



SAGIT Research Snapshot

MSF1201: Farmer groups to focus on innovative practices

FAST FACTS

The details

Start: July 1, 2012

Finish: June 30, 2014

Project participants: Gemma Walker (Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc), Richard Saunders and Leighton Pearce (Dodgshun Medlin), with support from Rachel May (Natural Resources SA Murray-Darling Basin).

The problem

Issues constraining grain production and practices aimed at improving participation and land management outcomes in the SA Mallee needed to be extended.

The research

Facilitated groups gave farmers the opportunity to learn more about projects in the Mallee, latest technology and practical management programs and strategies to improve profitability.

BACKGROUND

Farming is complex and requires grain growers to constantly update their skills and knowledge of practices to make them more productive, profitable and sustainable. Farming groups are an important source of information.

RESEARCH AIMS

- Improve productivity and profitability of South Australian Mallee farmers through greater adoption by farm businesses of research outcomes.

In a nutshell

Farmer groups in the South Australian Mallee addressed locally relevant issues and developed facilitated activities to improve productivity and profitability.

- Increase farmers' knowledge of locally-relevant methods of maintaining or improving productive capacity.
- Establish links between agribusinesses to develop relationships between farmers, researchers and extension agents.
- Strengthen agribusiness networks within the Mallee to help farmers learn from other farmers.

IN THE FIELD

The project started in 2012 with eight farmer groups wanting to address locally-relevant issues through workshops and field walks. The groups were Geranium, Karoonda, Partners in Grain-Bowhill, Loxton, Lowbank, Lameroo, Swan Reach/Nildottie and Wanbi/Copeville.

Topics varied according to each group:

- **Geranium and Upper South East** - variety performance and selection, pre-emergent herbicides, plant-back periods and rhizoctonia.
- **Karoonda Young Farmers** - Evercrop project findings, variable rate applications, nitrogen and phosphorus fertiliser strategy results, and SA Mallee frost trials.
- **Partners in Grain - Bowhill** - herbicides and their use, crop nutrition, crop rotations and varieties.

- **Loxton** - variety performance and selection. Pre-emergent herbicides, plant-back periods, variable rate applications and rhizoctonia.
- **Lowbank** – the future for herbicides, nutrition strategies, rhizoctonia.
- **Lameroo** - variety performance and selection, pre-emergent herbicides, plant-back periods, rhizoctonia.
- **Swan Reach/Nildottie** - variety performance and selection, pre-emergent herbicides, plant-back periods, variable rate applications and rhizoctonia.
- **Wanbi/Copeville** - seeder set-up, seeding rate and seed depth.

Projects were established to help farmers address specific research development and extension priorities identified during the workshops.



RESULTS

Speakers linked with projects were brought in at the request of farmers or as recommended by project consultants. As a result of the workshops and field walks, farmers were challenged, informed and updated on local cropping issues. The groups provided a conduit for the farmers' issues and challenges to be fed through to funding bodies.

Discussion regarding National Variety Trial outcomes in the Mallee informed farmers about variety performance and new varieties. A need for broad-scale legume variety trials was identified in order to implement outcomes from a crop sequencing project recently undertaken in the Mallee.

Future research and group investigation will focus on crop sequencing and rotations, new varieties, rhizoctonia, legumes for the Mallee, grass herbicide resistance and carbon farming.



VALUE FOR GROWERS

- Group activities provides a forum for learning and increasing understanding of issues and management options.
- Targeted training and workshops provide growers with exposure to new and existing tools and technology and provide contacts to access further information.
- Farming group activities increase networks between growers and give access to researchers and their projects.



Grant Yates, Southern Precision Agriculture, speaking to a group of growers at Parilla.

More information:

Stuart Putland
Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc
T: 03 5021 9106
M: 0427 219 103
E: stuart.putland@msfp.org.au

SAGIT DISCLAIMER: Any recommendations, suggestions or opinions contained in this communication do not necessarily represent the policy or views of the South Australian Grain Industry Trust (SAGIT). No person should act on the basis of the contents of this communication without first obtaining specific, independent, professional advice. The Trust and contributors to this communication may identify products by proprietary or trade names to help readers identify particular types of products. We do not endorse or recommend the products of any manufacturer referred to. Other products may perform as well as or better than those specifically referred to. SAGIT will not be liable for any loss, damage, cost or expense incurred or arising by reason of any person using or relying on the information in this communication. CAUTION: RESEARCH ON UNREGISTERED AGRICULTURAL CHEMICALS USE. Any research with unregistered pesticides or of unregistered products reported in this communication does not constitute a recommendation for that particular use by the authors or the author's organisations. All pesticide applications must accord with the currently registered label for that particular pesticide, crop, pest and region. Copyright © All material published in this communication is copyright protected and may not be reproduced in any form without written permission from SAGIT.