



MEDIA RELEASE –Monday 5th December, 2016

SEPWA set to assess stubble management options

Excess crop residue can cause serious problems for new season crop establishment. Many farmers resort to the age old practice of burning stubble to overcome the issue but in recent years a number of growers have purchased specific equipment to manage crop residues.

The South East Premium Wheat Growers' Association (SEPWA) is set to undertake an independent farm scale assessment of the performance of various machinery options for crop residue management currently available to WA grain growers.

The project, which will be run over two years and focus on the Esperance Port Zone, has received funding to the value of \$90,000 through the Council of Grain Grower Organisations (COGGO) Research Fund.

SEPWA Projects Officer, Nigel Metz said in recent years there has been a number of tillage, incorporation or slashing machines introduced to help speed up the breakdown and decomposition of crops residues.

He said excess crop residue can build up in seeding machinery and can cause uneven seed placement, poor germination, delayed or inefficient sowing due to stoppages and ineffective application of soil acting herbicides.

“These factors can combine to cause significant yield penalties and hence loss in farm profitability.

“While the traditional option is to burn crop residue, it is the least preferred option as the moisture conservation and soil erosion benefits of stubble retention are well recognised as being key factors for recent productivity gains.

He said to date there has been minimal studies on the effectiveness of crop residue management machinery within Western Australia.

“This project will address the information gap in the farming system and provide an objective comparison of crop residue management machinery and assist growers to make informed decisions as to which machine is best suited to local conditions,” Nigel said.

SEPWA will work with several local growers to assess the mechanical functionality and overall effect on trash flow come autumn seeding and assess the strengths and weaknesses of each machine.

Machinery options include Twister, Trash Cutter, Swifter-disc, Speed Tiller, Joker, and various makes of slashers and some of this equipment will be put to the test.

The project will span over two seasons and include field trials and assessments of the net result of trash flow, as different summer autumn conditions can dramatically effect crop residue decomposition.

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The overall findings will be compiled into an information resource for WA grain growers to draw on for future reference in relations to crop residue management and it will be available for the 2019 season.

For further information contact, SEPWA Projects Officer Nigel Metz on 0447 631 115.

Photo caption- Various machinery options for stubble management will be independently evaluated by SEPWA to help grain growers make post-harvest management decisions beyond the fall-back position of burning.

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