

GRDCs Regional Cropping Solutions Network (RCSN) meeting for the Esperance Port Zone was held as part of an interstate trip to Canberra, in conjunction with Kwinana East port zone RCSN members. This was the first RCSN member meeting for 2018.

Meeting attendees included: Ben Hyde, Ryan Meldrum, Leon Bowman, Bevan Tuckett, Collin Penny, Andrew Fowler, Peter Daw, Kirk Jeitz, Tristan Cornwall, Nathan Mudie, Quenten Knight, Gemma Walker & Jules Alvaro (Western Panel), Jo Wheeler, Julianne Hill (Coordinator), Cindy Power, Brooke Heenan and Graham Mussell (Project Support). Apologies were received from Holly Miekjohn.

Esperance RCSN members toured a number of facilities on their three days in Canberra including GRDC head office; CSIRO Black Mountain; Parliament House; Department of Agriculture and Water Resources (including ABARES) and heard from key researchers working in RCSN identified high priority areas. They conducted their RCSN meeting on 7 February 2018 at CSIRO Black Mountain. RCSN members stayed at the Kurrajong Hotel for the duration of their stay.

At their RCSN member meeting, RCSN members considered and voted on all ideas that had been gathered from the five growers they liaise with prior to each meeting; as well as any other topical and high priority issues that they had considered since last meeting. The top 10 ranked issues are listed in the table below.

**TABLE 1: Summarised Top 10 areas that Esperance port zone RCSN members ranked highly as impacting heavily on growers profitability (those in bold were further developed with MAKATs undertaken).**

ID #	Idea	Area	Further expansion by RCSN members on top issues
<b>ESP1</b>	<b>Best practice nitrogen strategy</b>	<b>Nutrition</b>	<b>What should be the protein target? Matching right nitrogen amount and timing to seasonal conditions to achieve the right protein to marketing grain.</b>
<b>ESP2</b>	<b>Best practice nitrogen strategy</b>	<b>Nutrition</b>	<b>Improved understanding of N application timings and effect on yield and grain quality. Most efficient timings of N applications on yield + protein in cereals.</b>
<b>ESP3</b>	<b>Best practice nitrogen strategy</b>	<b>Innovation</b>	<b>In crop rapid nitrogen testing coupled with modelling to achieve yield and protein. Ground truth rapid field testing (tissue and soil).</b>
<b>ESP4</b>	<b>Soil constraints</b>	<b>Soils</b>	<b>Develop best practice packages to overcome subsoil constraints in different soil types across the EPZ by measuring the effects of the treatment over many subsequent years and publishing economic analysis.</b>
<b>ESP5</b>	<b>Soil constraints</b>	<b>Soils</b>	<b>Regional soil constraints forum in conjunction with grower groups. Provide update on the progress of the GRDC investment currently researching all aspects of sub soil constraints.</b>
<b>ESP6</b>	<b>Soil constraints</b>	<b>Genetic Technology</b>	<b>Develop crops better able to thrive in hostile subsoils</b>
ESP7	Glyphosate resistance	Crop protection	Strategies to manage glyphosate resistance particularly around crop desiccating of barley and canola.
<b>ESP8</b>	<b>Break-crop and legumes</b>	<b>Agronomy</b>	<b>Develop a suite of communication materials and extension activities to build the skills and knowledge of growers to provide knowledge, understanding and research on break crop legumes.</b>

ID #	Idea	Area	Further expansion by RCSN members on top issues
<b>ESP9</b>	<b>Break-crop and legumes</b>	<b>Agronomy</b>	<b>Agronomic field trials in the EPZ of all legumes on a range of soil types to evaluate alternative legume opportunities.</b>
ESP10	Canola agronomy packages	Agronomy	No high yielding agronomy package for canola in our medium and high rainfall zones. Relative poor performance of TT hybrid canola varieties compared to OP varieties.
ESP11	Summer Weeds	Crop protection	Blanket spray versus weed seeker costs to effectively control stemless thistles in both pastures and crops in EPZ. Effective management of stattice with chemicals in cropping and pasture phases in the EPZ. This is a huge issue in the mallee.
ESP12	Staff and HR	Agribusiness	On farm OHS and what we can do as farmers to improve the overall culture and attitude to OHS on farms.
ESP13	High Yielding Wheat	Agronomy	High yielding wheat package - varieties, fertiliser, fungicides, economics and risk.
ESP14	Business Management Decision making	Agribusiness	Farm management structures for taxation and succession. Best machinery replacement strategies. Simple interpretations of financial benchmarking data to help lift those not in the top 20%.
ESP15	Snails/Slaters/slugs/V egetable beetles/earwigs	Crop protection	Develop a better understanding of the ecology, management and eradication of different types of snails in cropping and pasture phases in the EPZ. Best practice for managing snails, monitoring and baiting. Heavy stubble loads have been increasing numbers of veggie beetles, slaters and earwigs while no registered products are controlling them.

Other issues were also brought up but were not as highly ranked; however all issues will continue to have presence at the RCSN discussion table and have been forwarded to the GRDC Western Panel for continued visibility as port zone related issues that may feed into existing or future initiatives.

**What Next?** All issues considered to be high ranking by the RCSN members will now be further defined; due diligence conducted on each area with regard to research conducted in the past, currently or in development (to avoid replication and to make best use of resources); and those areas which are still considered an issue will be further developed for possible project work. Also, vacancies that exist on the current RCSN have been readvertised with applications closing on 23 April 2018.

**Connect with Us.** GRDC now have a Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/theGRDC/](http://www.facebook.com/theGRDC/) (like us!) as well as a dedicated RCSN website – [www.rcsn.net.au](http://www.rcsn.net.au). Follow us on Twitter @Julianne\_Hill, or visit GRDC [www.grdc.com.au](http://www.grdc.com.au).

**The next meeting of the RCSN** will be on 25 July 2018 at Esperance (8am-5pm) with accommodation supplied for all RCSN members for the night of 24 July 2018 following Open Forums at:

- 23 July 2018 - Dunn Rock (2-6pm)
- 24 July 2018 - Munglinup (8-11am)
- 24 July 2018 - Condingup (2-6pm)

**Further queries?** Please call Julianne Hill (GRDC Regional Cropping Solutions Network Coordinator) on 0447 261 607 or email [regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com](mailto:regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com)