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AEA Award for MSF

The SA based Ag Excellence Alliance (AEA) has named MSF joint winner of the 2009 Grower Group Award.

The criteria for this award includes collaboration with other groups, demonstrating sound natural resource management principles and participating in AEA activities.

Ag Excellence Alliance is a project funded by the National Landcare Program with the aim of increasing the viability of farming groups in SA.

CONGRATULATIONS TO ALL SA MSF FARMERS!!

From The Boardroom

It is a pleasure to welcome you to the first "e-dition" of Sustainability Snapshots.

As promised earlier in the year, 2009 will see increased benefits for MSF members. The change to a more frequent newsletter is just the start. With this change, MSF hopes to

be more responsive to seasonal demands and keep you up to date with MSF activities, trials and demonstrations. We hope you value this e-news letter and I would personally welcome your feedback. As always, here's hoping for an inch before Anzac Day!
Jim Maynard
Chairman



Sustainability Snapshots

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Rhizoctonia RED ALERT

Over 95% of Predicta B root disease tests for the SA Mallee have come back with high levels of rhizoctonia. This has been from 32 paddocks with a range of soil types and farming systems. The impacts of rhizoctonia have thought to have been increasing in recent years. This is partly due to the run of dry seasons which has diminished other competitive soil microbes due to the lack of adequate fresh carbon inputs. Rhizoctonia by comparison is a great survivor on older particulate organic matter, even through harsh conditions.

However, high soil inoculum doesn't have to result in paddock disaster, so to counteract the disease it is important to:

- Control all volunteer autumn plant growth early
- Use tillage systems to break up hyphal network (this should be balanced against erosion risk)
- Sow early to avoid cold soils where possible
- Avoid sulphonyl urea herbicides
- Ensure adequate Zn, N and P

A deeper working knife point for no till systems is vital, not only to break up rhizoctonia, but also to allow root tips to quickly grow through to the deeper soil away from the disease. Earlier research showed that soil disturbance 7-10 days after the break was most effective in reducing rhizoctonia, when the fungal network was starting to spread through the soil, rather than working straight after the first rain. Obviously, any tillage practice must take into account erosion risk.



Severe rhizoctonia damage on cereal roots

Homebush Field Day Friday 17th April

The Homebush Field Day has something for everyone to enjoy. There are lots of stalls, exhibits and demonstrations. There promises to be various items of working vintage machinery and stock on display as well. Free children's activities will include a jumping castle and show bag trail. Various local organisations will provide all day catering and the Lions Club will be running the bar. After lunch will be an auction of donated items. The Homebush Field Day site is 25 kilometres north of Balranald and a bus will run from the Balranald Post Office every hour.

**Homebush
Recreation Reserve,
25km North of
Balranald**



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THIS IS YOUR SPACE.



To contribute to this newsletter, contact the editor, Victoria Adams, Communications & Liaison Officer on 03 5021 9104 or victoria@msfp.org.au

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Spatial Data for Variable Rate Decisions

As Mallee farmers continue to strive for that extra fraction of a tonne per hectare, accompanying technology needs to become more and more precise. In some cases, this precision comes at a substantial cost. However, as all resilient farmers know, there are always cheaper alternatives.

Ben Jones from Mallee Focus in conjunction with the Mallee CMA, has been developing a web page that allows farmers to download publicly available spatial data.

The aim of the page is to give Mallee farmers free access to some spatial data that will help them make variable rate/zoning decisions in time for

sowing in 2009, especially if they don't have other sources such as yield maps or EM38 surveys.

Dr. Jones said "There are some good sources of spatial data out there—DSE have elevation on a 10 x 10m grid that covers the whole of the state, and GeoSciences Victoria have gamma-radiometrics on a 50 x 50m grid. They are publicly available but have been difficult for farmers to get and process in the past."

The web page allows farmers to draw their property on a Google map. After filling in a few details they will then receive an email containing 'shapefiles' of data for that area.

The shapefiles can be opened in precision agriculture software such as SMS, Case AFS, John Deere's Apex and free GIS programs such as MapWindow. The elevation data will help to sort hills, flats and low spots. The gamma-radiometrics data relates to the parent material of the top 30cm of soil and may be useful for understanding soil variation in some areas.

Although the current data is predominantly Victorian, there is some from SA and NSW with plans to increase the data available. Any feedback on this new page would be welcome by Dr. Jones.

www.malleefocus.com.au/data

State By State

Victoria

Assistance for utilising Federal Funds

The Federal Government has made available to every farmer in EC declared areas a farm management grant of \$5,500 to pay a consultant for professional drought management and recovery advice. Farmers have until 12th June 2009 to apply for these grants.

To assist your application, the Vic DPI is offering a limited number of farmers in the Victorian Mallee free consultation with DPI and MSF staff to develop a report summarizing your situation and outlining options for the future.

This will result in the best possible use of the Federal Government grant.

If you would like to participate in these consultations, contact MSF on 03 5021 9100

SA

Mallee Challenge Paddock

The Mallee Challenge Paddock is a great way to tackle big issues on your own farm with the support of MSF and Rural Solutions SA. To help with the process, MSF is also offering heavily subsidised soil and plant testing. This project will share ideas, issues and solutions with other local farmers but also offer a little competition with great prizes on offer. Prizes will be awarded for paddocks that

- Help improve sustainable and profitable farming
- Are relevant to the local group
- Demonstrate high quality trials

For more details and assistance with demonstration design, contact Chris McDonough, Richard Saunders or Linden Masters (08) 8595 9100

NSW

Kyalite Magical Mystery Tour

Lower Murray Darling CMA and NSW DPI are giving NSW cereal farmers the opportunity for a two day tour of the district to study adaptive management practices. The tour will take in Euston, Kyalite, Nyah West & district. Highlights will include

- Farming systems, technology and the future
- Points, disc openers and precision farming
- Growing cereals for grazing
- And lots more

For NSW cereal farmers, all accommodation, meals and transport will be paid for by Lower Murray Darling CMA. Places are strictly limited so booking is essential. Contact Graeme McIntosh on 0427 201 964