

## Keys stories for your region

### Julianne Hill, RCSN western region coordinator

By now the season is underway, with some growers finished seeding and others pulled up. What everyone has in common right across the grainbelt is the need for a good soaking rain. Here's hoping there will be some coming your way soon.

The Regional Cropping Solutions Network (RCSN) groups recently called for expressions of interest for new members to join and be part of the process to help GRDC decide on investments to deliver value for Western Australian grain growers.

This follows some members leaving the groups at the end of their term.

There were many applicants for the RCSN positions - all very high calibre - and those selected were chosen for their skill sets, passion and willingness to share.

They are:

**Kwinana West port zone** - Chad Hawksley, grower; Dani Whyte, agronomist

**Kwinana East port zone** - Callum Wesley, grower; Nic McGregor, adviser; Natalie Purdy, financier; Floyd Sullivan, adviser

**Geraldton port zone** - Phil Smyth, agronomist; Andrew Cripps, rural services; Jerome Critch, grain marketer

**Esperance port zone** - Cameron Mudge, grower; Joel Ebert, grower; Monica Field, agronomist

**Albany port zone** - Tim Mathwin, adviser; Peter Bostock, adviser.

You can find out more about continuing RCSN representatives and high priority research, development and extension (RD&E) issues for each group via [this link](#).

We are also excited to invite you to the next round of GRDC 'Open Forums', which are designed to give all WA growers an opportunity to have input into how grower levies are invested. Please register on the [RCSN website here](#). These are scheduled for:

#### *Albany port zone*

- July 16 - Cranbrook Sporting Club (2-6pm and hot beef and gravy rolls/ refreshments to conclude)
- July 17 - Jerramungup CRC meeting room (8-11am), 10 Tobruk Road
- July 17 - Kukerin Hotel (2-6pm and refreshments to conclude), 15 Scaddan Street.



#### *Esperance port zone*

- July 23 - Dunn Rock Tennis Club (2-6pm and hot food/refreshments to conclude)
- July 24 - Munglinup sports pavilion (8-11am and lunch to conclude)
- July 24 - Condingup Tavern (2-6pm and dinner/refreshments to conclude), Lot 7 Parish Street.

#### *Kwinana West port zone*

- July 31 - Goomalling sports and community centre (2-6pm), corner Quinlan & Hoddy Streets
- August 1 - Bedford Arms Hotel (8-11am), 99 Robinson Road, Brookton
- August 1 - Kondinin Aquatic Centre (2-6pm and hot food/refreshments to conclude).

#### *Kwinana East port zone*

- August 6 - Bruce Rock Shire (2-6pm and light dinner/refreshments to conclude)
- August 7 - Westonia Bowls Club (8-11am and light lunch), Diorite Street
- August 7 - Bencubbin Community Recreation Complex (2-6pm and dinner/refreshments to conclude).

#### *Geraldton port zone*

- August 22 - Eneabba Sporting Club (2-6pm)
- August 23 - Morawa Agricultural College residential campus (8-11am and sausage sizzle), Waddilove Rd
- August 23 - Geraldton Lavender Valley Farm (2-6pm and dinner/refreshments), 1852 Chapman Valley Rd, Yetna.

For more information about a wide range of RD&E projects with GRDC investment in the western region, see the [GRDC website](#), the [RCSN's dedicated website](#), the GRDC's updated and streamlined [Online Farm Trials \(OFT\) website](#), or contact me - Julianne Hill: 0447 261 607, [email](#), or [Twitter](#).

**Caption:** *Julianne Hill, RCSN western region coordinator.*

## Around the RCSN Port Zones



### Geraldton: Delving into rooting depth research

Sodic soils that reduce water infiltration and availability to crops by impeding plant rooting depth and growth are commonly found in eastern parts of the Geraldton port zone.

How to boost grain production and returns from these areas is the subject of a new three-year research project being conducted by the Mingenew Irwin Group (MIG), with GRDC investment.

It is investigating management strategies to overcome soil sodicity at depth, especially in medium and low rainfall environments.

The focus is on gypsum, with trials set up on confirmed sodic soils to assess application rates and economics and boost grower confidence in using this ameliorant.

The project follows past MIG research into managing soil acidity, and development of a lime calculator in conjunction with the West Midlands Group, Liebe Group, Southern Dirt, Aglime of Australia and the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD).

**More information:** MIG, 08 9928 1645, [ceo@mig.org.au](mailto:ceo@mig.org.au)

**GRDC Project Codes:** MIG1801-001SAX; LIE00008

#### **Useful resources:**

[GRDC Soils Constraints West initiative](#)

[GRDC final report for project LIE00008: Soil acidity management strategies throughout Western Australia](#)

**Caption:** *Spreading gypsum will be investigated by the Mingenew Irwin Group as a means of addressing sodic soils.*

**PHOTO:** GRDC

## Kwinana West: Head start for seedlings

Investigations into improving crop emergence through seeding technologies are being carried out by the West Midlands Group (WMG), with GRDC investment.

Timely and optimum plant emergence is a key driver of grain yield. This is primarily influenced by seasonal conditions and timing of the season break, but choice of seeding equipment can also have a big impact.



WMG is particularly interested in the use of paired row seeding configurations that have been adopted by many WA growers to improve crop competition with weeds.

The group wants to test anecdotal grower experiences that are finding these types of systems can impede timely crop emergence due to inappropriate placement of the seed into the soil, especially in seasons with low or variable rainfall.

WMG reports that some local growers are finding paired row seeding can result in seed being placed in the dry side wall of the crop row furrow. Conversely, single row seeding can place the seed in the bottom of the crop row furrow where the soil can dry rapidly in some seasons.

Both problems can reduce timely crop emergence, which highlights the importance of matching seeding configurations to soil type.

WMG is trialling paired and single seeding configurations and seeding depths across several soil types at demonstration sites in the central and northern agricultural areas of WA.

Crop emergence is being measured 14 days after seeding to assess the effectiveness of the seeding configuration in improving plant establishment and the project will compare harvest grain yield results.

**More information:** WMG, 08 9651 4008, [admin@wmgroup.org.au](mailto:admin@wmgroup.org.au)

**GRDC Project Code:** WMG1802-001SAX.

**Caption:** The West Midlands Group is this year looking into the effect on crop emergence from using a range of seeding technologies. **PHOTO:** GRDC



## Albany: Eye in the sky on crop growth

Albany port zone growers will no doubt watch with interest a new project monitoring crops with drones this growing season.

Conducted by Farmanco Management Consultants, with GRDC investment, it is investigating the economics and practicalities of using this technology for broadacre farming.

The drones will record crop condition at various growth stages and Farmanco will analyse the costs and benefits of monitoring paddocks one, two and three times during the season.

The aim is to see if drones - or a drone operator - can help to better establish, grow and manage crops for superior profitability in low, medium and high rainfall zones and for a range of crop types.

It could also form part of longer-term strategic plans that allow for variation according to crop rotations.

**More information:** Farmanco, 08 9295 0222, [mundaring@farmanco.com.au](mailto:mundaring@farmanco.com.au)

**GRDC Project Code:** FMO1801-001SAX

**Caption:** Trials using drones to monitor crops will be conducted across the WA grainbelt this season. **PHOTO:** GRDC



## Kwinana East: Financial Decision Making Tools for Growers

How do you make decisions about what you are going spend money on first? Would it be lime, stock feed, a machinery shed or a new header? You only have a finite amount of money.

GRDC's Kwinana East port zone RCSN members identified that, after last year's difficult season, they needed to better understand their constraints and how best to invest limited resources to give them the best 'bang for buck'.

They recognised that the health of farm balance sheets can restrict investment and wanted advice about tools and options to help prioritise expenditure - given limited capital resources.

As a result, several workshops are being run in this region to upskill growers about how to identify the constraint with the best return on investment (ROI) so this can be targeted for farm business spending.

The workshops will be presented by well-known farm business consultants Brent Searle and David Williams, of BJW Agribusiness, and will start in August.

Brent has had a long career in the agricultural and finance sectors since graduating from university, and has a strong banking background. He is now consulting to a wide range of broadacre, dairy and horticultural clients in WA - focusing on farm business management services to growers and assisting clients to achieve their goals.

David has worked in the WA grainbelt since graduating from university and has a core focus on farm business management services to growers.

He provides advice to clients about production and farm business management and undertakes farm management services for absentee landowners in WA.

The upcoming Kwinana East port zone 'Financial Decision Making Tools for Growers' workshops are free, but you must register via [this link](#) and following the links. Dates for the diary are:

- August 6 - Bruce Rock shire supper room (11am-1.30pm, followed by GRDC's RCSN 'Open Forum' from 2-6pm)
- August 7 - Bencubbin Community Recreation Complex (11am-1.30pm, followed by GRDC's RCSN 'Open Forum' from 2-6pm).

Another three workshops will be delivered in subsequent months - so express your interest.

**More information:** Julianne Hill, RCSN coordinator, [regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com](mailto:regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com); or Brent Searle, BJW Agribusiness, [brent@bjw.net.au](mailto:brent@bjw.net.au)

GRDC Project Code: BJW1804-001SAX

**Caption:** BJW consultant Brent Searle will be presenting at a series of workshops focused on generating the best returns from on-farm investments. PHOTO: BJW



## Esperance: Keeping glyphosate at the top of its game

The keystone herbicide glyphosate is under threat due to over-reliance in farming systems nationally.

Andrew Storr, of AGRONOMO and the Australian Glyphosate Sustainability Working Group (AGSWG), says weed samples submitted by agronomists and growers for herbicide resistance testing regularly show that up to 25 per cent have resistance to glyphosate - and polls on Twitter tend to show concern from growers with even higher levels of resistance on-farm.

The Esperance port zone RCSN has recognised the threats to glyphosate sustainability and, with GRDC investment, is helping to coordinate a series of half-day workshops to discuss best management practices for this commonly-used herbicide.

Andrew is organising the workshops, with assistance from agronomists Andrew Heinrich, of Farm & General, and Craig Brown, of Synergy/Craig Brown Consulting. He says there are currently 17 weed species resistant to glyphosate in Australia and this will only increase - along with the incidence of paraquat resistance (as its use increases to counter the risks of glyphosate resistance). The incidence of resistance to multiple herbicide modes of action is also rising.

Andrew says more summer rain in the Esperance port zone in recent years has led to more herbicides being used in those months and, without good integrated weed management plans in place, the risk of glyphosate resistance in a range of weed species is greatly increased.

He says the coming workshops in this region will include advice about:

- How and when to test for herbicide resistance
- Summer fallow management alternatives for key weeds
- Double knocks during summer - making it work
- Crop-topping alternatives to glyphosate - New technologies and pesticide residues in grain.

Workshop dates for the diary are:

- July 23 - Dunn Rock (10am-2pm)
- July 24 - Condingup (9:30am to 1pm)
- Third workshop date/location to be decided.

Latest advice about managing herbicides and herbicide resistance in wild radish and annual ryegrass is also contained in new GRDC Know More videos for the western region, featuring AHRI's Peter Newman - which can be found via [this link](#) and [this link](#).

**More information:** Andrew Storrie, AGRONOMO, 08 9842 3598, [andrew@agronomo.com.au](mailto:andrew@agronomo.com.au)

**GRDC Project Codes:** ARN1803-001SAX; UCS00024; UCS00020; UA00158; CRC00003

#### Useful resources

[AGSWG website](#)

[WeedSmart website](#)

[GRDC Integrated Weed Management Manual](#)

**Caption:** *Glyphosate resistance in wild radish will be one of the topics discussed at upcoming workshops in the Esperance port zone. PHOTO: Andrew Storrie, AGSWG*

## Hot topics

### Cautious approach to disease control spend

New WA research with GRDC investment highlights the value of carefully planning fungicide use in a dry season.

Carried out by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) and ConsultAg in 2015-17, the project 'Best practice management of spot type net blotch (STNB) in barley and interaction with stubble management and head loss' found a potentially expensive fungicide strategy risked providing only marginal returns when seasonal conditions were dry.

It also showed that when there is a dry start to the season and a slow build-up of disease, stubble management could have minimal impact on the build-up of STNB levels.

Burning barley stubble prior to planting barley-on-barley increased yields by only 0.325t/ha on average in 2017 and 0.4t/ha in 2015 trials.

In areas where there was high STNB pressure - typically from wet conditions early in the season - a double spray strategy was found to improve grain quality, yield and returns.

The research team advises, when growing barley-on-barley crops, growers should budget for a fungicide spray at Flag-1 every year to protect the top three leaves in the canopy.

When conditions are wet early (in the post-emergent phase and especially if stubble is retained), a fungicide spray at Zadoks Growth Scale Z31-Z32 for cereals can reduce disease pressure and protect the canopy until the Flag-1 spray is applied.

A full report from this project is available on the GRDC's updated [Online Farm Trials website here](#).

More information: Trent Butcher, 08 6253 2000, [ConsultAg.tb@consultag.com.au](mailto:ConsultAg.tb@consultag.com.au)

**GRDC Project Code:** TAR00007

#### **Useful resources**

[GRDC Online Farm Trials website](#).

## Watch and act on pests in emerging crops

GRDC has a range of resources to help with early crop insect and pest diagnostics, economic thresholds for control and management tactics for this season.

This includes an updated version of its 'I SPY' manual, containing comprehensive information about:

- Identifying common pests
- Monitoring pests
- Integrated pest management (IPM) principles (cultural, biological and chemical)
- Insecticide resistance
- Biosecurity information.

It covers more than 40 pests, including African black beetle and Russian wheat aphid, and can be found here.

Manual co-author Dr Paul Umina, of cesar research organisation and the University of Melbourne, says correct identification is key to effective insect and pest control, preventing insecticide misuse and avoiding potential increases in incidences of resistance.

More information: Paul Umina, cesar, 03 9349 4723, [pumina@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:pumina@unimelb.edu.au)

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

Julianne Hill, RCSN western coordinator

0447 261 607

[regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com](mailto:regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com)

[www.rcsn.net.au](http://www.rcsn.net.au)

[@Julianne\\_Hill](#)

PO Box 89, Brunswick, WA 6224, Australia



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Grains Research & Development Corporation (GRDC)  
Level 4, East Building, 4 National Circuit, Barton, ACT 2600  
PO Box 5367 KINGSTON ACT 2604 AUSTRALIA  
Telephone: (02) 6166 4500 Fax: (02) 6166 4599  
[GRDC Ref: 4572]