



RCSN NEWSLETTER

Key stories for your region

Julianne Hill, RCSN western region coordinator

This year seems to be flying past, with seeding underway in many areas. Here's hoping that all parts of the State will experience a reasonable start.

After seeding, the Grains Research and Development Corporation's (GRDC) Regional Cropping Solutions Network (RCSN) groups invite you to come along to a GRDC 'Open Forum' near you. These events have been running for the last four years, and are a good way for you to have your say about issues impacting on your farming business.



These events are scheduled for:

- Geraldton port zone
 - Yuna (4pm, June 24, following the Yuna Farm Improvement Group meeting)
 - Perenjori (8am, June 25)
- Kwinana West port zone
 - Badgingarra (3pm, June 25, following the West Midlands Group event at Badgingarra Research Station)
 - Corrigin (4pm, June 26, following the Corrigin Farm Improvement Group pasture walk)
- Kwinana East port zone
 - Beacon (8am, June 27)
 - Muntadgin (4pm, June 27)
- Albany port zone

- Kulin (4pm, July 1)
- Kojonup (8am, July 2)

- Esperance port zone
 - Ravensthorpe (8am, July 30)
 - Grass Patch (4pm, July 30)

There are also vacant positions for growers available on each of the RCSN groups in WA, and we encourage growers to apply for a place on their local RCSN by May 31. These positions are to replace members who have come to the end of their term. For more details and an application form, go to www.rcsn.net.au. We are really keen on attracting growers who are passionate about the grains industry and who will represent others in their area when bringing ideas to the table for GRDC consideration.

If you would like to find out more about the RCSNs, visit the website or contact me - Julianne Hill: 0447 261 607, [email](#), or [Twitter](#). Don't forget to catch up on major findings from more than 100 RCSN-initiated projects that have been established since 2012 by checking out the [2018 western region RCSN Annual Report](#).

Really looking forward to seeing you around the traps soon.

Around the RCSN Port Zones

Geraldton port zone

Geraldton port zone RCSN members at their last meeting identified a number of issues that impacted on their profitability, including those below:

- Geraldton port zone growers are looking for a high yielding package for cereals after soil constraints have been addressed as current practices do not match the new yield potential
- Subsoil pH is markedly lower than topsoil pH levels but growers are questioning the economics of lifting the pH of these more acidic subsoils
- Lupin yields are plateauing while canola yields are continuing to improve in the Geraldton port zone, leading to a greater area of canola sown as the break crop in rotations
- Weed management and pre-emergent herbicide efficacy after cultivation and deep ripping.

The last issue listed above will be investigated under a new five-year research project in WA 'Increasing farming system profitability and longevity of benefits following soil amelioration' – which is a GRDC and Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) co-investment.

Part of this research will investigate the effect of amelioration and seedbed preparation on herbicide activity and crop establishment.



Andrew Storrie, of AGRONOMO, pictured with growers at Merredin, led GRDC summer weed workshops in February in different parts of the WA grainbelt. Photo: GRDC.

Kwinana West port zone

Kwinana West port zone RCSN members at their last meeting identified a number of issues, with some of these being:

- Issues relating to calibration of spray machinery, occasionally leading to spray applications that have reduced efficacy
- More legume and pulse agronomy work is needed to provide growers with the knowledge to improve their crop rotations
- A need for more frost agronomy work to be undertaken in canola, which is a large part of many growers' programs
- Implications of the new requirements for 2,4-D application and the effect on weed control options – both for summer spraying and in-crop situations.

Resources relevant to calibrating spray machinery can be found on the [GRDC website](#) and specifically the [Spray Application GrowNotes™ manual](#) and the [GRDC Spraying Efficiency Fact Sheet](#).

Information on correct nozzle selection to match water rates and ground speeds with spray quality is available in the [GRDC Nozzle Selection Guide](#) and the video [Maximising spray efficiency](#) has tips on maximising spray efficiency and efficacy (it all starts with the nozzles).

Guidance on nozzle selection, as well as information about controlling summer weeds using 2,4-D under the new regulations relating to this herbicide, were among the issues covered at GRDC summer weed workshops held in the WA grainbelt in February.

These workshops, led by Andrew Storrie of AGRONOMO, were the result of GRDC RCSN groups highlighting summer weed control as a high priority issue for grain growers.

More than 60 people attended the workshops where participants had the opportunity to identify weeds that were at an early stage of development, using live specimens, and were shown identification short cuts and handy tools to use.

Some of the main take home messages for attendees were:

- Review boom calibrations, nozzle choices and application volumes
- Closely inspect weed seedlings before spraying them in order to correctly identify them
- Keep good spraying records
- Read and abide by herbicide labels
- Assess meteorological conditions at the spray site.

More of these workshops will be held in WA in spring.

Kwinana East port zone

Kwinana East port zone RCSN members at their last meeting identified the following issues as most impacting on their profitability and identified areas for GRDC to consider including:

- Long term results/comparison of harvest integrated weed management (IWM) methods to help growers make the best choice for their farming system
- Further testing and identification of products and factors associated with the testing of lime, Morrell lime and other products to ensure a return on investment from the product
- Addressing acidity in subsoil and developing methods to better incorporate lime efficiently at depth.

On the issue of testing and identification of products and factors associated with the testing of lime, Morrell lime and other products, growers may be interested in accessing a new GRDC online publication [Locating and assessing on-farm lime sources](#).

Compiled by the Liebe Group and Map IQ, it provides information about finding, assessing, extracting and spreading on-farm lime, plus grower case studies. It also addresses the economics of using this type of lime.

The publication was initiated after the GRDC RCSN group identified the costs of sourcing and applying coastal lime – at about \$42 to \$50 per tonne – as a significant cost to farm businesses in the area.



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Albany port zone

Albany port zone RCSN members at their last meeting identified the following issues as most impacting on their profitability and identified areas for GRDC to consider including:

- We are still not achieving yield potential and maximising profitability as growers are often not increasing their nutrition inputs to match the yield increase
- Managing frost including improving knowledge about whether a crop has been frosted so that growers can make earlier management decisions
- Lupin agronomy for better yields needs to significantly improve
- Management of snails at harvest time.

On the issue of achieving yield potential in the Albany port zone, grower group Stirlings to Coast Farmers is conducting work as part of a GRDC investment aimed at reducing the gap between current and potential yield in the high rainfall zone, targeting wheat and canola.

The investment will include grower surveys, paddock-scale demonstration trials and field days that include visits to the paddock-scale demonstration sites.

Project code: PROC-9175783



Nick Poole from the Foundation for Arable Research (FAR) addressed Albany RCSN members during a visit to the GRDC Hyper Yielding Cereals field research site at Hagley, Tasmania, as part of a study tour in February. Photo by FAR.

Esperance port zone

Esperance port zone RCSN members identified that real-time nutrient assessment tools are lacking in current farming systems. Some tools are available such as the Trimble® GreenSeeker® crop sensing system, using N-Rich Strips for comparison; grower and agronomist knowledge; biomass imagery options; tissue testing; and sap testing options. However, growers identified issues including:

- Growers lack the capability to conduct tests that provide immediate and real-time results because there are no tools readily available to do so
- Long turnaround time for results of tests such as tissue tests
- Not physically able to test regularly enough for most accurate results
- Overall logistics of the process is too cumbersome to encourage a high level of uptake.

The issue of real-time nutrient assessment is currently under investigation as part of a nationally-coordinated project with co-investment from the GRDC and a number of research partners.

‘Future Farm phase 2’ aims to increase profits for Australian grain growers via practical applications of precision and digital agriculture, with a specific focus on nitrogen (N) fertiliser applications.

The research, led overall by CSIRO, aims to develop site-specific management models and automation of decision rules in software that may potentially be linked to real-time application equipment.

As part of the project, CSIRO has developed a framework that could help modernise and simplify growers’ N decisions using machine learning, remote sensing, on-farm trialling and crop modelling. More information is in the GRDC Grains Research Update paper [How digital technologies will assist with nitrogen management](#) that was presented by CSIRO researcher Roger Lawes at GRDC Grains Research Update events earlier this year.



Esperance port zone RCSN members have identified a need for real-time nutrient assessment tools in current farming systems. Photo: GRDC.

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For more information about the RCSN initiative in the western region, contact Julianne Hill, RCSN western coordinator:

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