following discussions with plant breeders, they are now more aware of the complex process and the time taken to get a new variety out in a farmer's paddock.

4. To increase practical knowledge of no tillage systems, machinery adaptations and key factors to implementing and fine tuning this farming system for the south east region

In our original funding application we did indicate that the tour would attend the WA No Tillage Farmers Association Conference at Katanning which was in February. However due to lack of numbers for the tour at that time, we had to postpone the trip until after seeding and hence we weren't able to address this objective on the tour in August.

5. To increase awareness of sustainable farming systems in relation to grain production

Further due to the postponement of the tour and changes to dates, Lawry Pitman of Valema Farms at Corrigin wasn't available in August for us to visit and therefore the tour could not address the objective of increasing the participant's knowledge of sustainable farming systems.

However the tour, did visit the Nufarm Chemical Plant in Perth to look at handling and production of chemicals and while this tour didn't exactly address sustainable farming issues, it did have a big impact on the participants in regards to increasing their spraying knowledge, a couple of the comments included:

- how important spraying conditions and droplet size is when spraying, can lose lots of chemical
- spray drift demonstration showed how much drift there is between different types of nozzles

6. To strengthen relationships between growers in the region and encourage greater participation of young members in SEPWA

The SEPWA Beyond the Farm Gate tour provided a great platform for the interaction amongst grain growers. There were 32 participants on the tour, who came from throughout the Esperance Port Zone. Areas represented included Esperance, Grass Patch, Beaumont, Scaddan, Lake King, Condingup, Dunn Rock, Salmon Gums, Gibson, Beaumont, Munglinup, Neridup, Fitzgerald, Ravensthorpe, Hopetoun, Coomalbidgup and Cascade.

Many of the participants didn't know each other prior to the tour, indications from the pre tour questionnaire show that each of the participants knew in the range of 5 -32 people prior to the tour and following the tour, the majority knew everyone on the bus.

Several of the participants indicated that one of the reasons as to why they wanted to go on the tour was to meet new people, network with other young farmers and continue to find out more about the industry. Following the tour, some of the comments made in reference to young people included:

- good young farmers on tour positive for industry
- we have some wonderful young farmers in our community who are willing to learn and take a role in the future of agriculture in the Esperance Port Zone

In regards to participation in SEPWA, of the 32 participants on the tour, 23 of members of SEPWA, 2 were Sponsors and 7 people were non-members. All participants had

knowledge of the work SEPWA does and many have been involved in SEPWA and the group's activities, refer to the following table.

SEPWA Activity	No. who have participated in the past
Field Days	24
Ladies Day	3
AGM	10
Trials	8
Harvest Debrief	7
Other	7 Executive, Sponsor

Following the tour, the majority of participants noted that they would like to be more involved in SEPWA in the following manner:

- more tours and conferences
- by going to meetings
- attending field days
- keep doing trials on property
- become involved in doing trials on farm
- any capacity
- access to Newsletters
- information sharing and use expertise of members
- by being on the Executive
- I will become a member

In summing up the above results, the tour was also successful in strengthening relationships between growers in the region and also encouraging greater participation of young members in SEPWA. SEPWA will continue to encourage the participation of younger farmers in the group's activities in the future.

7. To expand grower networks of people including researchers, other farmers and people associated with value adding and breeding grains

On the tour, participants met with various researchers, breeders and people involved in the agricultural industry, other farmers and they were also able to network with members of the Liebe Group (another grower group in the wheatbelt) at dinner one evening. They were given various opportunities to expand their networks.

Tour participants were asked "how many contacts they had within the grains industry", in the pre tour and post tour questionnaires. Their answers are as follows:

	Pre Tour questionnaire answers	Post Tour questionnaire answers
People on tour	293	614
Other farmers	2146+	2735
Researchers	189	568
Industry	598+	810

In regards to researchers, the tour participants knew 6 researchers on average, compared to an average of 21 following the tour. Whereas with industry people, they started with knowing an average of 20 people and finished knowing about 30 people.

The above table can be summed up in saying that all of the tour participants did expand the networks of people, taking in other farmers, researchers and industry people.

The majority of participants indicated that they were likely to make contact with people that they met whilst on tour. These included researchers, marketers, other farmers to discuss the different practice they use and other industry representatives.

8. Other Comments

Overall the tour participants learnt a lot from the tour and thoroughly enjoyed themselves, some of their comments that nicely sum up the tour are:

- It was an extremely well managed tour and exceeded my expectations
- I like the plant breeding and the fact that I now have an idea of where people from different sectors believe the grains industry is going
- Every tour was very informative and a credit to the organisers, it could not have been any better
- I liked most of the tour, meeting new people was one of the best things
- Tour was excellent, range of businesses great and the timing was good
- Organisation and running was of a high standard and enjoyed by me
- I think it has been a fantastic tour.
- The tour covered a wide range of issues to do with our industry.
- Excellent tour – opened my eyes as to the opportunities available and the in depth research
- Very professional and impressive. Wide range of presentations and topics. Congratulations and thanks for the opportunity to participate

Learning Outcomes/Reflections

As part of our reporting requirements to GRDC and in order to determine if we have met our objectives, tour participants were asked to evaluate the SEPWA Beyond the Farm Gate through several methods:

1. Pre Tour Questionnaire – this was to gauge the participants understanding/knowledge prior to participating in the tour. Refer to Appendix 4
2. Tour Score Sheet – this was to measure the success of each of the tours and their relevance to tour participants. Refer to Appendix 5
3. Tour Learning Diary – this is a record of all of the tour visits and what they involved. Each participant was asked to write a report on one visit in conjunction with another tour participant. Refer to Appendix 6
4. Post Tour Questionnaire – this was to measure if the participants knowledge/understanding had increased as a result of the tour. Refer to Appendix 7
5. Tour Coordinators report – a report written by Lyndon Mickel to summarise the tours and the participants learnings throughout the tour. Refer to Appendix 8

Following the tour, all participants will receive a copy of the Tour Diary and Report. The diary and some photos will also be made available on the SEPWA website – www.sepwa.org.au.

Extension & Communication of Outcomes

Timeframe	Methods of Extension and Communication	Type of Media and Exposure
Pre Tour	December 2004 – SEPWA Newsletter Promotional insert	Grower members in the Esperance Port Zone
	18 th January 2005 – SEPWA Media Release “SEPWA granted tour funds”	Media Release distributed to media outlets – statewide rural papers and local papers within the Esperance, Ravensthorpe and Lake King region
	20 th January – Esperance Express Article “Beyond the farm gate looms”	Print media reaching Esperance area
	24 th January – ABC Rural Report, Esperance	Radio broadcast from Merredin to Esperance and Ravensthorpe

	Interview with SEPWA Executive to promote tour	and areas in between
	27 th January 2005 – Farm Weekly Article “SEPWA grain tour”	Print media reaching statewide audience
	February 2005 – SEPWA Newsletter Article “Farmers wanted for grain growers tour”	Grower members in the EPZ
	June 2005 – SEPWA Newsletter Article “Tour participants wanted for the SEPWA Beyond the Farm Gate Growers Tour”	Grower members in the EPZ
	7 th July – Esperance Express Article “Beyond Gate on horizon”	Print media reaching Esperance area
	8 th July – SEPWA Media Release “Tour participants wanted”	Media Release distributed to media outlets – statewide rural papers and local papers within the Esperance, Ravensthorpe and Lake King region
	14 th July – Farm Weekly Article “Group wants growers to go beyond the farmgate”	Print media reaching statewide audience
	Prior to tour – SEPWA website Information about the Growers Tour	Internet reaching local, state, national and international audiences
Post Tour	25 th August – Farm Weekly Article “Growers go on tour to learn their options”	Print media reaching statewide audience
	30 th August – ABC Rural Report, Esperance Interview with Tour Coordinator about learnings from tour	Radio broadcast from Merredin to Esperance and Ravensthorpe and areas in between
	8 th September – Esperance Express Article “Tour shows product of farm labour”	Print media reaching Esperance audience
	October 2005 – SEPWA Newsletter Article “The SEPWA Beyond the Farm Gate Tour”	Grower members in the EPZ
	21 st October – SEPWA Executive Meeting Power Point presentation by tour participant, Andrew Heinrich	SEPWA Executive, Staff and Sponsors
	Post tour – SEPWA website Information about Growers Tour – tour diary and learning report	Internet reaching local, state, national and international audiences