

GRDCs Esperance Regional Cropping Solutions Network (RCSN) met for the first closed meeting of 2019 as a combined meeting with the Kwinana West port zone. The meeting was held during 26-27 February 2019 in Perth and included a combined dinner on 26 February 2019 featuring Brad Bryant of Independent Grain Handlers who was the guest speaker, followed by a combined meeting on 27 February 2019 at the Quality Resort, Sorrento Beach. The following members attended the meeting: Ryan Meldrum, Leon Bowman, Holly Meiklejohn, Peter Daw, Kirk Jeitz, Tristan Cornwall, Nathan Mudie, Cameron Mudge, Joel Ebert, Monica Field and Lindsay Brownley with apologies from Quenten Knight and Andrew Fowler who were unable to attend the meeting. The meeting was also attended by a number of GRDC members and facilitated by Julianne Hill with RCSN project support by Cindy Power, Helen Ablett and Gilly Johnson.

The meeting included the following agenda items:

- Seasonal updates and reflections on 2018 harvest.
- Guest presentation by Richard Simonaitis, CEO of AEGIC.
- Updates on the progress of RCSN ideas since the last meeting and GRDC general update.
- Identification of port zone top issues, including reviewing data collected from the Summer Sesh forums held in Dongara and Busselton held in January 2019.
- Guest presentation by Kirk Jeitz on his farmer tour of Denmark, Estonia and Germany, along with a guest presentation and deep dive on the topic of trace elements and nitrogen by Dr Rowan Maddern of GRDC.
- Review by Julianne Hill on an innovative decision-making tool using MS Excel developed by Jerome Critch (Geraldton RCSN).
- Review, discussion and expansion on the port zone top issues, leading to the identification of the issues to be further developed using the MAKAT process (see below).
- NVT committee updates.
- Meeting evaluation, discussion of next meeting dates and formal meeting close at approximately 4.45 pm.

The Top 10 Issues and those that the RCSN further developed with a MAKAT (in bold) included:

- **Growers aren't applying nutrients in a timely manner to maximise profitability due to a lack of real time nutrient assessment tools**
- Long term results/comparison of harvest IWM methods and machines to ensure growers are using the most efficient and effective weed seed management
- Better weather forecasting that allows growers to play the season and be more flexible which would improve profitability and resilience
- There is still a lack of agronomy packages for profitable legumes (not just break crops).
- Crop choices for early planting in the lower rainfall areas to maximise season length and potential yield, with particular interest in heat and drought tolerant cereals.
- There are becoming fewer options of OP or hybrid canola varieties that suit our zone.
- An inability to source good quality staff and labour is constraining farm business profitability and expansion
- There is a need to engage young people in agriculture and to attract them into careers in the grains industry
- Compaction is still causing issues and growers are unsure what is the best option to address this.
- **Management of Green Peach aphid going forward to preserve our chemistries while achieving good control**
- **Deep ripping responses to ameliorate soil constraints are not well understood in the Lakes, Ravensthorpe and mallee areas of the Esperance port zone**

The selected topics for the MAKATs included (as per bold above):

- Growers aren't applying nutrients in a timely manner to maximise profitability due to a lack of real time nutrient assessment tools
- Management of Green Peach aphid going forward to preserve our chemistries while achieving good control
- Deep ripping responses to ameliorate soil constraints are not well understood in the Lakes, Ravensthorpe and mallee areas of the Esperance port zone

The Esperance members then completed three MAKATs on the above topics, using the online GroupMap tool which enabled capture of ideas and information against the MAKAT framework. The MAKAT framework is the methodology upon which projects are then taken forward for consideration by GRDC.

The next meeting for the Esperance RCSN will be 31 July 2019 in Esperance. For further details, contact the RCSN Facilitator Julianne Hill on 0447 261 607 or email regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com or visit www.grdc.com.au or www.rcsn.net.au