

# RCSN Newsletter

News from the Western Regional Cropping Solutions Network



**GRDC**  
GRAINS RESEARCH  
& DEVELOPMENT  
CORPORATION

[www.grdc.com.au](http://www.grdc.com.au)

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## **Julianne Hill, RCSN western region coordinator**

Western Australian growers have a reputation for rapid uptake of innovations and new technologies stemming from grains R&D to boost their profitability.

During the past few weeks, hundreds of growers from across the State have taken time out of their busy schedules to attend GRDC Grains Research Updates in their region, or in Perth, to hear the latest in R&D findings - and quiz the experts about on-farm implementation of results in their local area.

You might have noticed most of the western region port zone Regional Cropping Solutions Network (RCSN) members were at the Perth Update event. This was aimed at keeping the groups informed about where GRDC's short-term investments are made in local areas and to help with deliberations about developing further R&D activities in their individual port zones.

An overview of key R&D projects that were presented at the Geraldton, Kwinana East and Albany port zone GRDC Regional Grains Research Update events is outlined below.

These range from time of sowing to managing diseases and pests at seeding, dealing with soil constraints, implementing frost risk strategies and controlling weeds.

Through the RCSN network, leading WA growers, advisers and other industry stakeholders have also this month been identifying future R&D priorities to ensure GRDC continues to deliver enduring profitability for grain producers.

GRDC Managing Director Dr Steve Jefferies told a combined RCSN meeting in the Swan Valley that GRDC was seeking to implement investments that would make the biggest difference to collective profitability and generate maximum value for grower levy payers.

The five RCSN groups spent time identifying the top R&D priority issues and gaps in their port zone across two-days and these are summarised below. This information is used by GRDC and its Western Regional Panel to ensure fast responsiveness to emerging issues and to enable the corporation to develop future investment strategies for R&D.

On another note, GRDC is running a series of free 'Opportunity for Profit' workshops focusing on the performance drivers of the 'top 20 per cent' of WA grain growing businesses. I look forward to seeing you at one of these days.

The first forum was held at Dalwallinu on March 16 and further events are scheduled at the:

- Merredin Community and Leisure Centre on March 30
- Cunderdin Sport and Recreation Centre on April 3
- Esperance Bay Yacht Club on April 10.



I hope you find this edition of the RCSN newsletter interesting. I'd love it if you forwarded this newsletter to friends, or you can contact me for news and information about the western RCSNs - Julianne Hill: 0447 261 607, [email](#), or [Twitter](#).

Outcomes and results from RCSN-initiated RD&E projects, final reports and information about RCSN activities can also be found on the group's dedicated [website](#) and through the [GRDC's Online Farm Trials \(OFT\) website](#).

## Around the RCSN Port Zones



### Identifying R&D priorities

At the combined RCSN meeting held this month, group members received an update from Dr Jefferies and GRDC research program leaders about the organisation's current and planned RD&E investments.

Dr Jefferies explains the roles and importance of the RCSN groups in a short video that can be seen here via [this link](#).

The RCSN meeting included an overview of results from wide-ranging projects supported by the groups in the past 12 months.

They then mapped-out the future RD&E priorities for their specific port zone and a summary is outlined below.

Further details can be found at the RCSN website by following [this link](#).

*Caption: Members of the five western region RCSN groups gathered at the Swan Valley this month to identify and capture R&D priorities in their local area to feed into the GRDC. PHOTO: GRDC*

### Geraldton RCSN

Mt Erin grain grower Jason Stokes explains some of the key issues affecting the Geraldton port zone and some local RCSN project outcomes in a short video that can be seen via [this link](#).

Priorities identified by the group include:

- Soil constraints: incorporating lime, ripping, post-amelioration management
- Very early crop establishment (all crops): emergence problems, heat shock, coleoptile length, pre-emergent weed management problems
- Sclerotinia: fungicides for lupins/canola, row spacing/singulation, plant density
- Technology in agriculture: making it work, replacement and maintenance costs.



*Caption: Members of the Geraldton port zone RCSN group. PHOTO: GRDC*



*Caption: The Kwinana East RCSN group members. PHOTO: GRDC*

## Kwinana East RCSN

Bruce Rock grain grower Darren Kilminster outlines some of the Kwinana East RCSN activities and ideas via [this link](#).

Priorities identified by the group include:

- Matricaria weed control: options in crop and fallow/pasture
- Subsoil amelioration: economics with liming and compaction, acidity and sodicity options
- Crop disease/pests: nematodes (especially in canola), crown rot, rhizoctonia after liming
- Alternative summer weed control options
- Glyphosate in low rainfall cropping systems.

## Kwinana West RCSN

Northam grower Ty Fulwood discusses R&D priorities and projects stemming from the Kwinana West RCSN group via [this link](#).

Priorities identified by the group include:

- Micronutrients: sources and efficiency
- Business models: buy, lease, share farm, manage contractor
- Sclerotinia: multi-season research
- Decision-making support tools: economic threshold, risk assessment
- Potassium: testing and sampling accuracy and methods
- Stubble and residue
- Weed control: chemical and mechanical



*Caption: The Kwinana West port zone RCSN group members. PHOTO: GRDC*



## Albany RCSN

Albany RCSN group member Scott Smith discusses issues for this region via [this link](#).

Priorities identified by the group include:

- Soil constraints: one-off strategic tillage, compaction
- Crop Sequencing for profitability
- Crop nutrition
- Non-wetting soils: economics of management options, longevity.

*Caption: The Albany port zone RCSN group members. PHOTO: GRDC*

## Esperance RCSN

Esperance RCSN group member Peter Daw discusses issues in this port zone via [this link](#).

Priorities identified by the group include:

- Frost and heat stress
- Weeds: summer spraying, dormancy, broadleaf species control
- Glyphosate alternatives
- Soil constraints: sodicity, boron
- Drainage tools for water management (south coast): CTF and erosion down the slope.



*Caption: Members of the Esperance port zone RCSN group. PHOTO: GRDC.*

## Regional GRDC Grains Research Updates a success



### Geraldton port zone

Carnamah grower Cameron Levett provides his feedback about the Geraldton port zone Grains Research Update via [this link](#).

Mingenew Irwin Group helped to coordinate this update, which featured regionally-specific sessions about:

- Dealing with soil compaction and CTF
- Wheat and canola diseases
- Sowing times
- Weed control
- Frost mitigation strategies
- How to get more growers involved in R&D trials.

Crop Circle Consulting adviser Grant Thompson spoke about his RCSN-initiated research into improving spray fallows in the northern agricultural region. A short overview of his key findings can be found via [this link](#).

Full papers and presentations from the 2017 Grains Research Updates can be found via [this link](#).

*Caption: Carnamah grower Cameron Levett at the Geraldton zone Grains Research Update. PHOTO: GRDC*

### Albany port zone

This Grains Research Update opened with a presentation from global food and drink expert Prof David Hughes. His key points can be seen by following [this link](#).

South Stirling grower Luke Bennett sums up the event, which was staged at Kendenup with help from the Stirlings to Coast Farmers, at [this link](#).

The update featured latest regionally-specific information and results from GRDC-supported R&D into:

- Snails
- Crop diseases and pests
- Dual-purpose crops
- Growing noodle wheat
- Soil compaction
- Managing root lesion nematodes



- Value of wetting agents
- Use of technology and engineering in cropping systems.

DAFWA's Geoff Thomas provided an update about management of crop diseases starting at seeding for season 2017. This was identified as a priority for R&D by the local RCSN group, and his key points are explained by following [this link](#).

Full papers and presentations from the 2017 Grains Research Updates can be found by following [this link](#).

*Caption: Prof David Hughes presented at the Albany port zone Grains Research Update. PHOTO: GRDC*



## Kwinana East port zone

Merredin grain grower Phillip Gray gives his overview of the Kwinana East port zone Grains Research Update via [this link](#).

Topics high on the agenda at this event, held in Merredin with the support of the Merredin and District Farm Improvement Group (MADFIG), included:

- Managing frost risk
- Summer weed control
- Oat and canola agronomy
- Making use of 'big data'
- Soil-borne diseases

DAFWA researcher Martin Harries outlined the latest in canola agronomy R&D and early sowing options for the eastern grainbelt, which is a high priority for the local RCSN group, and his key findings are explained by following [this link](#).

Full papers and presentations from the 2017 Grains Research Updates can be found by following [this link](#).

*Caption: Merredin grain grower Phillip Gray at the Kwinana East port zone Grains Research Update. PHOTO: GRDC*

## Grains Research Update, Perth

Wagin grower and Albany port zone RCSN member Ben Ball gives his impression of the Grains Research Update, Perth. View the video by following [this link](#).

This event attracted a record crowd of about 620 delegates and featured latest findings from local, state and national GRDC-supported R&D projects.

Focus sessions were held to give growers access to experts in:

- Frost
- Crop diseases
- Plant breeding
- Soil management
- Mixed farming systems.

A range of keynote speakers from across the globe discussed the 'big picture' for agricultural issues of fungicide resistance, grain markets, world consumer trends and uses for 'big data' stemming from crop production technologies.

These included UK-based consultant David Jackson, a director of LMC International, who discusses global grains trends. See the video by following [this link](#).

*Caption: Wagin grower and Albany port zone RCSN member Ben Ball at the Grains Research Update, Perth. PHOTO: GRDC*



## Hot topics for March

The Grain Industry Association of WA has full papers and presentations from GRDC's 2017 western region Grains Research Updates by following [this link](#), or click on the links below to access topics that are particularly timely this month:

[Early sowing](#) – Brenda Shackley, DAFWA

[Wheat variety performance in NVT trials](#) – Christine Zaicou-Kunesch, DAFWA

[Canola National Variety Trials – 2016](#) – Mathew Davey, Kalyx Australia, and Jackie Bucat, DAFWA

[Agronomy for early sown canola](#) – Martin Harries, DAFWA

[Fungicides at seeding for management of cereal foliar diseases](#) – Geoff Thomas, DAFWA

[Eleven years of integrated weed management: long-term impacts of row spacing and HWSD on annual ryegrass control](#) - Catherine Borger, DAFWA

## Keep an eye out for...

To visit the GRDC **Facebook** page, click [here](#).

For the latest Western region **Western Events** click [here](#).

For the latest Western region **Fact Sheets** click [here](#).

To access the latest **Hot Topics** for the Western region, click [here](#).

For more information about the RCSNs in the Western region, contact  
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