



## RESEARCH SUMMARY

### SPA119G

#### FAST FACTS

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##### PROBLEM

Precision agriculture offers farmers a triple benefit – productivity, environmental and social – but remains a complex technology to adopt.

##### PROJECT

SPAA delivered two annual symposia online and three major expo and symposia events to help educate growers and advisors.

##### PARTICIPANTS

SPAA: Dr Rachel Melland

##### DATES

Start: 1 July 2019

Finish: 30 June 2022

## SUPPORTING PREMIER PA EVENTS: PRECISION AG EXPOS AND SYMPOSIUMS

Precision agricultural technology remains a complex and competitive field. Society of Precision Agriculture Australia (SPAA) events bring together technology, experts and end users to provide advice and information.

Despite COVID interruptions, SPAA held annual in-person and online events to showcase the technology and its productivity, environmental and social benefits.

In-person events were the 2019 SPAA Symposium in Launceston, 2021 SPAA Expo in Loxton and the 2022 SPAA Expo & Symposium in Adelaide. 2020 and 2021 symposia were held online.

#### BACKGROUND

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Since 2001, SPAA has advocated and supported the adoption of precision technologies to support the efficiency and productivity of Australian farmers. SPAA has produced a wide range of resources and managed many projects in partnership with SAGIT, GRDC, AgriFutures and others.

However, hands-on and in-person events have always been a primary means of engaging farmers and advisors, allowing them to see the equipment first-hand, and hear from or speak to technology providers and subject matter experts.

#### RESEARCH AIMS

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The core objective of this project was to provide ongoing precision agriculture support and education for farmers and advisors, through major expos and symposia between 2019 to 2022

#### IN THE FIELD

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SPAA had planned a range of symposia and expos across South Australia and northwestern Victoria to help grain growers confidently adopt and optimise precision and digital agriculture technologies on their farms. Unfortunately, COVID-19 disrupted these plans. However, it was decided to press ahead with events wherever possible and so the annual SPAA Symposia for 2020 and 2021 were conducted online. This meant growers could still benefit from the knowledge and expertise of precision ag experts, including those based interstate or overseas.

The 2020 virtual symposium was held on 30 September and featured a keynote presentation from President of the International Society of Precision Agriculture Professor James Lowenberg-DeBoer, who spoke on the future of precision ag. Other presentations covered the eGrazor cattle monitor, using machine vision to map in-season nitrogen needs

and real-time air temperature mapping.

The 2021 Symposium was also held online and featured a substantial program including Dana Campbell from CSIRO on virtual fencing applications, updates on weed recognition technology, spatial mapping layers and yield mapping, plus grower presentations on managing variable soils, and incorporating technology and field trials into farm management.

In September 2021, with lockdowns and travel restrictions lifting, the SPAA Expo postponed from March was held in Loxton, SA. Updates were given on NVDI and VR technology plus the Mallee mesonet. Growers Joe Koch and Wade Nickolls shared their experiences with precision ag technology.

The 2022 Expo planned for March was unfortunately postponed due to the COVID Omicron outbreak. This event was eventually held as a combined Expo & Symposium at Adelaide Oval on 6 and 7 September 2022, with more than 100 attendees. This was the 25th SPAA Symposium and featured the SPAA 20th Anniversary Symposium Dinner, an extensive trade display, and symposium presentations covering a wide range of production sectors, perspectives and technologies.

## RESULTS

Attendance for all events was very satisfactory, with good levels of interest and engagement.

The 2020 virtual symposium attracted 130 registrations and some 70 attendees. The 2021 event gained 185 registrations and more than 100 attendees.

Recordings of both online symposia have been kept available on the SPAA YouTube channel, so growers and advisors can continue to view the content.

The 2021 Expo at Loxton gave Mallee grain producers an opportunity to learn more about the latest precision ag developments in their area, with close to 60 attending the event.

Following two years of COVID restrictions, the combined Expo & Symposium at Adelaide Oval in 2022 had a real sense of celebration, which was enhanced by on the Anniversary Dinner on 6 September. This event was shared by 70 people, while the overall Expo and Symposium attracting more than 100 delegates over the two days.

## VALUE FOR GROWERS

SPAA events help South Australian grain growers to better understand and implement the benefits of precision and digital agriculture technologies on their farms. Sharing this knowledge, encouraging communication and upskilling users in these technologies helps the industry achieve productivity gains and prepare for future requirements in digital record keeping, inputs and emissions accounting, managing constraints efficiently and profitably, and adopting more autonomous machinery.

### MORE INFORMATION:

Angelique McAvoy, Society of Precision Agriculture Australia

T: 0473 790 109

E: eo@spaa.com.au



**Top:** SPAA Symposium 2019, Launceston. **Above:** Adelaide Symposium, 2022.

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