

## Keys stories for your region

### Julianne Hill, RCSN western region coordinator

It's been a season of extremes this year. Some of the best conditions have been experienced in northern parts of the grainbelt, while other areas have had to wait for good rain to establish crops, hold down paddocks and get some pasture up and away. Hopefully those who needed rain have received some in the past week.

Weather aside, grain growers have the opportunity in coming weeks to raise production and research, development and extension (RD&E) issues with the GRDC's Western Regional Panel, managers, staff and Regional Cropping Solutions Network (RCSN) group members at upcoming Open Forums in their local districts.

Open Forums have already been held across the Albany port zone - at Cranbrook, Jerramungup and Kukerin - and there are plenty more of these meetings to be rolled-out (see further details outlined below in each port zone).

The GRDC's RCSN groups in each port zone have been instrumental in coordinating these events and ensuring local priority RD&E issues are at the forefront of agendas. Registrations can be made through the RCSN's dedicated website [RCSN website](#).

Feedback from the Open Forums helps the GRDC shape its future investments to deliver sustained value and profitability to WA grower levy payers, so it's important you attend and raise specific issues for your region.

I'm hoping you have had some time away for July/school holidays, or have a trip planned, and come back fresh and ready to tackle the world.

Feel free to contact me at any time. Julianne Hill: 0447 261 607, [email](#), or [Twitter](#).



## Around the RCSN Port Zones



### Sky-high crop spying analysed

Drone technology is offering new perspectives on monitoring crop growth and health, but the optimum frequency of fly-overs to provide a return on investment (ROI) is less certain.

PHOTO: GRDC.

This will be the focus of discussions with Kojonup-based Farmanco consultant James Macfarlane at the RCSN Kwinana West Open Forums in Brookton and Kondinin on August 1.

James is undertaking research with GRDC investment this winter to assess how often a drone operator contractor could be used during the crop growing season to provide the best financial return for broadacre growers.

As part of his project, the practical and economic use of drones - with one, two or three flights - will be assessed for wheat, barley and canola crops in low, medium and high rainfall zones.

James says this technology has potential to value-add to agronomic decision-making and help plan management strategies for nutrients, weeds and diseases in conjunction with experienced farm advisers.

His GRDC project aims to unravel the financial costs and returns of employing contract drone services, depending on location and crop mix, and the ROI on repeating the process up to three times in a season.

James says from the trial results, he intends to produce a decision-support matrix based on a 'traffic light' system and will assess the best timing of drone use during the season.

GRDC's Liam Ryan will also attend Kwinana West RCSN Open Forums to outline GRDC's investments in digital agriculture and enabling technologies to boost grower profits at the farm gate.

Other speakers presenting at the Kwinana West meetings include GRDC's Rowan Maddern, and Chris Wilkins discussing GRDC investments in weeds, soils and nutrition in WA. Agendas and registrations are available [here](#) and venues are:

**GRDC project code:** 9176023

**More information:** James Macfarlane, Farmanco, 0447 99 99 02, [james@farmanco.com.au](mailto:james@farmanco.com.au).

## Chemical registration process unravelled

GRDC's manager of chemical regulation, Gordon Cumming, will explain to growers at Open Forum meetings the data required by the national chemical regulator (the Australian Pesticides and Veterinary Medicines Authority - APVMA) to issue 'Minor and Emergency Use Permits' (MUP and EUP) - and the process of progressing permits to labels.



He will also outline some of the limitations to what GRDC can achieve in this space, as part of its continued investments in crop protection regulation issues.

Gordon says GRDC works closely with registrants (chemical companies) and requires their support for most activities.

He says the GRDC process for setting priorities in chemical registration includes:

### Minor Use

- Identification of needs that could be met through MUP or EUP
- Maintenance of permit uses via links with industry bodies and current permit holders
- Providing support, including by filing APVMA applications and sourcing available data
- Progressing permits to label 'pathways to registration'.

### Pathways to registration

- Partnering with registrants to generate data for registration
- Adding value to registrants' new actives by increasing crop uses
- Extending applications to all pulses and adding oats to wheat and barley registrations
- Identifying new use patterns to manage new ging biotic threats.

### Agricultural Chemical Access Program (ACAP)

- The Australian Government committed \$8 million over four years (2014-2018) to help growers gain improved access to safe and effective agricultural and veterinary (agvet) chemicals
- GRDC has been successful with 18 grant applications.

## Setting Priority Use Patterns

- Nomination from growers and grower groups
- Pest and crop solutions
- Nominations are priorities set by: need (non or few alternatives); data package requirements (no greater than efficacy or crop residues); regulatory risk (life of active); or registrant backing for registration and input.

**More information:** Gordon Cumming, 0428 637642, [gordon.cumming@grdc.com.au](mailto:gordon.cumming@grdc.com.au).



## Ripping good times in Esperance

A range of ripping tools are being discussed by Aidan Sinnott, of SEPWA, as part of an RCSN initiated 'Ripper Gauge' project at Esperance port zone Open Forums.

PHOTO: GRDC.

South East Premium Wheat Growers Association (SEPWA) project officer Aidan Sinnott will discuss local GRDC 'Ripper Gauge' trials at Open Forum meetings in Dunn Rock on July 23 and Munglinup and Condingup on July 24.

These Esperance Ripper Gauge trials are among several being conducted over three years across all WA port zones, starting in 2018. The project aims to look at the impact of this technology and types of machines that can be used for deep ripping to help alleviate water repellency, compaction and waterlogging on various soil types and in different farming systems.

Sites are located on common soil types in each port zone, and the work is investigating options to ameliorate multiple soil constraints - such as compaction, subsurface acidity and surface non-wetting.

Some of the treatments include: deep working seeding points; deep ripping; inversion ploughing; rotary spading; delving; and common grower practices.

There are four demonstration sites in the Esperance port zone. The Mount Madden and Coomalbidgup sites are building on previously established grower trial work, and the Cascade and Neridup sites are building on previously established trials conducted with Council of Grain Grower Organisations funding. In addition, SEPWA has established a new trial site at Salmon Gums.

Aidan says the very dry and windy start to the 2018 cropping season in the Esperance region had resulted in poor germination and establishment of cereals and canola in most deep ripped trial plots, compared with the undisturbed control treatments. Conditions were detrimental to achieving a good germination rate on most of the ripped plots, due to evaporation caused by soil disturbance.

However, the Coomalbidgup trial site received more rain than the other locations and there was good crop germination at this site on all plots, including the ameliorated treatments.

To hear more about the trials and for a full agenda, register for the Esperance RCSN Open Forums at [www.rcsn.net.au](http://www.rcsn.net.au). These are scheduled for:

- 23 July Dunn Rock Tennis Club (2-6pm)
- 24 July Munglinup Sports Pavilion (8-11am)
- 24 July Condingup Tavern (2-6pm)

## Potassium needs for 2018

Growers attending the Geraldton port zone Open Forums will learn about new research aiming to generate information that can provide growers with better guidelines for using potassium (K) more strategically and profitably.

Murdoch University researcher Richard Bell says fertilisers are one of the highest variable costs for WA grain growers and, due to changes in climate and farming systems in recent years, current scientific knowledge that drives K fertiliser management decisions needs to be updated.



He says potassium (K) supply is critical for optimal plant growth and development, from early growth through to grain development.

Adequate K allows the plant to use water more efficiently, increasing the vigour of the plant. Importantly, K also contributes to the synthesis of both protein and starch in grain, influencing grain filling and quality.

Professor Bell says the K research was part of three WA soils and crop nutrition research projects, worth \$14.6 million, that were announced earlier this year - involving a GRDC partnership with multiple organisations from the public and private sectors.

The K research is part of one of the projects - worth \$9.7 million across five years - which is investigating soil nitrogen, phosphorus and K supply to crops, with a focus on providing a better understanding of fertiliser requirements.

This project is being led by The University of WA (UWA) - through the SoilsWest alliance with the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) - and Murdoch University and the University of Adelaide, with involvement from other grains industry stakeholders.

To hear about this and other GRDC investments at the Geraldton RCSN Open Forums, register [here](#). These meetings are scheduled for:

- 22 August Eneabba Sporting Club (2-6pm)
- 23 August Morawa Agricultural College (8-11am)
- 23 August Geraldton Lavender Valley Farm (2-6pm).

**Caption:** Richard Bell, of Murdoch University, has tips for managing and measuring potassium in a year like 2018 that he will present to Open Forums. PHOTO: GRDC.

## Hot topics

### Accessing resources for a challenging season

DPIRD (formerly DAFWA) is liaising closely with agricultural businesses, consultants, grower groups, farming organisations and regional communities to ensure appropriate support is provided to farmers due to the challenging 2018 growing season in some areas.

It has advised that its website will be updated over coming months to provide timely and relevant advice, tools and networks as the season progresses.

This includes links to: climate/weather tools; agronomic information; livestock information; and an events calendar for key industry gatherings.

For more information, click [here](#).

## Keep an eye out for...

For a list of all **Western Events**, [click here](#).

For **GrowNotes™** - your one-stop shop for trial results and best practice recommendations, [click here](#).

For **GrowNotes™ Alert** [click here](#).

For the **GRDC YouTube** Channel, [click here](#).

For **publications** for the Western Region [click here](#).

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

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