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# SEPWA

ISSUE 85, APRIL 2017

# newsletter



SEPWA

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implements, breakdown of  
stubbles, nutritional effects  
and seeding efficacy.

# PRESIDENT'S REPORT

**The 3 F's, fire, floods and frost all in 16 months! I can think of another F to throw in there to sum it up. Farming in the Esperance Port Zone always has its challenges but the last year and a bit would have to be up there in terms of stress for most of our growers.**

Unfortunately SEPWA cannot curb the influence of Mother Nature however it is here to help wherever possible through these trying times. An example of this is the fires booklet which is at the printers as I write to help those that are unfortunate enough to have to deal with the issues associated with fire in the future. Many thanks to those growers and consultants that have contributed to the book in some shape or form as well as GRDC for their assistance.

For those particularly along the coast of the entire EPZ the soil profile is full and dealing with water logging in winter could well be a real issue this season. This is nothing new but the scale of the erosion is and will take some time to remediate, particularly in the western regions. The get on with attitude of growers in the EPZ I'm sure will hold us in great stead and has always been an aspect of our region I am particularly proud of.

As per usual there is always plenty happening within your SEPWA team and I would like to take a moment to thank the staff and executive that make SEPWA the group it is today. We are very fortunate to have the expertise and passion within the group and on our payroll which makes your grower group one of the most respected, productive and relevant in the country. As with business it is only as good as the people within it and this makes us an organisation I am only too happy and fortunate to lead for another 12 months.

As per usual if there are any issues that affect you or your farming business please don't hesitate to contact one of your executive members or SEPWA staff and we would be only too happy to address it, or at the very least attempt to.

All the very best for the upcoming season

**Greg Curnow**  
President

## Esperance student wins scholarship to raise awareness of depression

**From a young age, Darcie Yeend loved farms and the outdoors and it was this passion that led her to study a Bachelor of Agribusiness at Marcus Oldham College in Geelong. After leaving high School in year 11, Darcie returned to study as a mature age student and she is now excelling in her second year at the university.**

Darcie is this year's worthy winner of the Rob Ashman Memorial Scholarship which will help to fund her studies and reduce financial pressure for her. The scholarship, which is sponsored by Hassad Australia and the South East Premium Wheat Growers' Association (SEPWA), was developed to raise the awareness of depression in rural Australia and support capacity building in agriculture.

It is targeted at young people who are passionate about agriculture, with a keen interest in the future of agriculture and who are ready to expand their networks and learn new skills.

It is in honour of Rob Ashman who sadly took his life in 2015 after suffering from depression for many years. Rob managed properties for Hassad Australia and was also an active member of SEPWA.

The winner of the scholarship was announced at the SEPWA Harvest Review, last Friday in Esperance, by Tony Stringer from Hassad Australia and Sue Ashman, wife of the late Rob Ashman also attended the day.

21 year-old Darcie said as a young teenager she loved spending time with her step-father on his Gibson property and she has continued to be attracted to the industry - working with CBH and on farms to save money to study.

Darcie said the financial support from the scholarship was very



*Darcie Yeend is congratulated by Hassad Chief Executive Officer, John McKillop at Marcus Oldham College.*

welcome since she was at university 5 days a week and she also supported herself by working two jobs and saving while working at home on holidays.

Darcie said this scholarship's aim to raise awareness of depression in rural Australia was something she could relate to, since she had suffered depression herself in recent years and knew of many others who had also. She had gained new confidence and a sense of achievement through her studies and this had helped her to find motivation which had changed her life.

"While Esperance is a tight knight community, farming can be very isolating," she said. "Raising awareness, removing the stigma around depression, admitting that you are not ok and making sure there is always someone to talk to is very important."

The scholarship, which is available to a commencing or current undergraduate student studying agriculture related fields at university, provides a bursary of \$3500 and the opportunity to work with SEPWA for a work experience.

The Rob Ashman Memorial Scholarship will be open on an annual basis, for more information is available on the SEPWA website [www.sepwa.org.au](http://www.sepwa.org.au).

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# SEPWA HARVEST REVIEW FOCUSSES ON MALT BARLEY



**The SEPWA Harvest Review held on February 24 at Esperance Bay Yacht Club attracted around 80 participants to the day. The main topic for discussion was the barley industry and the difficulty growers in the Esperance Port Zone have with prices for malt barley – which can be lower than in other port zones and quite often don't pay big enough premiums to justify growing over feed barley.**

The discussion was centred on how this could be rectified through rationalisation of the number of varieties grown in the port zone. By increasing the volume of a malt barley variety on offer, growers could hopefully attract more overseas buyers to the region which would encourage competition and hopefully stimulate prices.

Grain marketing consultant, Mae Connelly from Farmanco in Narrogin said Esperance growers needed to welcome new buyers to the region which was dominated by CBH at present.

She also encouraged that the number of malt varieties should be reduced from the 9 that were on offer last year.



Barley Australia Executive Director, Andrew Gee travelled from Melbourne to attend the day. He explained how the process of malt barley varietal accreditation took place and why this took at least two years in Australia to transition from old varieties to new ones. This was sometimes frustrating for growers who wanted to speed up the process to enable better yielding varieties to get market approval.

The meeting voted that around four varieties in the port zone would be much better from a marketing perspective and this would allow different areas to choose a variety that was agronomic ally sound for their region (based on factors such as rainfall and soil types).

Other topics for discussion included: Break crops (Mark Seymour, DAFWA Esperance); container exporting opportunities for the Esperance Port (Neil Wandel); grain issues and variety information, labour management systems (Reece Curwen, South Stirlings), soil constraints projects in the region (Dave Hall, DAFWA) and double break and lime resources (Bob Nixon, Kalannie).

SEPWA Projects Officers, Nigel Metz and Aidan Sinnott gave an overview of the projects currently being managed by SEPWA, including a malt barley project funded through Royalties for Regions which is working in with Internalt in Vietnam to better understand the needs of end users in the market. The first grower tour leaves today to travel to South East Asia.



1. Sam Guest (Salmon Gums); John Stead (Cascade) and Manfred Barz (Cascade)
2. Blakely Paynter (DAFWA Northam) and Andrew Gee (Barley Australia)
3. Reece Curwen (South Stirlings)
4. Steve Cocking (Rabobank Esperance) and Murray Ayers (Cascade)

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The in-season  
Grass Patch  
Trials walk will  
be held on July 26 –  
save the date!

# Grass Patch proposed trials in 2017

There are even more sites planned this year and these are listed below.

Trial	Species	Locality	Host Grower	Trial Co-ordinator
FP1	Field Peas Variety Trial	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	PASE
DAFWA 1	Lentil Seeding Rate Trial	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Seymour
DAFWA 2	Lentil Variety Trial	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Seymour
DAFWA 3	Lentil TOS Trial	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Seymour
DAFWA 4	Vetch Variety Trial (RADI)	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Seymour
DAFWA 5	Field Pea NVT	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Seymour
DAFWA 6	Possible Fungicide trial (Grass Patch)	Grass Patch	TBC	Seymour
DAFWA 7	Crown Rot trials – Mace v Scepter	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Hills
DAFWA 8	Canola -Retained seed seeding rate trial	Grass Patch	D Sanderson	Seymour
DAFWA 9	Canola - Fertiliser Trial – Rates N & P plus other nutrients	Grass Patch	D Sanderson	Seymour
DAFWA 10	Barley Seeding Rate Trial x N	Grass Patch	D Sanderson	Curry
DAFWA 11	Deep Ripping trial	Grass Patch	G Curnow	Hall/Edwards
F & G	Canola - Break crop Trial (Sown 2015)	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Warren
F & G	Wheat - Break crop Trial (Sown 2016)	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Warren
F & G	Pea - time of sowing and Fungicide	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Warren
F & G	Lentil - time of sowing and Fungicide	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Warren
F & G	Medic - re-inoculation and Pasture bio-mass	Grass Patch	P Letto	Warren
F & G	Canola - Blackleg/ sclerotinia - Fungicide profitability	Grass Patch - Belgian Rd		Warren
F & G	Summer weed knock down and pre-sowing	Rolland's Road/Grass Patch west		Warren
W4	Wheat	Grass Patch	Leon Bowman	SEPWA/Sharp
O2	Oat	Grass Patch	Geoff Sanderson	SEPWA/Sharp
B3	Barley	Grass Patch	Danny Sanderson	SEPWA/Sharp
C2	Canola (Triazine)	Grass Patch	Leon Guest	SEPWA/Sharp
A Sheep	Pasture Trial	Grass Patch	D Vandenberghe and D Sanderson	
Summit	Long Term Phosphorus (Lentils 2017)	Grass Patch	Ron Longbottom	Donkin
G x E	Field Pea Stage 3 Variety trial	Grass Patch	Leon Bowman	Young
G x E	Lentil Stage 3 Variety trial	Grass Patch	Leon Bowman	Young
SEAS	Fungicide work - various - Prosaro	Grass Patch	TBA	Marquis
Syngenta	Fungicide Application - Uniform/ Amistar	Grass Patch	TBA	SEPWA/Sharp

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## North Mallee Updates



The North Mallee Updates in March attracted around 60 people due to a great line-up of speakers. Chair of the North Mallee Farm Improvement Group, Sam Guest organised and chaired the event with support from SEPWA. The day was sponsored by GRDC.



Key-note speaker, Nick Gillett travelled from Bencubbin to talk about the innovative things he was doing on his low rainfall properties to handle a drying climate. Nick was a 2014 Nuffield Scholar who travelled the world to find ways of improving crop germination and yield.

Nick crops over 5600 hectares of wheat and over 900 hectares of barley annually. The Gillett's also run some sheep on the remainder of their property.

With three of his districts worst winter rainfall years on record occurring in the last ten years, Nick wanted to study how to improve wheat germination for better plant establishment in marginal conditions.

Nick said that low rainfall cropping had a bright future and by striving to improve cropping management whilst adopting readily available technologies and the further incorporation of new innovations into the future, dryland farmers can still positively influence crop establishment and business strength.

Things he had learnt along the way included:

- Spray knockdowns quickly. A tank in poor conditions is better than a tank postponed. Moisture retained = \$\$\$\$\$
- Have weed-free paddocks to enable at least 80% of programme to be dry seeded.
- In the EWB there is a higher chance of a dry finish than frost or disease. Seed by calendar to finish on or before May 25
- Chase moisture if no rain is forecast.
- Use Cli-Mate app to help play the season.
- Be honest with yield potential.
- Have a spreadsheet on hand for cropping financials.
- Trial something new every year.
- You can't spend enough on lime or moisture retention.
- Make the best decision on the day, critically analyse own performance but don't beat yourself up.
- Need to make better mistakes.
- The eastern wheatbelt is a great place to farm.

Other speakers on the day included: Stephen Park (Pacer Legal), Mick Daw (CBH), Gary Walter (Grain Bags Case Study), Jason Vermeersch (PASE), Aidan Sinnott (SEPWA), Mark Seymour (DAFWA), Dave Hall (DAFWA), Roger States (GRDC) and Dan Sanderson (Fire Update).

The Salmon Gums P&C did an awesome job of catering and a sundowner followed in the beautiful Salmon Gums Recreation Centre.

## EFOM FOCUSSES ON EMPLOYING BACKPACKERS AND CURRENT SUPERANNUATION CHANGES

A large crowd attended the March 13 EFOM forum to hear Byfields accountants Neil Hooper and Scott Smith who travelled from Perth to present on employing backpackers and give superannuation updates.



Around 50 people attended the March EFOM forum at Esperance Civic Centre to hear Byfields accountants give presentations on employing backpackers and superannuation.

If you missed the event, the power point presentations – 'Employing Backpackers' and '2017 Super Changes', PLUS the Employing Backpackers 'checklist' have been placed on the EFOM secure website. If you have any problems accessing the website please contact Niki Curtis.

Most members will be aware that recent changes effective from 1 January 2017 allow employers to withhold 15% tax from employees on 417 & 462 visas. You must be registered with the ATO to withhold this tax rate and it is only applicable for the first \$37000 the employee earns. Once the employee earns over this amount they revert to the higher rate of 37.5% tax. There was some discussion at the meeting about when the threshold is applicable. It is our understanding that the higher rate for the 2016/17 year comes into effect after the employee has earned \$37000 in the period from Jan 1<sup>st</sup> 2017 to Jun 30 2017. For the 2017/18 year the 32.5% rate will come into effect after \$37000. For further clarification, please contact Sue Stead by phone: 0488 792 098 or email ss.stead@bigpond.com.

An in house discussion was also held on ISCC Audits and what people who had been audited had found from their experience.

The next forum will be on May 8 at the Esperance Civic Centre. Grace Gan from RSM Bird Cameron will talk about paperless dialogue options with the ATO. AGDATA Australia will be sending two trainers to present to Phoenix users on recent changes and how to make the most of the program. Agrimaster presenter TBC. Keep an eye on the EFOM facebook page and the SEPWA eNews for updates.

All SEPWA members are welcome to attend these forums which usually start at 9.30 am and finish around 12 noon.

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# SEPWA R4R project Vietnam and Perth Training Trip March 2017

By Nigel Metz, SEPWA Projects Officer

## **A group of 9 from SEPWA recently travelled to Perth and Vietnam as part of the R4R “Barley Brand development for Asian Consumers” project**

First off was a visit to the Barret Burston malt factory in Forrestfield where plant manager Michael Ryan gave an excellent introduction into the science of malting. This was followed by a plant tour in which the water and energy requirements of malting were well demonstrated.

Following this the group met with Ken Arrowsmith now of Northbridge Brewing. Many of you will recall Ken from the side of the old Emu Biter cans when he was head brewer with Swan/LioNathan. Now working in the craft brewing sector, Ken gave some very useful insights to the key attributes large brewers look for in their malt supply.

With our introduction to malting and brewing science complete we then departed to Vietnam.

Day 1 in Vietnam the group attended the “Australian Grains Conference” which was aimed at informing and

promoting Australia as a supply source for grain to the Vietnamese and south east Asian market. Overall this event was somewhat disappointing in the way our industry and grain exports were promoted. Our reliable production from a large geographic area (the whole of Australia) as well as a world leading storage, handling and shipping facilities were not well communicated. While this type of the event is well beyond the farm gate and not the role of growers, SEPWA has provided feedback on the way this event was run and its key messages.

The key purpose of this first trip was to view the Intermalt malting plant in action and set down the projects testing program.

On touring the Intermalt plant what is immediately evident is the quality of construction. By comparison to the Australian plants visited, the Intermalt facility is of significantly better build quality. All vessels and grain conveying equipment are stainless steel which will allow ease of cleaning and maintenance for decades to come. Combined with this is the deep-water port access

already servicing the Interflour flour mill making for efficient delivery of barley into the plant.

The current Intermalt capacity is 360 tonnes per day or approximately 110,000 t/year with the facility upgradable to 720 t/day (220,000 t/year). While being right alongside a container port also, (making the export of finished malt very efficient) the majority of malted barley from the plant is likely to be sold domestically in Vietnam.

Vietnam has a strong beer culture based around some of the highest consumption per capita in Asia as well as higher percentages of malt (instead of rice) in their local brews. A supply contract is in place for Heineken who also owns the Tiger beer brand, cornering the large majority of beer consumption in Vietnam.

Micro malting and testing of WA barley will start in the coming month and we will keep you posted on our learnings from this.

For further information contact Nigel: [nigel@sepwa.org.au](mailto:nigel@sepwa.org.au)

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## SAVE THE DATE FOR THE SEPWA LADIES DAY

The SEPWA Ladies Day committee has been busy organising this year's event scheduled for August 11. The day promises to be better than ever with the theme: **Life is a like a box of chocolates and key note speaker, Anna Gare.**

Anna has a passion for using in season produce and moved to Denmark at the beginning of 2014 with husband Luc Longley. She says the Great Southern is a food maniac's dream where old school farming is still producing delicious sustainable and organic foods.

Anna is recognised as one of the most popular chefs on Australian television with a number of loved programmes under her belt. In recent years, she has presented two of the highest rating TV programmes on Channel Nine (Great Australian Bake Off) and Channel 10 (Junior Masterchef). Her role of Judge on Junior Masterchef garnered her Logie nomination and a legion of new fans across Australia.

Prior to her work on Junior Masterchef, Anna completed "Quickies in My Kitchen" an 8 part series featuring Anna for the Lifestyle Food Channel. Anna's journey on the TV screens of Australia really started with her acclaimed role on the top rating show "The Best in Australia", in which she starred alongside celebrity chefs Ben O'Donoghue and Darren Simpson. This program became the top rating show on Lifestyle Food and has also aired on ABCTV.

Most recently Anna has released her latest cookbook: *Delicious – every day.*

With books, more television projects and her high profile charity and educational work Anna's star is set to continue on its amazing rise!

Anna's life has always revolved around music and food. She was a member of the internationally acclaimed all-girl rock band the "Jam Tarts" in the 1980s and 1990s at the same time as developing her culinary career in various restaurants around Australia. From the late 1990s she ran her own catering company, the highly regarded "Deluxe Catering", based in Fremantle.

Her work in television cooking shows has allowed Anna to combine her natural flair as a performer with her passion for cooking.

This year's event will be on August 11 and held at the Esperance Civic Centre. Mark the date in your diary.

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# Do you have a budget to tissue test for nitrogen this season?

By Aiden Sinnott, SEPWA Projects Officer

## In the preparation for the upcoming season, many will have worked out the fertiliser budget for 2017.

There are indeed plenty of things on the mind of growers close to the break of the season, however soil nitrogen levels may not be at the top of the list. There have been significant rain events this past summer, most notably in the Ravensthorpe area, and the growers there will have far more to deal with than just managing soil nitrogen levels. For the rest of the Esperance Port Zone, there has been a large amount of rain poured on the land over the past few months, and it is important to take stock of soil nitrogen levels before seeding. If you have permanent soil testing sites ("georeferenced" – sampling locations with GPS coordinates) which you revisit on a regular or irregular basis, this can be a very useful string in your bow for getting an idea of how much nitrogen is present.

This season may prove it more beneficial however, to conduct tissue tests at key timings, for example, around the 6 WAS (weeks after sowing) mark, in order to assess the soil nitrogen status. At this point, growers will have a visual on their crop and be better able to

assess deficiencies if present.

Water logging will play a part this season, so tactical application of urea in particular, will be pivotal to achieving good NUE (Nitrogen Use Efficiency). Many areas along the south coast have a very full profile of moisture, and applying urea in front of a torrential rain may prove a pointless and costly exercise. Keep a good eye on the long-range forecast, and watch for the big fronts.

Don't forget that there are tools out there to help aid nitrogen decisions. Yield prophet is a useful tool, however requires a deep soil core and an annual fee, however does not account for areas of your paddock which may be waterlogged. iPaddockYield is another mobile device app, which requires 10 years of yield data, and up-to-date rainfall records. It forecasts what your yield potential is realistically, however, the difficulty lies in waterlogging.

It will be a difficult year for nitrogen inputs, but with some strategic soil and tissue sampling and testing, and using currently available information about nitrogen application timings, growers will get the most out of their nitrogen.

## eConnected Grainbelt

Under the Royalties for Regions project eConnected Grainbelt, SEPWA is one of 14 grower groups state-wide involved in the project which has implemented 11 new weather stations from Yuna to Grass Patch.

Some of these links may be useful as the season progresses:

### Rainfall to Date

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/climate-weather/rainfall-date-tool>

### Potential Yield

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/climate-weather/potential-yield-tool>

### Soil Water

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/climate-weather/soil-water-tool#?station=10115&soil=3&groundCover=1>

### Weather Stations

<https://www.agric.wa.gov.au/weather-stations>

## Soil test for crop nutrition

Updated critical soil test values will help improve test interpretation to inform better fertiliser decisions. Before deciding how much fertiliser to apply, it is important to understand the quantities of available nutrients in the soil and where they are located in the soil profile.

It is also important to consider whether the fertiliser strategy aims to build, maintain or mine the soil reserves of a particular nutrient.

Soil test critical values indicate if the crop is likely to respond to added fertiliser, but these figures do not predict optimum fertiliser rates.

Soil test results can be compared against critical nutrient values and ranges, which indicate nutrients that are limiting or adequate.

When considered in combination with information about potential yield, last year's nutrient removal and soil type, soil tests can help in making fertiliser decisions.

For more information to the GRDC Crop Nutrition Fact Sheet: <https://grdc.com.au/GRDC-FS-SoilTestingW>

### Key points

- A range of soil test values used to determine if a nutrient is deficient or adequate is termed a critical range.
- Revised critical soil test values and ranges have been established for combinations of nutrients, crops and soil.
- A single database collated more than 1892 trials from Western Australia for different crops.

- Nutrient sufficiency is indicated if the test value is above the critical range.
- Where the soil test falls below the critical range there is likely to be a crop yield response from added nutrients.
- Critical soil test ranges have been established for 0 to 10cm and 0 to 30cm of soil.
- Soil sampling to greater depth is considered important for more mobile nutrients (N, K and S) as well as for pH and salinity.
- Use local data and support services to help integrate critical soil test data into profitable fertiliser decisions.



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## Record February Rainfall May Effect Autumn's Deep Ripping Plans

By Michelle Handley, SEPWA Project Officer



**At the risk of stating the obvious, it's fair to say that the South East Coastal District has had a wet start to the year. Moisture brought down from two tropical lows that formed in the north of the State, the first in late January and the second in early February, produced significant cloudbands that brought persistent rainfall and below average temperatures to the region. Rainfall received during the 8<sup>th</sup> to the 11<sup>th</sup> of February proved to be particularly significant. At the peak of this rain event many recording stations in the South East Coastal District recorded their highest February daily rainfall and had broken their February monthly rainfall record by the 14<sup>th</sup> of the month.**

These massive falls caused widespread flooding across the district, bringing with them significant impacts to our communities, road infrastructure and agricultural businesses. While the full cost of the damage wreaked will take some time to evaluate we do already

know that in terms of agricultural production there are a number of growers in our district that are facing hefty erosion repair works. The flip side to this is that we also know there are a number of growers that have been presented with an opportunity as they start the 2017 growing season with full soil water profiles.

One thing that may have come to mind this month is what are the implications of this much rain on the deep ripping plans I had for autumn, and you'd be right to ask this question. DAFWA has issued very timely advice to help those wanting to do some deep ripping to address soil compaction issues to ensure you don't do more harm than good, and waste valuable time and money by trying to rip when the soil is too wet.

The issue is that if you try and rip when the soil profile is too wet the ripper tines won't lift and shatter the soil to bust it up like you want them to, instead they'll just cut through the soil like a hot knife through butter. They may even compact the soil further.

DAFWA suggests that your best option in helping you decide whether to rip or not is to rip a test strip in the paddock and then dig a hole behind the ripper, across the furrow, and examine closely if you're getting the soil to break out and how far down the effect goes.

The shape that you're after is a V from the bottom to the top of the ripping tine. If the hole takes a Y shape then the job's not getting done, the soil is shattering from further up the tine and not down at the point. This creates horizontal compaction on the sides of the tine and may be creating a problem rather than solving one.

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# Stubble samples urgently wanted to map fungicide resistance

**Researchers are calling on growers and advisors to urgently send them samples of stubble infected with wheat powdery mildew (WPM), so they can grasp the extent of fungicide resistance across Australia.**

The call comes after the Fungicide Resistance Group at the Centre for Crop and Disease Management (CCDM), a national research centre co-supported by Curtin University and the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC), recently discovered resistance to strobilurin fungicides in WPM from 2016 crop samples from Victoria and Tasmania.

Dr Fran Lopez-Ruiz, leader of the Fungicide Resistance Group at CCDM, said the situation was quite fragile at the moment, as there were only two modes of action registered for WPM control – DMI (group 3) and strobilurin (group 11, QoI) fungicides which were already sold in mixtures with a DMI, such as azoxystrobin and epoxiconazole.

“And with one of those modes of action – QoI fungicides – compromised in some regions of Australia, growers will now look to the other mode of action – DMIs,” he said.

“This does raise concerns for an increased use of DMIs which in turn would put even more pressure on a group of fungicides that already have a considerable risk for resistance development. This is why integrated disease management strategies are essential.”

Dr Lopez-Ruiz said samples of infected wheat powdery mildew stubble will help his team put together a map of where resistance to strobilurin has occurred, and communicate targeted fungicide resistance management strategies to those areas.

“These samples will help us get an idea if it really is only in a few areas in Victoria and Tasmania, or a widespread issue for all grain growing regions – currently, we don’t know,” Dr Lopez-Ruiz said.

“We would also like to let growers know if fungicide resistance is near their properties, so they can be proactive and select the best fungicides to control wheat powdery mildew which will help save them time and money.”

For the coming season, Dr Lopez-Ruiz recommends only one QoI spray per year and if additional sprays are needed, use a DMI formulations that was not in the previous fungicide application, even if that DMI was in a DMI and QoI mixture. For a full list of registered fungicide formulations, visit [www.apvma.gov.au](http://www.apvma.gov.au).

“Levels of WPM can be reduced early on by avoiding sowing wheat into infected wheat stubble, selecting wheat varieties with disease resistance, and implementing good crop hygiene such as removing volunteer plants that may carry disease between seasons,” he said.

“Consider also discussing with your neighbours about controlling strategies, as WPM is what we call a social disease and it does not understand fences or paddock boundaries. It is an airborne disease and incorrect resistance management decisions will have an impact on everybody.”

Dr Lopez-Ruiz said the discovery was first identified in Tasmania thanks to agronomists reporting issues with fungicide control. Shortly after it was also identified in Victoria thanks to field samples from the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) who also noticed fungicide control changes similar to those occurring in Tasmania.

The Fungicide Resistance Group is now urging growers and advisers to send in a sample of their infected stubble as soon as possible, to get fungicide resistance analysis underway.

For a sample kit, email [frg@curtin.edu.au](mailto:frg@curtin.edu.au), or for more information, visit [www.ccdm.com.au/FRG](http://www.ccdm.com.au/FRG)



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## Optimising Snail Control Methods

By Michelle Handley, SEPWA Project Officer

**Increasing snail numbers is an issue that has been talked about for some time. What may have seemed at first like a relatively low key issue involving a few rare occurrences has now emerged as an issue of major significance. Snails are being found in grain at selling time and grain buyers are taking notice.**

There are 2 Ports in South Australia that one Chinese buyer won't buy grain from due to snail contamination and Vineyard snails, which occur in the Esperance Port Zone, have been flagged as a quarantine concern to China in relation to Australia's wheat and barley. In February this year CBH indicated that detection of snails in canola was an issue during the 2016/17 harvest.

None of us want to see Australian grain rejected by overseas buyers and there are stringent receival standards in place for wheat and barley and likely to be a tightening for canola. It is also likely that inspections will increase. It's important then that snail control methods are factored in to farm planning and management.

### CONTROL OPTIONS

While biosecurity measures need to be employed by industry, growers, and local and state government bodies to limit the further expansion of snails it's really important that an integrated suite of on farm control methods are put in place that are tailored to the biology of the target species.

There is a range of snail control options available, each of which are best suited to different stages of the snails' lifecycle, including:

- Baits
- Windrow burning – particularly effective for snails in canola
- Cabling/rolling/stubble mulching
- Sheep
- Good crop establishment and Crop rotations
- Long Fallow
- Precision Pest Management
- Grain Cleaning as a last resort
- To achieve successful snail control:
- Be vigilant
- Remove summer refuges
- Roll or cable in summer when > 35°C

Apply baits when snails are active and feeding. The timing of this will vary depending on paddock conditions, product used and the species present but baiting before egg laying in Autumn is ideal. Baiting in winter is less effective.

If you've chosen to include baits as part of your snail control approach keep in mind that to be effective their application needs to coincide with the time in the snails' life cycle when they've started feeding but have yet to lay their eggs (usually no more than 3 weeks after feeding has begun) in autumn. To help work out the most effective timing you can check paddocks to see if snails are present and if they are feeding.

When checking for snails knowing a bit about the biology of the target species

can be helpful. Small pointed or conical snails feed on green material and are active in the morning, Italian snails feed on green material and are active at night when relative humidity is greater than 90%, and Vineyard snails feed on crop residues and are active at night when relative humidity is greater than 90%.

One final useful piece of science that may help the success of snail baiting practices is work done on bait degradation. It's now known that:

Rainfall erodes the physical integrity of bran-based baits.

The bait's active ingredient is reduced by rainfall (ie metaldehyde & iron chelate) meaning individuals are more likely to consume a sub lethal dose after rainfall.

Don't use current Iron based baits when more than 10mm rain is expected.

Temperature, not UV light, degrades metaldehyde baits. Don't use metaldehyde products in summer and expect them to be effective for more than 2 weeks.

Commonly used bran products need to be re-applied within 2 weeks, more expensive products will last 3-4 weeks so is worth considering the cost benefit of each product to your circumstances.

*Acknowledgements: This article is based on information provided by Greg Baker, Helen De Graaf, Blake Gontar and Michael Nash from SARDI Entomology, and Svetlana Micic and Alice Butler from DAFWA.*

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# RAIN WRAP



**A 6 day weather event (commencing the evening of 7<sup>th</sup> February) saw up to 300mm fall in the Ravensthorpe Shire, leaving a path of destruction in its wake. Growers are now working tirelessly to repair roads and paddocks prior to seeding.**

The agricultural and environmental impacts are extensive with earthworks the number one priority for paddocks and shire, gravel or on-farm roads. The destruction of the Phillips River Bridge and inundation on Springdale Road has interfered with school runs and seeding preparation. The Culham Inlet causeway was washed away leaving a 250m expanse of water and no sealed road access into the Fitzgerald River National Park. This is impacting other areas of our community as tourist numbers rapidly decline. Estimates for its replacement are in the \$5million vicinity and the timeframe could blow out to 2 years.

The community is pushing for a Category C ranking which would remove some of the red tape surrounding the WANDRRA funding available to affected businesses. Agricultural impacts have been assessed and Shire damage reports are being finalised. These will determine the final outcome.

The event has also raised concerns about the reliance on only one road to the Esperance Port. Drainage is a massive issue for several growers whose paddocks are inundated with water and will be for some time to come. Environmental concerns have been raised for weed spread and river bank rehabilitation. Fences are down and washed away or buried, however fence

repair has only been a priority repair for those with uncontained livestock. Blazeaid will be mobilising to the area very soon to assist with repairs. Repair of soil erosion on paddocks is the largest cost for most, in excess of \$150K for some. Seeding preparation is number one priority.

## CROP UPDATES

RAIN forged on with their Crop Updates event on Thursday March 23<sup>rd</sup>. Attendance numbers could have suffered given the post flood workload for many. But we were pleasantly surprised by a strong roll up in excess of 70. Industry updates were presented. Nathan Mudie (South Coastal Agencies) presented results for the Sustainable Break Crop Trial which is being run in collaboration with RAIN and funding via the Australian Government National Landcare Program. Whilst field peas continue to be a great option, lentils also provide an opportunity (strong prices) as could Faba Beans if sown in the right timeframe. Faba Beans are a good fit for our area, they love the rich red country and nodulate well. They are also fairly good for waterlogging. Chickpeas also did much better than expected.

Michael Nash (SARDI) gave an update on snail research. Bob Nixon (Nuffield Scholar) did a fantastic presentation on the 'double break' and on-farm liming sources. A reminder to always be seeking opportunities and innovations! Angelo Loi (DAFWA) presented on 'The Nitrogen Story' and there was a WEEDit Spot Spray Demo over afternoon tea. Luke Marquis (SEAS) gave a recap of SEPWA variety trial

results and an update on the summer cropping trials that went in this summer in collaboration with RAIN and South Coast NRM. Bob Reed reflected on his career as a farm advisor with some key learning points. The event closed with Shire CEO, Ian Fitzgerald giving an update on roads and shire focus going forward. Discussions regarding flood damage and government position ensued. WAFarmers CEO, Stephen Brown was also present to give some advice. Thanks to GRDC, GrainGrowers, SEPWA, the Australian Government, National Landcare Program, State NRM, WAFarmers and South Coast NRM for supporting this event. Thanks also to the local P&C for their amazing catering! The event concluded with an informal sundowner over some Lucky Bay Brewery beer. It was a great opportunity for industry and locals to unwind and discuss their situation post-flood.

The Lake King Crop Updates was held on Friday 17<sup>th</sup> March. Aidan Sinnott presented a SEPWA Update, Mae Connolly (Farmanco) spoke on the Esperance Port Zone malt barley price issues, Frank D'Emden (PAA) discussed soil and prescription mapping and Angelo Loi (DAFWA) presented on the Nitrogen story. Gary Walter (Cascade grower) gave a great overview of their farming operation and the role of grain bags in their business. The event concluded with Peter Hughes, Bali bombing survivor telling his story. Thanks to GrainGrowers and GRDC for their support.

## FITZ FEST

On the weekend of March 25/26<sup>th</sup> RAIN coordinated 'Fitz Fest' – a mini festival to celebrate our history and surrounds. The event was a camp out held at the Fitzgerald Hall. It included some cultural discussion, bush poetry, an overview on river systems and a bush walk. 'Los Car Keys' a lively band played by the camp fire entertaining the kids and 40+ adults. The event was funded by State NRM and the Royalties for Regions program.

For further information about any events or RAIN please contact us on 9838108, email [rainoffice@westnet.com.au](mailto:rainoffice@westnet.com.au) or find us on facebook.



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## Barley Varieties in our Port Zone...how many is too many?

Over the 2 and half decades of SEPWA's existence we have continually evaluated new varieties for their benefits in productivity and grain quality. While in milling wheat this has helped to improve our regions exports, in barley the story is not so simple.

This is because malting barley must be processed at the malt factory by single variety if you are to produce a quality malt. While CBH operations is very flexible to ensure that our local bins have a malt stack of the local variety, this doesn't always flow into the market place as a full shipping parcel.

Currently the high number of varieties in our port zone creates multiple cargos, yet our port facility dictates full consignment bulk shipments. In the Kwinana Zone should a trader not accumulate a full cargo they can buy (or sell) extra grain on what is termed the 'track market', or export via containers for smaller tonnages.

In the Esperance port zone (EPZ) there isn't this flexibility. Last year 2 traders bought the majority of barley in the EPZ, and this means a virtually non-existent track market. As a result, should a trader want to buy in Esperance they need to be very confident to secure a whole ship cargo otherwise they can be left high and dry with half a ship and no real track market to top-up the cargo or liquidate should they have to pull out entirely. This has translated to the bidding competition at a farm gate level being less competitive. For example, malt barley prices in our region are often \$8 to \$12 per ton less than Kwinana due to this reason.

This leaves us as growers in the EPZ in a conundrum. While we look to new barley varieties for yield and disease gains, this quest has fragmented our production to a level where only a couple of traders purchase malting barley in our region.

While it will always be the right of the individual to grow which variety they see fit, reducing the number of malting segregations in the whole port zone would be one way to improve the bidding completion from traders support the farm gate price for malting barley.

## A Snapshot of EPZ's 2016/17 Harvest

By Michelle Handley, SEPWA Project Officer



**As we gear up for the 2017-18 growing season its worth taking a moment to take a look at how harvest turned out in the Esperance Port Zone in 2016-17.**

With 2, 682, 498 tonnes delivered between October 2016 and January 2017, grain receipts in the zone exceeded CBH's predictions by 29%. While production this year was similar to last year the Gross Value of the crop was estimated to be about 25% less than the previous year due to lower commodity prices.

In terms of the type of grain delivered, 47% of the 2016/17 crop was wheat, 36% was barley and 15% was canola, which was very similar to 2015/16.

Fortunately wheat grades were not severely impacted by the frosts experienced during the season, 43% of receipts graded ASW, 39% making APW, 15% going Hard and 3% were off grades. In relation to Barley, making Malt grades was more difficult with screenings and protein being the main factors in grain being graded Feed.

CBH's receipt network in the Esperance Port Zone was under the pump at times, especially between 9<sup>th</sup> November and 9<sup>th</sup> December when just over 2 million tonnes were received. During that time Esperance

received 870,000 tonnes, with a daily average of 28,000 tonnes and a best day of 39,000 tonnes, or 600 truck loads. On the best day for the port zone as a whole 92,400 tonnes were received, delivered by 1424 trucks. Cascade, West River, Shark Lake, Beaumont and Munglinup recorded their highest receipts to date.

As these volumes unfolded it became evident that CBH requires even more firepower at some sites, especially Mt Madden, Cascade and Grass Patch. The importance of harvest shipping to CBH's management of terminal storage was also a challenge. One of the reasons was a 120,000 reduction in shipping from the port in November, compared to last year, which meant that CBH's capacity was stretched.

Snails caused some concern in canola this harvest and it's important that we continue to seek effective implementation of control measures on farm as receipt standard changes for snails in canola are likely to be on the way.

Some changes to the way in which chemical applications are declared was introduced this harvest and it's something CBH is committed to keep working together with industry on to make sure we continue to meet the requirements of the market.

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# Barley headloss results now available



By Aidan Sinnott (SEPWA Project Officer) and Bill Sharp (SEPWA Trials Coordinator)

The Barley Headloss project has utilised data from the SEPWA barley variety trials to quantify actual on farm head loss characteristics of barley production in the south coast region. SEPWA's unique reach of production environments and historic data collection has enabled a far wider examination for genetic by environment (GxE) factors than previous industry research.



The project was designed to span 2 harvest seasons (2015 and 2016) as well as utilize historic SEPWA trial data to create a head loss by variety risk matrix. This information has been collated into an online webpage which all growers in WA can access. This will enhance growers' agronomic strategy for their barley crop management.

The results of this project span over the seasons between 2010-2016. Comparing varieties at various locations is a difficult exercise in terms of a direct comparison, as many seasonal and agronomic effects of one rainfall zone may or may not be present in another. Varieties were separated by rainfall zone for the purpose of improving the accuracy of the GxE (genetic x environment) matrix when assessing mainstream barleys. Varieties which did not have more than 2 years of data were excluded from the variety matrix.

Over different numbers of trial sites each year, fallen barley heads were counted at harvest and calculated per metre squared. This was extrapolated out to yield per hectare, thus assessing yield losses at harvest time due to headloss by variety.

The overall results showed the three varieties which were the best and the three varieties which performed the worst across the different rainfall zones. The varieties which had the best overall head retention were Rosalind, La Trobe and Spartacus. The varieties which had the worst head retention were Henley, Gairdner, and Buloke.

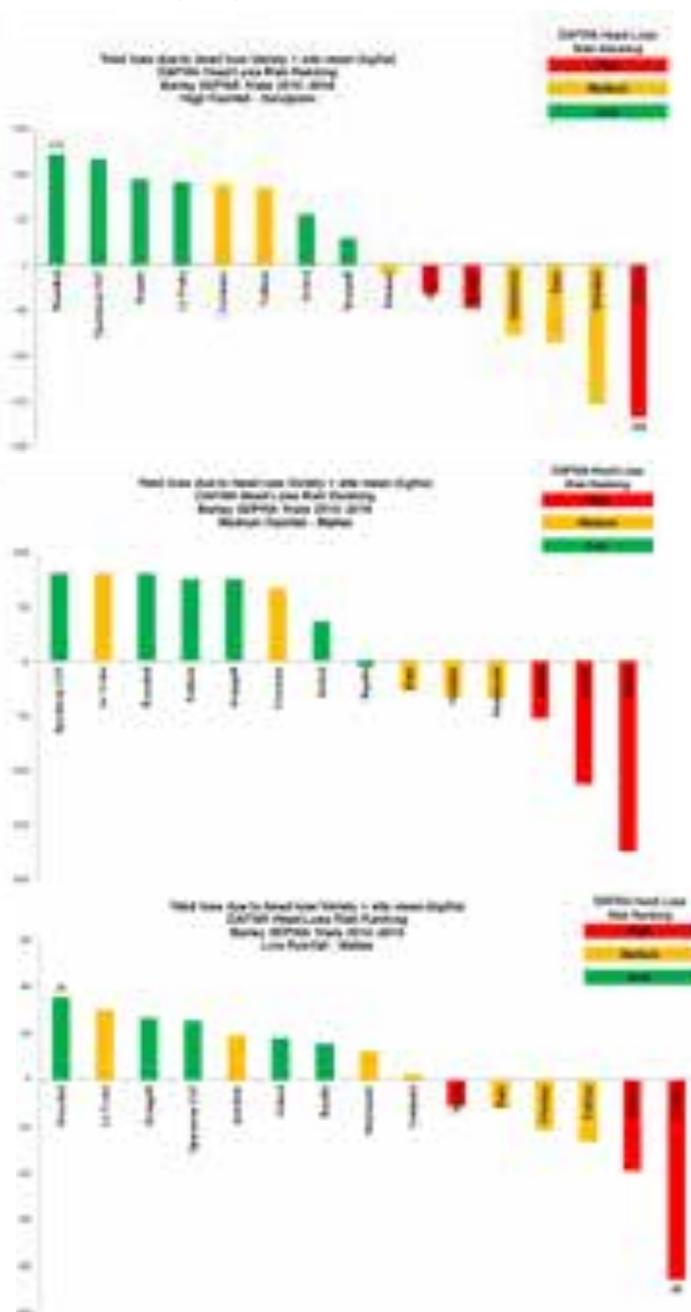
The results from the Low rainfall areas showed that Rosalind, La Trobe, and Granger were the best varieties for head retention and Henley, Buloke and Fathom were the worst (in order of ranking). In the medium rainfall zone, the best varieties for head retention were Spartacus, La Trobe, and Rosalind, and Buloke, Henley, and Scope were the worst. In the High rainfall zone, Rosalind, Spartacus, and Baudin were the best varieties for head retention, while Henley, Gairdner, and Bass were the worst.

This data was summarized on two graphs, one which shows overall results in kg/ha losses of variety in order of the best

performing variety, in terms of head retention, to the worst (see Figure 1).

Interestingly, the results were not always in line with DAFWA rankings for particular varieties, which suggests that more work could be done in this area to improve the methods of assessment and consistency of analysis. The other graph illustrates this more clearly, as it places the order of DAFWA head retention rankings in order on the x axis (see Figure 2).

The remaining graphs for headloss can be found on the following webpage: <http://www.sepwa.org.au/projects/headloss-barley-project>



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# 2017 SEPWA Trials

Bill Sharp, SEPWA Trials Co-ordinator

**Various breeding and commercial companies have been approached again this year and were asked to indicate where their particular varieties may be best suited within the Esperance Port Zone in order to maximise the value of SEPWA Trials.**

## Wheat Trials

In 2017 there will again be 13 wheat variety trials to be sown throughout the Esperance Port Zone. Varieties to be included this year are Scepter (a Mace replacement - Mace as the major parent) which performed very well in SEPWA wheat variety trials in 2016 and together with Mace are the benchmark for new wheat varieties. New varieties from Elders Plant Genetics include Tungsten (protein accumulator),

Cobalt and Tenfour. Other varieties to be included are Cutlass, Bremer, Longreach Trojan, and older varieties such as Yitpi, Emu Rock, Corack and Eagle Rock.

## Long Season Wheat Trials

There will again be three long season wheat trials which are CBH sponsored and located at Condingup, Hopetoun and Wittenoom Hills. The trials are looking at early sowing of long season winter wheat varieties in the mid to high rainfall areas sown in early April and on a variety of soil types looking for high yields with protein around 9.5%.

Varieties include winter and spring wheats such as Manning, DS Pascal which performed well in 2016,

Kittyhawk, RAC2341 and Zircon with Revenue (a red wheat) being the control. Scepter and LongReach Trojan will also be included again to compare early sowings. The SEPWA wheat variety trials are also located at these sites to compare yield of varieties sown in the normal sowing window.

## Barley Trials

There are 10 SEPWA Barley variety trials to be sown in 2017. New varieties include Planet (SeedForce), Maltstar and Brewstart (Elders Plant Genetics). Older varieties will include La Trobe, Flinders, Scope, Fathom, Compass, Rosalind and Spartacus Clearfield (La Trobe type).

## Oat Trials

There has been some interest again in oats and SEPWA is planning 3 sites at Beaumont, Grass Patch and Lake King. Varieties include a new variety SV03-3198 Oats (a Mitika replacement) and other varieties including Durack, Williams, Yallara, Swan, Winjardie, Pallinup and Mitika. The main aim of the oat trials is to ascertain if the EPZ can produce enough high yielding quality oats suitable for milling.

## Canola Trials

In 2017 there are 9 Canola sites targeted comprising 6 Triazine and 3 Roundup variety trials.

Like wheat and barley there are not many new canola varieties within the SEPWA trials with the number of varieties down from 2016. Varieties to be included in trials are listed below.

Information on new varieties is currently being sought from breeding programs and seed companies and farmers will be updated on the SEPWA web page and at the Spring Field Days.

The SEPWA webpage [www.sepwa.com.au](http://www.sepwa.com.au) will be constantly updated and will include a brief agronomical description of varieties once the information is available from the various companies.

For further information, contact SEPWA Trials Co-ordinator, Bill Sharp on 0428 711 375.



ROUNDUP - READY		TRIAZINE	
Company	Variety	Company	Variety
NuSeed	GT 53	SeedForce	Turbine TT
Bayer	IH51RR	SeedForce	Ignite
Bayer	InVigor R 5520P	NuSeed	T103
Bayer	3/4 Series - NEW	NuSeed	T085
Pacific	Hyola 404 RR	NuSeed	T092
Pacific	Hyola 600 RR	NuSeed	ATR TM Bonito
<b>ROUNDUP - READY/ TRIAZINE NuSeed</b>		NuSeed	ATR TM Mako
		ATR TM Wahoo	
Company	Variety	Pacific	Hyola 559TT
Bayer	3000 RT	Pacific	Hyola 650TT
Pacific	Hyola 525 RT	Pacific	Hyola 450TT
Pacific	Hyola 725 RT	Bauer	InVigor T 4510- TT

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# Case

## Peter & Tamara Kuiper

Kuibrook Farms,  
West River

*Operation at a glance*

**Farm area:** 4300ha

**Soil types:** Undulating duplex sand/  
gravel/clay

**Annual rainfall:** 420mm

**Enterprises:** Canola/wheat/barley/  
pasture; 150 breeding cattle, 1500  
Dohne ewes

**History:** Parents cleared farm in the  
1960s; Peter has been working on it  
since 1997

Like many farmers around him, Peter Kuiper mapped a section of his family's West River farm using the EM38 over a decade ago, but then wasn't quite sure what to do next with his new-found data. They didn't have machinery that could work with VRT and even when they did later, there wasn't a local contractor that could spread gypsum using the technology.

Around 1000ha of the farm was mapped and deep core soil tested, costing the business a large amount of money back then. "We just didn't do anything with the information after that, probably also mostly due to financial constraints following some lean years," he said.

Due to the Kuipers' proximity to the coast, yield maps often didn't truly reflect the potential of their soils because they usually had highly variable seasonal conditions impacting on yields. Peter said getting machinery to correspond with the program was also expensive and uploading software always takes longer than anticipated.

## Variable rate technology (VRT) is useful if you start simply and work from there

SEPWA last month published a case study booklet on Variable Rate Technology (VRT) initiated by the RCSN groups in the Esperance and Geraldton Port zones.

'Variable Rate Technology: Maximising returns for Western Australian grain producers' outlines how growers are implementing this rapidly evolving technology and offers practical tips for adoption.

The typical approaches to VRT by grain growers are either to use a consultant to set up a system, or to 'dabble' on their own - which can often be time consuming and stressful.

The new VRT booklet explores a range of VRT systems that are being adopted locally, at a range of complexity levels, and highlights the benefits of keeping things simple.

It also includes practical advice from a range of advisers and specialists.

To read the book online go to: 'Technology: Maximising returns for Western Australian grain producers' at <https://grdc.com.au/RCSN-VariableRateTech> and <http://www.rcsn.net.au/publications>.

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# Study

But the hardest drawback for the Kuipers is their distance to service centres. They are 250km from Esperance and Albany, so getting technical support on the farm is often not cost effective (travel could usually add at least \$500 onto a bill).

However, in recent years, with a run of good seasons and the purchase of another farm, the Kuipers have revisited variable rate practices. At this stage it is just for varying gypsum applications which had until recently been applied at blanket rates.

The EM38 maps have helped with choosing zones for gypsum rates on the original property, but Peter didn't want to EM38 the entire farm due to the cost, since he only needed to work out the best areas (clays) to apply gypsum.

"We just needed to know where clays and the sandy gravelly soils were so we could adjust our gypsum rates accordingly," Peter said. "Really the maps are useless unless you have invested in the machinery to do the work, although the maps were interesting to compare for the heavier soils."

The Kuipers found that the biomass maps often don't correlate since the season has such a big impact on yield. Gypsum was just basic to work with. "If you have clay and it's gypsum responsive, then it's a simple to know where to put it."

Peter just worked out rates of gypsum into 4, 2 and 0.5t/ha zones – correlating to the three different soil types.

## LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

In 2016 the Kuipers purchased a drone and Peter said this kind of technology could have huge impacts on crop production in the future for varying applications such as herbicides, through the access of photo imagery.



Satellite imagery was also proving useful and provided cheap and effective means of getting a better perspective of the farm.

When the Kuipers purchased their new property they looked at Google Earth maps and one of the images showed the new property in subterranean clover and it was very easy to see the clay areas on the farm.

"We just drew circles around the clay areas on the satellite photo. We then jumped in the ute and spent around half a day driving around the property to check we got the areas right," Peter said.

Their rough map was then emailed to PTS's Julien Coles and he turned it into a digitised map. This map worked really well and cost the Kuipers less than \$1000 to have made.

"I don't have time to do this kind of stuff myself, it's much easier to outsource, especially with the better costings these days," Peter said.

"Getting a VRT map sorted can take me a whole day, but Julien can do it in a couple of hours. The software is getting more user-friendly and eventually there will be an easy app to use too, I hope. I think most farmers just want simple-to-use stuff because we have so many other things going on and we just forget how it all works one year to the next with everything else we do now."

## LESSONS LEARNT

Just drawing a rough map of soil zones from the Google Earth photo was better than doing a blanket application rate for gypsum.

Getting a file off a desktop that syncs with machinery can sometimes be enough of a challenge; so outsourcing technicians for this kind of work is still the best option when as a farmer you are time-poor already.

When purchasing machinery and being so far from a service centre, you have to make sure you have good back-up service to get more PA-focused, which is tricky.

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# SETTLING THE DUST

A book to document the learnings from the 2015 Esperance Fires by farmers affected has been printed and is available for download on the SEPWA website.

“Settling the Dust – lessons learnt from the 2015 Esperance fires” was funded by GRDC to capture the work done after the fires to reclaim the land for others who may need it.

SEPWA is grateful to the farmers who participated in the case studies: Dave and Linda Campbell, Darren and Kelly Curnow, Greg and Donna Curnow, Nigel and Lynne Norwood, Brendan (Shorty) and Rhonda Morcombe, Theo and Sheila Oorschot, Christian (Wags) Siemer, David and Katherine Vandenberghe and the Vermeersch family.

200 copies of the book have also been printed and if you would like a copy, then please contact Niki Curtis at [eo@sepwa.org.au](mailto:eo@sepwa.org.au) or phone 0447 908 311.



## Case Study

**Christian (Wags) Siemer**  
Taliska, Scaddan

**Farm area:** 6000ha total crop

**Crop rotation:** wheat/barley/canola

**Area burnt:** 400ha of standing crop and 1000ha of stubble (15km of fencing)



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## The fire

By the time the fire reached Chris (known to everyone as Wags) Siemer's Taliska property, located 15km to the east of Scaddan, the wind was starting to change direction and get cooler. Paddocks in crop and stubble burnt to within 100m of his house and took many days to extinguish. Repeated flare-ups in the neighbouring Truslove Nature Reserve, which had been severely burnt, were fuelled by smouldering logs which kept being fanned by constant and changing strong winds.

When the fire first hit late that Tuesday afternoon, most of his employees had been sent to town. Wags was intent on sheltering in a cellar as it went through, but was talked into evacuating by his employees and so he reluctantly fled to Grass Patch. "I fully expected to lose everything as I drove away", he said "It was one of the worst feelings returning a few hours later and not knowing what we were coming back to."

Fortunately, farmers from further south east (Neridup) had been watching the fires' progress from a hill and when the wind changed direction (from west to south), pushing the path of the fire away from their farms, they were able to move in and save the three houses under threat on Taliska.

Since all power, mobile and phone services were defective from midday, communication was only by two way radio. The Neridup fire brigade farmers were situated between the two fires (Merivale and Scaddan) and they spent another 4 days and nights mopping up and fighting repeated flare ups of both fires. Many of the volunteer fire fighters spent the nights fighting the mallee fire (putting in fire breaks and extinguishing embers, while it was cooler and less windy) and then moved to fighting the coastal fire around Merivale during the day.

Wags, along with family, employees and friends stayed and protected the property until Sunday – five days later – when rain and cold weather allowed them to return to harvest. He was helped by the volunteer brigades on and off also.



## The recovery

To stabilise the paddocks, Wags chose to deep rip using a Bednar delver to bring up clay from around 40cm, this helped to stop wind erosion. He also used a Bednar Swifter Disc 18m wide cultivator on some of the paddocks that were clayed and others that were delved.

Wags said he was surprised at how little the weeds or burnt grain germinated; he had expected to get cover from what was left on the paddocks, especially with such consistent summer rainfall. "It goes to show just how hot the fire was," he said.

What weeds did germinate, he let go rampant until autumn.

In hindsight, he thinks he probably should have seeded barley, like some of his neighbours did, to achieve better ground cover. However, due to the ensuing mild, wet summer, there was little erosion.

Blowing top soil had formed mounds on unburnt stubble sections in the paddock. These were spread back out prior to seeding. "We did lose some top soil, but I don't think it was very much," Wags said.

Seeding in 2016 was done early as soon as soil moisture was right and seeding rates for canola on the burnt paddocks was increased, along with Nitrogen.

"We have been amazed at how well the canola has gone on the burnt paddocks," Wags said. Yields have actually been looking higher on the areas burnt – even though the seeding and nitrogen applications have been the same." Wags said the plants were noticeably taller and had germinated better. Disease and pests had also been noticeably less on the burnt country.

## Lessons learnt

- Harvest the crop between burnt and unburnt areas to ensure there's no contamination.
- Take all flush caps off rainwater tanks and clean them out after a fire.
- Deep rip the sandier country and sow it for cover. This is a better long-term solution as the ripping has lasting effects.
- Do a germination test on the burnt grain left on the ground so you know what you are dealing with.
- Sow paddocks that were burnt with standing crop on, to the same crop the next year to avoid contamination from last year's seed (wheat on wheat). You may think it won't germinate – but some probably will.
- When seeding canola, go early in moisture to get good coverage. Sow around 1kg/ha more and sow on the heavy country because of the increased wind erosion risk.

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## Rural net – regional discussions on improving our telecommunications.

**This project is funded directly by SEPWA. This issue of data access is an on-going pain for many in the Esperance Port Zone and is seen as an important issue by the SEPWA Executive Committee.**

Some of you may have noticed some NBN workers around the town of Esperance in the past few weeks as they install some new optic fibres. This probably is leaving a few of you asking if there will ever be any change in the “on farm” data connection level given the NBN delivery outside of town is tagged at Sky Muster Satellite only?

In recognition of this, SEPWA is currently involved in a WA regional group called Rural Net. Rural Net was formed with multiple people from across regional WA who recognised the challenges for regional business to connect digitally.

The goal of the group is to facilitate world class internet services for regional WA.

The group consists of grower groups, local government, industry service providers, GRDC, CBH, DAFWA and development commission staff who have all until now been independently pushing for change in regional digital connection. Just prior to the state election the group was very positive around the previous government’s commitment to \$22million to regional data connections. While the new government is still settling in, so far initial consultations are positive that the theme of digital support for regional business (in particular agriculture) remains a priority.

The immediate goal of the group is to set out a framework that will allow competitive regional wholesale rates of

data. With this in place, local wireless connections can then be constructed that are geographically specific to the user density and topography. While these types of private wireless networks are relatively new in regional WA, they are common in the Eastern states and other regional locations across the world. It is anticipated that a co-investment model will be looked at for these wireless connections, with users and other regional stakeholders all being part of a local network for internet connection. This may include stakeholders such as CBH which has significant regional infrastructure, for example grain elevator towers at receival sites.

For more information on Rural Net please call Nigel Metz – 0447631115 (if you have signal).



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# GRASS ROOTS FUND - MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN YOUR COMMUNITY

**Community gardens, agricultural shows, centenaries, festivals and sporting events – these are just some of the projects that CBH is proud to support through its Grass Roots Fund.**

As a grower owned co-operative, it's part of our DNA to support the farming communities in which we operate, helping to ensure the sustainability of those communities, and the grain industry as a whole.

Since 2014, our Community Investment Program has invested around \$1.5 million annually into our regional communities through sponsorships, scholarships and local funding grants.

The Grass Roots Fund was set up to provide funding directly to our diverse range of community groups and organisations who contribute to the health and vitality of their communities.

In the Esperance Zone, we've provided over \$30,000 in grants over the last two years, including the Newton Condingup Football Club kitchen renovation; Scadden fire shed; Festival of the Wind event; Hopetoun Summer Festival and Bush Dance and the Munglingup Easter Campdraft.

Grants of up to \$5,000 are available through the fund and applications are assessed against a set of criteria such as contributing to the vitality, well-being and safety of our communities; promoting a positive image of the agricultural industry and contributing to the development of future community and industry leaders.

The next round for the Grass Roots Fund will open in May, so if you have an event or project coming up, be sure to start getting your application ready. You can submit your application online when the next round opens, and all the criteria can be found on our website. For further information or to talk to someone about your application, contact our Community Relations Advisor, Kate Dewar on (08) 9237 9818 or email [kate.dewar@cbh.com.au](mailto:kate.dewar@cbh.com.au)

[www.cbh.com.au/cbh-community/grass-roots-fund](http://www.cbh.com.au/cbh-community/grass-roots-fund)

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# Elders reward loyal clients through AgriClime

Last season, Elders Esperance, WA signed up one of their loyal clients to Syngenta's cash-back program, AgriClime.

AgriClime offers eligible cereal growers a 15% cash-back on their investment in Syngenta technology if rainfall does not meet a threshold level over an elected period during the season.

Carl Johnstone, Farm Supplies Sales Representative at Elders Esperance was really pleased with their involvement in the program and their grower even more so, having received a cash-back last season.

"It enabled us to provide a value add service to our loyal clients as well as offer money back to our growers," Mr Johnstone said.

Since launching country-wide in 2016, over 420 growers have registered for AgriClime, covering in excess of 400,000 hectares.

AgriClime is designed to help shoulder the risk of low rainfall periods with cereal growers. As an example, see Figure 1, which shows that Esperance growers registered for AgriClime during this period would have received a cash-back in 2006 and 2014.

Registration for AgriClime is free of charge, however eligibility requirements apply. To be eligible, growers must spend at least \$50 (inc gst) per hectare on select Syngenta products across a minimum of 300 hectares.

Qualifying products include any purchases made of the following brands between September 2016 and October 2017: Amistar Xtra®, Axial®, Boxer Gold®, Dual Gold®, Karate Zeon®, Moddus® Evo, Uniform®, Spray.Seed®, Talinor®, and/or Vibrance®.

To find out more go to the Syngenta Australia website. Registrations close July 30, 2017.

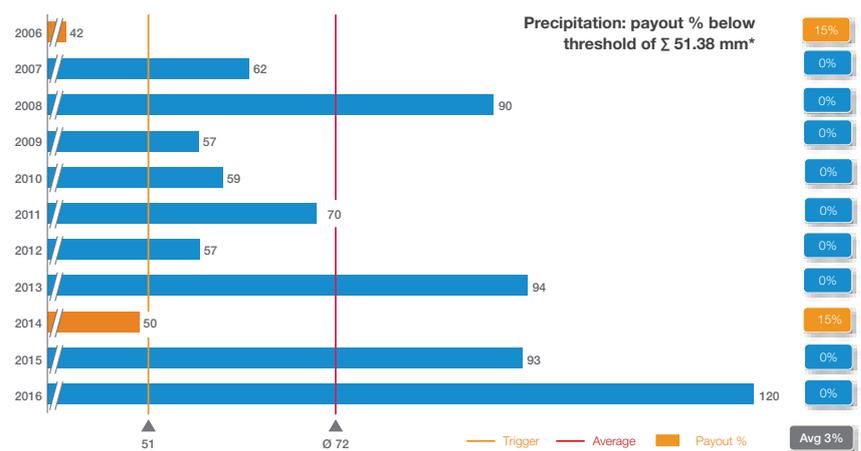


Carl Johnstone (middle right) with his colleagues at Elders Esperance, WA and Syngenta Sales Representative, Brian Staines (middle left).

Figure 1. Trigger graph for Esperance growers 2006-2016.

## AgriClime historical payout Esperance WA

Grid: -33.75; 116.75 / Risk Period: 01.08. – 29.09. (60 days)



Syngenta is a leading agriculture company helping to improve global food security by enabling millions of farmers to make better use of available resources. Through world class science and innovative crop solutions, our 28,000 people in over 90 countries are working to transform how crops are grown. We are committed to rescuing land from degradation, enhancing biodiversity and revitalizing rural communities. To learn more visit [www.syngenta.com](http://www.syngenta.com) and [www.goodgrowthplan.com](http://www.goodgrowthplan.com). Follow us on Twitter® at [www.twitter.com/Syngenta](https://twitter.com/Syngenta)

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# Currency to dictate Aussie grain prices

**Western Australian grain growers have been told to “watch their dollar carefully”, as currency movements are set to have the biggest bearing on Australian grain prices next season and beyond, according to US grains expert Dan Basse.**

In Australia recently as part of Rabobank’s Visiting Experts Program, Mr Basse has been forecasting US and world agricultural price trends for more than three decades.

In a “world awash with grain”, Mr Basse said Australian prices will be largely dictated by the value of the Australian dollar.

“Over the past three years we have seen the Australian dollar fall by around 24 per cent against the US dollar, and it has been this currency shift that has helped underpin Australian grain grower revenues and incomes,” he said.



Dan Basse

And the Australian dollar is expected to depreciate further over the next couple of years, he said, as the US dollar looks set to remain in a bullish phase as the United States raises interest rates and lowers the corporate tax rate.

Mr Basse said this will help underpin Australian grain prices in a global grains market that is set to remain oversupplied in the short to more medium term.

“There are no longer ‘levers that can be pulled’ to return balance to the global grains market, which remains burdened by record wheat, corn and soybean stocks,” he said.

“In years gone by, we saw low grain prices and low profitability essentially correct itself by the EU and US reducing acreage. However changes to US farm income support and EU Cap reforms ensure this is no longer the case.”

The Black Sea and South America have also “changed the global grains landscape”, he said, with Russia, once the largest importer of wheat, now establishing itself as the world’s largest exporter.

“If the Russian ruble stays weak and the economic incentives to increase production remain, Russia’s potential is huge,” he said. “They also have huge agronomic potential, with their yields lagging those in the US by some 40 per cent.”

On the demand side, Mr Basse said world wheat trade remains flat with the 1.8 per cent annual increase in global grain demand met by the trend increase in world crop yields, without cultivating additional acres.

With global grain demand previously driven by biofuel demand and the livestock sector, he said future grain demand growth will need to come

from new biofuel policy direction or expanding world livestock herds.

Mr Basse said increased demand from expanding world livestock herds might come from India or Africa, as China was currently self-sufficient in grain.

“Back in 2014/15, China imported one out of every five million tonnes of grain that were traded in the world,” he said. “But now, there is a real possibility that China could become a net exporter of corn by 2018/19.”

In a global grains sector facing so many headwinds, Mr Basse said a supply-shock will only have a short-term effect on the market.

“Historically, every seven to 14 years we have seen a significant weather event drive a rally in world grains markets, however the crop woes of the EU over the last two years or last spring’s damage to South America’s crops haven’t eased the supply pressure,” he said.

That said, the world is facing a short-term shortage of high protein wheat due to flooding in France and Germany, which has been positive for Australian growers.

“Millers are in search of higher quality wheat, and this has boded well for Australia’s exports of prime wheat, however this shortage is expected to be alleviated when the northern hemisphere crop comes back online in June,” he said.

Mr Basse founded AgResource Company in 1987, with his firm’s research sought after around the world by farmers, processors, wheat millers, food companies and trading companies.

To listen to Dan Basse discuss the latest outlook for grains in a Rabobank podcast click [here](#).

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# upcoming events

**May 8**

**EFOM Forum**

Niki Curtis – 0447 908 311

**July 28**

**Grass Patch Field Walk**

Niki Curtis – 0447 908 311

**August 11**

**SEPWA Ladies Day**

Niki Curtis – 0447 908 311

## Your SEPWA Team

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