

## IN THIS ISSUE

Thinking About Next Year's Crop  
From The Boardroom  
LawrieCo Sponsors MSF  
Mallee Case Study Book Out Now  
Ron Hards Joins MSF Board

## Diary Note



The MSF office will close for the Festive Season between Thursday 24th December 2009 and Monday 4th January 2010.

The Board and Staff of MSF wish you and your family a joyous Christmas and health and prosperity in 2010.

## From The Boardroom

Good-day Members,  
As we shift into harvest mode and contemplate those long hours on the header, it occurs to me that we could make good use of this time by thinking about our research, demonstration and educational needs.  
Whenever I am out and about, I try and stress to people that MSF is here for us, the Mallee dryland farmer, and for the organisation to remain relevant and productive for us, MSF needs to know what we want.  
Funding dollars are hard to come by these days and with the State governments shifting responsibility for research and extension to groups like MSF, we have to change how we operate as well.  
Funding applications are substantial documents that may take MSF staff many, many hours to compile and then there is



# Sustainability Snapshots

Volume 1, Issue 8, November 2009

## Time To Think About Next Year's Crop

**Q. How many times a year do you come within 10 metres of your entire crop?**

**A. Once, at harvest.**

This is a great time to start thinking about next year's cropping program. As you spend countless hours on the header, get added value out of your time by taking a good look at your crop to understand the factors that may be limiting your yields. This is the last chance to find those weedy patches, disease hotspots or nutritional problems in your paddocks.

It will be beneficial to record what you see (easier if your header has Autosteer) by taking a notepad, hand drawn maps or aerial photographs such as from Google Earth. Keep a good eye on the yield monitor or, if you do not have one, keep an eye on how much grain is coming into the bin. This information may not

only be useful for planning next year's crops, but for those using yield mapping, the information will help to decipher the results.

Following are some things to look out for.

### Weeds

Weeds that have escaped control over the season can produce very large quantities of viable seed and will increase the seed bank in the following season. For example, a dense population of Annual Ryegrass (100 plants/m<sup>2</sup>) can produce up to 45,000 seeds/m<sup>2</sup> under favourable conditions. *Cont page 3*

## LawrieCo Sponsors MSF

MSF is delighted to announce that a sponsorship agreement has been signed with LawrieCo. LawrieCo is a leading biological product supplier operating in South Eastern Australia.  
As part of this sponsorship package, a rebate deal is being formulated that will see benefits for MSF and its Members. More details will be available in future editions of Sustainability Snapshots.



often a long wait to hear if the application is successful. I have known it to take up to 2 years to get through all the negotiations – and after that 2 years nothing has even been sown!

But as members of the organisation we can all contribute to its success. As farmers, our role is to make sure that our ideas are heard by the organisation and are ready for funding applications when the right one comes along.

MSF has State Reference Committees in all three Mallee states and these provide an excellent conduit between farmers and MSF Board and staff. However even if you are not a member of a State Reference Committee, MSF would still like to hear about your concerns.

Let's all give it some thought.

**Jim Maynard**  
Chairman

## OUT NOW!

### Strategic Practical Options For Integrating Cropping and Livestock Systems



Rural Solutions SA have compiled an invaluable publication called Strategic Options for Integrating Cropping and Livestock Systems.

The booklet comprises 20 case studies of successful mixed farming enterprises in the South Australian Mallee with relevance for all low rainfall dryland farmers.

The enterprises cover a range of cropping/livestock ratios from 100% cropping to 50/50% cropping/livestock mix.

The booklet was compiled by Mehdi Zaboli and Tamara Rohrlach both Sustainable Farming Systems Consultants with Rural Solutions SA in Murray Bridge.

Each farm's operation is described in detail with expert comments provided by a range of specialists.

The Rural Solutions SA experts include:

Tim Prance, Senior Consultant Pastures & Grazing Systems;

Bruce Hancock, Senior Livestock Consultant; Albert Singh, Senior Livestock Consultant; Linden Masters, Sustainable Farming Systems Consultant.

This publication is a result of the Implementing Sustainable and Productive Forage Systems in the Murray Mallee project and has been funded by Caring For Our Country.

Strategic Practical Options For Integrating Cropping and Livestock Systems is available on line at [www.msfp.org.au](http://www.msfp.org.au) with a link from the front page or at the Other Publications section in the Library.

Hard copies are available to MSF members on request. Phone 03 5021 9100 or email [admin@msfp.org.au](mailto:admin@msfp.org.au) and we will post one out to you.

## Ron Hards Joins MSF Board

At the recent Mallee Sustainable Farming Inc. AGM, Ron Hards was confirmed as MSF's newest Board member. Ron has been elected for a two year term as one of two Victorian farmer representatives on the MSF Board.

"Ron's skills and experience will add to what I believe is already a talented and committed Board" said Jim Maynard, MSF Chairman.

"The landscape in which farming system groups like MSF operate is changing" he added, "and a Board can never have too much talent!"

Mr. Hards has been farming in the Victorian Millewa since 1967 and has developed an extensive grain operation which includes up to 4 000 hectares under no till as well as precision farming practices incorporating variable rate technology.

He has been active in agripolitics since the late eighties including terms on the Graincorp Ltd Board, the Grains Council of Australia and 11 years on the VFF Grains Group

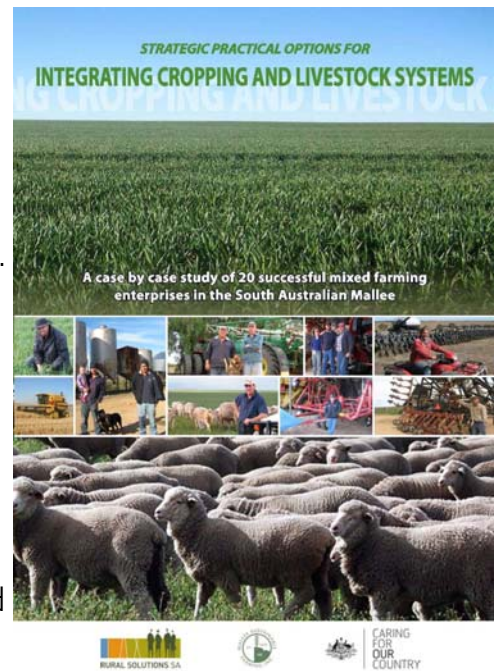
Executive. Mr. Hards was President of the VFF Grains Group from 1998 to 2003.

"I am delighted to have been elected to the MSF Board" said Mr. Hards, "as I believe we should continue to plan for the future of dryland agriculture in the face of climate variability, global markets and an increasing population that must be fed."

"We need farming systems, varieties and rotations to cope with these changes and MSF continues to work for dryland farmers to achieve and improve this knowledge", said Mr. Hards.



Ron Hards was elected Victorian Farmer representative on the MSF Board at the recent AGM.



## 2009/10 MSF Board

- Jim Maynard (NSW), Chairman
- Ian Hastings (Vic), Vice Chairman and Treasurer
- Paula Gordon, Secretary
- Glynn Schmidt (SA)
- Tim O'Halloran (NSW)
- Darren Nitschke (SA)
- Ron Hards (Vic)
- Rick Llewellyn (CSIRO)



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### Mallee Growing Season Rainfall

The table below show rainfall figures for 1st April to 30th October, 2009.

Balranald	138.5 mm
Hay	173.0 mm
Hopetoun	183.4 mm
Karoonda	242.2 mm
Lake Victoria	151.3 mm
Lameroo	240.0 mm
Loxton	128.4 mm
Mildura	127.2 mm
Murray Bridge	267.5mm
Ouyen	230.9mm
Pooncarie	111.6 mm
Renmark	149.2 mm
Swan Hill	190.8mm
Walpeup	252.2 mm

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## Time To Think About Next Year's Crop (cont from page 1)

### Weeds (cont from page 1)

Dense populations of weeds can also be an indication of the development of herbicide resistance. If you have a long history of Group B (e.g. Glean, Logran) or Group D (Treflan) herbicide use and weed numbers seem to be building, it would be well worthwhile collecting a sample of the weed seed and having it tested for herbicide resistance. Having recorded which paddocks have weed problems, where in the paddock the problem occurs and what weeds are present, will help you make informed decisions at sowing time in 2010. This could include strategies such as delayed sowing, using a 'double knock' or adjusting your rotation to chemical fallow next season. Equally, by knowing that paddocks are 'clean' can help you to dry sow with confidence in 2010.

### Disease

The effects of many root diseases become obvious at the end of the season. Bleach-white and empty heads are an indication of Crown Rot and Take-

All. Crown Rot tends to affect scattered plants or tillers, where as Take-All will occur in larger patches.

Rhizoctonia and Cereal Cyst Nematode (CCN) will appear as patches of dwarfed and spindly plants. It is important that you distinguish between these two diseases in crops which do not have a good level of CCN resistance. Some of the new varieties being used do

not have a high level of CCN resistance and continuous cropping using varieties with poor CCN resistance could lead to the failure of the system. Furthermore, knowing the paddocks where Rhizoctonia was or was not a problem will allow you to reflect on which management strategies in your soils best controls the disease (e.g. time of sowing, rotation, tillage, crop nutrition).

### Nutrition

This is a good time to evaluate your fertiliser strategies. If you have lowered your fertiliser input in some parts of the paddock over the past few seasons, pay particular attention to these areas.

Stunted plants are an indication of phosphorus deficiency. Parts of the paddock where phosphorus

deficiency can occur can be the very sandy soils and the highly calcareous and stony soils. Poor tillering plants with spindly stems can be a result of nitrogen and sulphur deficiency. Again, pay particular attention to the sandy soils of your paddocks to assess how effective your nutrition program has been.

### Summer Weeds

The value of having sub-soil moisture available to the crop in spring has been highlighted time and time again over the past four years. Sub soil moisture results in significant yield increases, particularly in years of low growing season rainfall. Building up subsoil moisture usually begins soon after harvest. Summer weeds need to be controlled early to prevent soil moisture being used up before the crop can access it. Not only can weeds such as melons or heliotrope deplete the soil profile of moisture, they can also draw down the soil moisture to a lower level than cereal crops. Therefore in paddocks with high summer

weed burdens, your soil moisture levels could, in effect, become negative at the end of summer. Summer weeds can also use up valuable nitrogen. This can suppress yields and the grain protein content of the following crop and increase your fertiliser bill next year.

As you are covering your paddocks in the header, keep an eye out for which paddocks and which parts of paddocks



*Sitting on the header during harvest is the perfect time to think about the management of next year's crop.*

already have summer weeds germinating. It is difficult to determine the best economic strategy for controlling summer weeds (i.e control early or late). Things to consider are chemicals rates and costs, how much soil moisture is present, the likelihood of more rainfall, if you need follow up control and the amount of rainfall received in the following season.

We hope you have a successful harvest that rewards you for the hard work and good management that you have put in over the year.

**Michael Moody**  
**MSF Agronomist**