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Recognising Women Farmers

Free Seminar Series

Loxton 23rd September
Werrimull, Balranald & Murray Bridge in October
More details on page 2

VFF/GRDC Grain Marketing Roadshows

Wednesday 23rd September

Breakfast in Duyen
8am at Duyen Football Club
Lunch in Swan Hill
12.30 pm at Swan Hill Jockey Club
VFF Grains Group members and friends are invited to attend one of a series of forums to make sure they make the most of marketing their harvest in 2009. For more information or to book a place contact VFF Grains Group on 1300 882 833.

From The Boardroom

Good-day Members, August and September are always busy months for field days and this year has been no exception. Of course these events do not happen by themselves and I would like to thank all MSF and Agency staff for the great effort put into making them the successes they are. With recent staff changes, this may not have been easy at times, but all went well on the day so well done Team!! This last month I have also been busy meeting with politicians and raising the profile of MSF. Along with Mike Mooney, I went to Melbourne to address the House of Representative's Standing



Sustainability Snapshots

Volume 1, Issue 6, September 2009

Meet the new MSF Executive Manager

Mike Mooney is the new Executive Manager of Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc and officially started work on 24th August. Mike comes to the organisation with significant knowledge of the region and substantial management experience. "I've joined MSF at a really busy time with so many field days going on so I've been kept on my toes," said Mike. "This has given me an opportunity to meet with a lot of our current and potential members across all three states."



Mike Mooney, MSF Executive Manager

"I've also had the opportunity to be a part of several strategic discussions including MSF's involvement in the future of the Mallee Research Station at Walpeup and the formation of a Victorian Grower Group Alliance." Mike Mooney was born and raised in country South Australia and has spent the majority of his working life in regional areas. He moved to the Mallee in 2000 with Telstra Country Wide and was the local Area General Manager from 2003 to 2008. When offered an interstate transfer, Mike opted to remain in this region and after some time working as a consultant and as a participant in the current course of the Australian Rural Leaders Program, he now joins MSF as part of a new look, dynamic team. "There is no doubt there are challenges ahead for both

Mallee farmers and MSF, but life would be pretty boring without challenges, wouldn't it," he commented. "I look forward to working with the talented and committed MSF team to continue to bring real benefits to Mallee dryland farmers."

Dryland Juncea Field Day

A field day is being held to discuss the potential of this tough Brassica break crop for dryland cropping areas.

When: Monday 21st September at 12.30pm

Where: 8km south of Woomelang on the Sunraysia Highway

The TAFE National Centre for Sustainability and the Victorian Department of Primary Industries has organised a bus to take people to the Woomelang site. The bus will leave Mildura at 9.15am and pick up along the way including at Cardross and Duyen.

To book a place on the bus, contact Kathryn Kenny on 0429 448 097. Seats are filling fast!

Committee on Primary Industries and Resources Inquiry into Australian Farmers and Climate Change. I feel this was a very worthwhile exercise with interest shown in our organisation and the farming systems group model. At the invitation of John Forrest, Member for Mallee, MSF and other industry groups also met with Warren Truss and Nigel Scullion in Mildura. Again MSF got a good hearing and I am confident that awareness of Mallee farmers has been raised in Canberra.
Jim Maynard
Chairman

What Women Want



Australian Government
Department of Agriculture,
Fisheries and Forestry

Time Management, Networking and Goal Setting were the most popular topics at the recent Recognising Women Farmers seminars held in Wentworth and Duyen.

Recognising Women Farmers is a project involving a series of seminars to develop the skills of women in the agricultural sector.

Many aspects of Certificate IV in Corporate Governance are covered during the workshops as well as leadership and management skills.

These modules promote self development and boost the confidence of the participants to contribute to government and industry decision making processes. The ultimate aim is to encourage participants to think about obtaining placement on local, state and national Boards in order to contribute to the direction of their relevant industries.

Mallee Sustainable Farming has engaged Lin Baddock from Focus Consulting to deliver these seminars which consist of a structured workshop, small group exercises and open discussion.

This project is supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry under its Australia's Farming Future initiative.

Upcoming seminars will be held in
 Loxton Wednesday 23rd September
 Werrimull Tuesday 20th October
 Balranald Thursday 22nd October
 Murray Bridge Saturday 24th October

All seminars run between 9.30am to 4.30pm with lunch provided.

For further information and to register for one of the sessions, contact Focus Consulting on 03 5022 1859.

Predicting and managing Rhizoctonia bare patch disease in cereals

Conservation agriculture has been a double edged sword in the management of Rhizoctonia. Minimising tillage systems substantially reduces any control by cultivation and the early removal of the 'green bridge' of weed roots, while stubble retention provides a valuable source of carbon for soil organisms, enhancing the viability of disease suppressive organisms. The expression of Rhizoctonia in any paddock is due to management and environmental factors that influence the level of pathogen inoculum, inherent suppressive activity, nitrogen availability and crop/root vigour.

At CSIRO a new project researching Rhizoctonia in the paddock and in the laboratory aims to provide better prediction and management of this significant root disease of dryland cropping in southern Australia. The project is a multi-institute collaboration involving SARDI, NSW DPI, DAFWA, Agritech NSW and David Roget.

The new research project consists of core field trials in three soil types at Waikerie, SA (Mallee sand-MSF Inc), Streaky Bay, SA (Alkaline calcareous loam-EP farming systems group) and Galong, NSW (Red brown earth - Agritech NSW). Treatments will provide differences in level of tillage and rotation. Soil samples collected during the summer, early autumn period and soil and root samples gathered in winter will be assessed for inoculum, disease levels and microbial communities in relation to the treat-

ments and the season.

Changes in Rhizoctonia inoculum during summer months are being monitored using soil samples from nine field sites in SA, NSW and WA located on commercial paddocks with at least a three year history of stubble retention and continuous cropping.

Annual field experiments to evaluate short term management options such as the use of seed applied fungicides, modifying crop nutrition and tillage are being conducted at Waikerie, Streaky Bay and in WA.

These field experiments will be supported by laboratory investigations to determine the specific functional groups of microbial communities that respond to carbon additions and their link

to disease suppressive potential. Preliminary results indicate significant differences in the types of bacterial groups found in suppressive and non-suppressive soils. Observations from this laboratory work will be used to select the microbial parameters that can be measured in soil samples collected from the field trials and paddock surveys.

Gupta V.V.S.R. CSIRO Entomology, Glen Osmond, SA

GRDC project code: CSE00048

Researchers involved:

Gupta, VVSR, Stephanie Diallo and John Kirkegaard - CSIRO

Alan McKay and Kathy Ophel-Keller (SARDI)
David Roget



Rhizoctonia core trial at Waikerie (Glen Schmidt's farm) to investigate the impact of rotation and tillage on Rhizoctonia inoculum levels and suppressive microbial communities in order to improve disease prediction.



Got Something To Say Others Would Like To Hear? 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

Header School

Learn about producing yield maps, successfully using data cards, check and tips for yield monitor and making the most of header time.

South Australia
Thursday 8th October
Loxton (morning)
Pinaroo (afternoon)
Free for SPAA members,
\$50 for non-members

Victoria
Wednesday 14th October
Manangatang
Free for all participants
Contact Sam Trengove to register attendance on 0428 262 057

Oil Mallee Workshop

Earlier this month, five delegates from the Oil Mallee Association in WA travelled to Mildura to deliver presentations on their experiences in growing Mallee species in the Victorian Mallee. The presenters discussed a number of topics ranging from site selection and establishment through to the end result in terms of products, economics and carbon sequestration/trading.

Farm forestry, especially the Mallee eucalyptus industry, has been gaining momentum for some years in WA as an alternative financial stream for cereal growers. The Oil Mallee Association has been at the forefront of this working with small communities across the grain growing belt areas. In Narrogin, over 10 million trees have been planted whilst in Katanning, 1200 landholders are engaged in farm forestry with interest still growing.

Integrating mallees into farming systems either as belts or as strategically located blocks ensures maximum impact in reducing groundwater recharge as well as providing habitat for birds, insects and mammals whilst still enabling the growing of cereal crops. To be able to undertake both activities, careful planning is needed to maximise production from both enterprises.

A number of products can result from the harvesting of Mallee trees. The main products the Oil Mallee Association promote are biomass fuel, liquid fuel, wood products, eucalyptus oil, activated carbon and carbon sink, with the main aim to establish a number of

industries whereby the whole tree is utilised.

Two main conclusions came out of the day. The first was that the establishment of Mallee trees in our environment is likely to be difficult without some assistance. Essentially the problem is getting the trees through the first summer and this may mean setting trees up on a dripper system.

The second conclusion was that the visiting Western Australians are interested in pursuing trial plantings in this area. Some local growers have already indicated interest in participating in these trials.

Kathryn Kenny
Project Officer

The Oil Mallee workshop was funded by the Victorian Department of Primary Industries under the Supporting Industry Development Organisations initiative.



Representatives from the Oil Mallee Association in Western Australia discuss the potential for the industry in the Mallee of south eastern Australia. Fact sheets are available by contacting MSF on 03 5021 9100 or admin@msfp.org.au

Next Gen Farmers

Educational Roadshow

The Loddon Murray Community Leadership Program is organising a 3 day roadshow aimed at developing the skills and confidence of young people (aged 18-30) involved in an agricultural industry to take on leadership roles on a local through to national level.

Participants will travel around north west and central Victoria with workshops targeting change management, governance, project management, setting goals/time management and speaking/presentation skills. All accommodation and meals will be provided to participants at no cost through funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture Fisheries and Forestry under its Australia's Farming Future initiative. More information can be obtained from Julie Slater on 03 5498 3270 or info@lmclp.org.au.

The Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc Annual General Meeting will be held at 2pm on Friday 23rd October, 2009 in the Faulkhead Room at the Hotel Mildura.

Sustainability Snapshots

Short season varieties to shorten risk



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Mallee Growing Season Rainfall

The table below show rainfall figures for 1st April to 14th September, 2009.

Balranald	113.3 mm
Hay	150.0 mm
Hopetoun	147.8 mm
Karoonda	153.7 mm
Lake Victoria	117.1 mm
Lameroo	163.8 mm
Loxton	77.8 mm
Mildura	87.0 mm
Murray Bridge	189.2 mm
Ouyen	127.3 mm
Pooncarie	90.3 mm
Renmark	99.8 mm
Swan Hill	137.6 mm
Walpeup	160.4 mm

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Over the last few weeks, I have had many discussions on wheat varieties and in particular about the value of short season wheats. New varieties are being developed and released at a rate which has not been seen before and this offers great opportunities for Mallee farmers. Each variety has different physiological characteristics, susceptibility to pest and disease and tolerances to soil and environmental conditions, however none are 'Silver Bullets'. By adopting a suite of varieties, you can reduce the risk of these factors affecting your productivity. The issue of short season varieties (particularly Axe) has been at the top of peoples minds. Traditionally, crops are sown at an optimum time to avoid the risk of frost during flowering. Recently however, the risk of hot conditions during flowering and false breaks has become more prominent. Short season wheats have a short growing season and grow and mature much quicker than traditional varieties like Yitpi.

This means that they can be sown later without the yield penalties experienced when mid-long season varieties are sown late. Or as the last few seasons have shown, short season wheats sown early are better able to withstand dry springs as they mature earlier. In last year's Victorian variety trials, Axe produced yields that were 9 % greater to more than twice the yield of Yitpi across 8 trial sites. As both varieties were sown at exactly the same time at each site, this is not a surprising

result given the poor finish to the season. If spring rainfall had been greater you might expect that Yitpi would have performed better. Therefore, the use of shorter season varieties should be viewed as a risk management strategy. Just exactly how you integrate short season varieties into your management will depend on your individual circumstance. For example you may decide to plant 20% of your crop to a short season variety each year to manage the risk of poor finishes to the season. Alternatively, in seasons where there is a late break, the proportion of short season varieties sown could be significantly increased.

As mentioned earlier, there are no 'Silver Bullet' varieties. All have a weak link and the one that you choose could be susceptible to certain diseases or have other undesirable characteristics such as high screenings or light grain weight. In the case of Axe, it is not resistant to Cereal Cyst Nematode (CCN)

and therefore will need to be grown in rotation with other CCN resistant varieties. It would be prudent not to reintroduce disease problems such as CCN which have plagued Mallee crops in the past. I strongly encourage you to explore the range of varieties available to you. Consult your agronomist, state department or go to <http://www.nvtonline.com.au>.



Short season wheat 'Axe' sown at Kerribee this season

Michael Moodie
MSF Agronomist

2009 Waikerie Field Day



Drew Radford interviews Allen Buckley and Chris McDonaugh from the Waikerie Field Day for the ABC's South Australian Country Hour. You can hear a podcast from the Field Days at <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/sa/content/2009/09/s2673344.htm>