

GRDCs Esperance port zone Regional Cropping Solutions Network (RCSN) held three Open Meetings during the period 25-27 July 2017. The meetings were held at Cascades Hall (25 July @ 3pm); Salmon Gums Community Centre (26 July @ 7am); and Redman's, Hopetoun (27 July @ 3pm).

A total of 122 guests attended the three open meetings. Members of the general public were able to register for the Open Meetings at the RCSN website [www.rcsn.net.au](http://www.rcsn.net.au) and could submit an issue/idea should they be unable to attend. Those presenting were:

- Peter Roberts and Bill Ryan (Western Panel): GRDCs investment into frost agronomy and research (Cascades and Salmon Gums)
- Leigh Nelson (GRDC): GRDCs investment into crop protection (Hopetoun)
- Rebecca Smith (Living Farm) and Brenton Leske (DAFWA): Frost trial work and results (Cascades and Salmon Gums)
- Rick Horbury, Craig White & Matt Williss (Bayer): Statice, matricaria and other hard to control weeds (Salmon Gums)
- Jerome Critch (Planfarm): Nuffield presentation (Hopetoun)

The following Regional Cropping Solutions Network initiated project was also presented:

- Nick McKenna (Planfarm): Assessment of some harvest weed seed management options

Also in attendance were Esperance RCSN members. Online GroupMap technology was used to capture audience input. A key part of the open meeting was the opportunity for participants to share the top issues affecting their profitability. The aim of these discussions was to provide growers with direct input into the analysis of current local priorities affecting productivity and profitability to assist in the discussions relating to future projects by GRDC's RCSN and by GRDC's Western Panel and GRDC staff.

A number of projects have been put on the ground in the Esperance port zone through the RCSNs since 2011. Final reports are available online at the Online Farm Trials website, [www.farmtrials.com.au](http://www.farmtrials.com.au) or by contacting Julianne Hill, RCSN Coordinator.

All issues raised at the Open meetings at Cascades, Salmon Gums and Hopetoun were discussed by the RCSN members at their meeting held on 28 July 2017 in Hopetoun. The RCSN also added further issues after gaps were identified. All issues were ranked according to three main factors:

1. Is the idea/issue something that impacts on grower's profitability?
2. If work was conducted on the issue, would it deliver more value to growers?
3. And is the issue something that we can effect change upon?

**Table 1: Summary of areas of Interest raised at the Cascades (C); Salmon Gums (S); and Hopetoun (H) Open meetings**

Areas of interest raised at Esperance port zone Open meetings	Expanded areas of interest	RCSN member feedback and further action
<b>C, S, H: Soil constraints - gypsum, acidity, etc</b>	Soil constraints, with more research on nutrient depletion on different soil types especially lighter country. High magnesium soils and how they respond to gypsum; economics around gypsum and more strategic application of it; as well as how to identify soil types that will respond. Despite good soil moisture crops aren't fully utilising this moisture. Is this disease, nematodes or trace elements or all of the above? Soil acidity, non-wetting soils, hard pan, sodicity, boron. These issues are impacting on what crop types can be grown. What effect will ripping of shallower soil types have on the growth of crops? (Eg. maximising use of moisture on domed clays), Being able to do many pH tests fast to get a good map that is accurate so we can focus lime etc to the right place.	Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. The RCSN identified this as an issue impacting on profitability however noted that much of this work is being covered in a current GRDC tender which closed in July; and in current work being conducted under the GRDC Soils constraints investments.

Areas of interest raised at Esperance port zone Open meetings	Expanded areas of interest	RCSN member feedback and further action
<b>C, S, H: Staff and retention</b>	Employment and retention of staff- visa requirements haven't been updated and farm workers not classed as a job such as with jobs such as mechanic etc. Human resource management. Dealing with the limited return on investment through training of backpacker/short term staff. No opportunity to have them back for a second seeding/harvest Retention, remuneration, attraction. Dealing with multiple award systems.	Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. The RCSN identified this as an issue however felt that much of this was outside the scope of GRDC but wanted to ensure that it was raised as an issue within GRDC.
<b>C, S, H: Summer and Hard to kill weeds</b>	Weeds - understanding the suite of tools to manage hard to control weeds such as stemless thistle, marshmallow, statice, fleabane, caltrop, doublegee, onion weed, portulaca, melons, ryegrass, prickly lettuce and other problematic summer weeds. Look at residual herbicide options.	Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. The RCSN identified this as an issue impacting on profitability over most years, however noted that much of this work is being covered by the bodies such as Bayer, and AHRI and did not further develop this issue at this time.
<b>H, C, S: Waterlogging</b>	<b><i>Waterlogging and management in the Esperance area. Ways to improve oxygen availability. Waterlogging, drainage tools to decrease waterlogging in soils and the effect of deep ripping on waterlogging (including consideration of ways to reduce salt incursions). Better crop varieties that grow/can handle waterlogged soils.</i></b>	<b><i>Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. RCSN members ranked this highly and further developed this issue.</i></b>
<b>H, C: Sclerotinia</b>	Sclerotinia control - Better decision-making tools, particularly in reference to early infections, and better disease resistance. What levels are in our paddocks and how do we know when to spray or take other action?	Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. The RCSN identified this as an issue heavily impacting on profitability over many years, however noted that much of this work is being covered by the current long term GRDC investment into canola disease, as well as other investments by Bayer and DAFWA.
<b>H, S, C: Early sowing</b>	<b><i>Early sowing varieties to enable us to capture advantages of longer growing season and early sowing opportunities, hyper-yielding winter cereal agronomy. Winter wheats suited to the area and different crop types. With these earlier seeding opportunities comes the need to know more around herbicide and fungicide options.</i></b>	<b><i>Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. RCSN members ranked this highly and further developed this issue.</i></b>
<b>H, S, C: Glyphosate on everything - alternatives?</b>	<b><i>Lack of glyphosate alternatives. We are growing glyphosate resistance in ryegrass. Limited options available and we want to know what options we do have. Is Paraquat our last tool. Strong need to educate people about using glyphosate wisely so that we do not lose it as a weed management option. Want to see more work on sow thistle and it's chemical resistance status.</i></b>	<b><i>Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. RCSN members ranked this highly and further developed this issue.</i></b>
<b>H, S, C: Legumes</b>	<b><i>Legume choices to improve quality of the crop rotation. Pulse agronomy. Legume choices for shallow clay soils. Early breeding programs in the Esperance port zone for lentils. Work on April sowing of lentils and early generation screening of lentils suited to April sowing. What are the best (profitable) rotations for this area?</i></b>	<b><i>Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. RCSN members ranked this highly and further developed this issue.</i></b>

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<b>H, S, C: Snails, Slugs and slaters</b>	<b>Hard to kill insects including slaters, vegetable beetles, slugs and snails. Few registered chemical options to control them. They are also more prevalent than most realise. What is the impact of lime and gypsum applications. Is there a possibility of BT canola? Biosecurity measures need to be taken by everyone to reduce spread, particularly machinery/product movement. African black beetle also increasing as a pest in cereals. How do we control them?</b>	<b>Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. RCSN members ranked this highly and further developed this issue.</b>
<b>H, S: Ryegrass</b>	Identification of ryegrass especially hard seeded ryegrass varieties. AHRI are undertaking surveys which need to be understood and extended to growers. Is it changing due to early plantings.	Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting, however RCSN members felt that much of this was being covered by AHRI and other GRDC investments currently.
<b>H, S: Frost</b>	Frost and varieties which can handle frost better	Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. The RCSN identified this as an issue heavily impacting on profitability over many years, however noted that much of this work is being covered by the current long term GRDC investment in frost.
<b>C, S, H: Nematodes</b>	C: Nematodes and soil borne diseases - canola/wheat rotations- need to know more about managing nematodes, including when serradella is in the same rotation. Use and accuracy of tests. What rotations can we use in a profitable way to manage nematodes and soil borne diseases? Soil borne nematodes and fungi including pythium root rot and crown rot are affecting yield.	Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. The RCSN identified this as an issue heavily impacting on profitability over most years, however noted that much of this work is being covered by a current GRDC investment.
<b>H: N efficiency</b>	<b>N efficiency and variation between seasons. Variation both in mixed farming and continual cropping systems. What is driving or causing the variation?</b>	<b>Ranked highly by RCSN members at their closed member meeting. RCSN members ranked this highly and further developed this issue.</b>

**NB:** All issues raised at the Open Meetings will continue to have presence at the RCSN discussion table and will be forwarded to the GRDC Western Panel and GRDC for continued visibility as port zone related issues that may feed into existing or future initiatives.

Connect with Us.

GRDC now have a Facebook page – [www.facebook.com/theGRDC/](https://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).

Thanks and Further Details.

Thank you to everyone who attended the Open Meetings and contributed to the detailed discussions. For further details on the RCSN, please visit [www.rcsn.net.au](http://www.rcsn.net.au) or contact the RCSN Facilitator Julianne Hill (GRDC Regional Cropping Solutions Network Co-ordinator) on 0447 261 607 or email [regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com](mailto:regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com).