

# UNFS UPDATE



Upper North Farming Systems Newsletter

December 2018

## A Bright 2019 on the Horizon *Ruth Sommerville*

To say that 2018 has been a challenging season would to most be an understatement. It has however been a productive year for UNFS, one of finishing off some long running projects, in particular the GRDC Funded Stubble Initiative.

If you haven't seen our book of Stubble Management Guidelines please get in touch!

It has also been a year of negotiations on new projects and we have some great projects planned for 2019 including:

- ◇ Final wrap up of the Time of Sowing for Wheat Trial (SAGIT funded) - 3 years of data will provide a great report for our 2019 Annual Report. We intend to submit a similar trial, but with a Barley focus, to SAGIT for the next funding round.
- ◇ The Micronutrients in the Upper North (SAGIT funded) will continue in 2019 building on the results from this years trials. Despite the challenging growing conditions we are excited to see the harvest and tissue testing results analysed.
- ◇ The Pulse Check Group will continue in 2019 with another successful trial site planned, a bus tour being discussed and more facilitated discussion sessions to tackle all your pulse growing challenges. New members always welcome!
- ◇ New "Warm and Cool Season Cover Cropping for Sustainable Farming Systems in SE Australia" project will begin in 2019. A 3 year project looking at increasing diversity on farm to improve soil health and diversity under farm.
- ◇ Ladies on the Land are running more workshops in 2019 focussing on Precision Agriculture.
- ◇ We have 4 submissions currently in for significant partnership projects focussing on "Mixed Farming Profitability; Barley Grass Management; Healthy Soils in Livestock Enterprises; Healthy Farms, Healthy Farmers and Weathering the Drought Workshops. These may not all be successful but we are optimistic and excited by what they may bring to the region and your businesses in the future!

We are always on the look out for new project ideas or things to add to our list of challenges to farming in the Upper North. Make sure you get along to one of our events over the coming weeks and chat to your hub rep, or drop them a line and let them know your thoughts!

### Also in this issue

- Project Update
- New weather station project
- Hub updates
- Ladies on the land
- 'I farm well' resource
- Seasonal Climate Forecasts - Valuable or not?
- Drought Support & Assistance Measures for Primary Producers.
- APVMA Changes to 2, 4-D labelling
- Heavy Vehicles Work Diary Exemptions
- New AGT wheat variety
- SAGIT media release
- New GRDC factsheets and podcast information
- Calendar of Events

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## Farewell Hannah

Hannah Mikajlo joined us back in 2017 as the UNFS Project Officer based in Jamestown. In the 18 months she has been with the group she has wrapped up the Stubble Initiative, managed the Time of Sowing and Micronutrient Trial Sites and assisted with the many



events we've run over the period. With the changing nature of our funding for 2019 unfortunately we are unable to keep a full time project officer on and as such Hannah is off to explore other aspects of agriculture research. We thank her for her contributions to the group and wish her well in her future research, I'm sure we'll see her name attached to research projects in the future!

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### Have you heard about this new exciting project?

#### Mid North Mesonet Project



Construction is underway with four weather stations installed at Hart, Pinery, Balaklava and Jamestown. The installation involved the Observatory Group coming across from Victoria to oversee and train local technicians. The Observatory Group operate worldwide and are providing the instruments for meteorological, process monitoring, air and climate technology within this project. Weather data is currently being collected from these stations to assist with the rollout of the full network in coming months.

This exciting project is being managed by Ag Excellence with funding support from PIRSA, GPSA, N&Y NRM and Wine Grape Growers Assoc. Further information contact Mark Stanley, Project Leader on 0427 831 151 or email [mark@regionalconnections.com.au](mailto:mark@regionalconnections.com.au)

## Project update

Hannah Mikajlo, Project Officer

One of our largest projects this year has been the wheat Time of Sowing trial, situated just north of Booleroo Centre. This is the third year that we have run the trial, and once again we are expecting to collect some very interesting results. Frost, moisture stress and heat damage have all had an impact. Just based on visual assessments, the fast-maturing Hatched has one again been the worst affected by frost, while the slower maturing varieties have all struggled with moisture stress. Once we have harvested the plots and analysed the data, we will be able to properly compare all the different wheat varieties and times of sowing.

Another big UNFS project has been one focusing on micronutrients. We ran three trials this year, two looking at zinc and copper in wheat and another looking at zinc and molybdenum in lentils. Unfortunately, this year has not been a good one for testing crop responses to micronutrients, with the less than ideal seasonal conditions masking most of the effects the micronutrients may have had. There were no obvious visual differences between the treatments, although tissue samples from the lentil crop showed that the plants had responded positively to the molybdenum applications. The first wheat trial was harvested earlier this week, and once the other two are harvested and all the data analysed, we will be able to tell you more.



One of the micronutrient trials being harvested

Andrew Kitto explaining his harvester set-up at one of the pulse check group meetings.



The pulse extension project has been a third major UNFS project. Between the seasonal conditions and the Indian tariffs, this has been a difficult year for pulse growing.

Based on feedback for the pulse check group meetings UNFS ran, the workshops were still greatly appreciated by those who attended. The trial at Warnertown, investigating time of sowing, moisture levels, stubble architecture and pulse varieties, has certainly been a highlight. UNFS will be running a further four workshops next year.



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**Melrose Hub Crop Walk** was held on 23 August 2018. Andrew Walter led the group visiting various farms in the Melrose district with discussion focusing primarily on legume crops, time of sowing, pre/post seeding treatments and some paired/spreader boots vs standard seeding boots.

Crops visited included Chick Peas, Faba Beans, Lentils, Barley and Field Peas. The day ended with a BBQ and catchup at Caleb Girdham's new shearing shed.



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## Introduction to Precision Agriculture

*Jessica Koch*



On October 30<sup>th</sup> a group of women from around the district came along to learn 'An Introduction to Precision Agriculture'.

Designed to be a 'taste test' to what's out there, this workshop covered how autosteer systems work, what can be achieved with GPS/RTK systems and what's new in technology for livestock.

We looked at how a drone can give you a view to a known paddock problem.

After smoko we looked at different maps and what value they can provide and also discussed how they're recorded. These included pH, nutrient maps, EM38, NDVI, protein and yield. There were a number of examples of how mapping or technologies could make or save you money.

All attendees were given a demo login to some cloud based software which allowed them to login and view a number of map layers for some local fields and how they correlated to one another.

In the afternoon we headed out to look over local farmer - Todd Orrock's harvester. We looked at the hardware on the system including the protein and moisture monitor and various other technologies like a machine mounted weather station.

There will be another Precision Ag workshop held in early 2019 to build on the knowledge learnt in the first workshop.

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## Online resource for farmers' mental health

University of South Australia Research Fellow Dr Kate Fennell has developed an online resource called iFarmWell.

The website is designed to help farmers cope effectively with life's challenges and get the most out of every day, which it does this by sharing practical ways of coping with difficult circumstances, thoughts and feelings and helping to work out where it is most useful for farmers to put their attention and energy.

The resource is free and can be accessed online. **Details:** [iFarmWell website](#)

Source: GPSA Newsletter



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## Seasonal Climate Forecasts - Valuable or not?



Barry Mudge

We all know that climate variability is a major source of risk to grain grower profitability in the southern Australian grains region. GRDC has recognised this with a significant investment aimed at improving the way the grains industry manages climate risk and specifically how and when imperfect but improving seasonal outlook forecasts (SCF) can be used to improve grain grower profitability in the southern region.

The project has three main components:

1. Extending the "The Break" e-newsletter and video communication to cover the whole GRDC southern region. This will involve a South Australian, Victorian and Tasmanian version.
2. Working closely with about 20 advisors from South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania through two workshops to explore if and how seasonal climate forecasts can be better incorporated into the management of grain farms.
3. Create a summary publication with case studies and worked examples to assist GRDC Southern region growers and advisors on the use of seasonal forecast information to better target crop inputs, manage risk and increase profitability.

The project is being led by Graeme Anderson and Dale Grey from Agriculture Victoria. In addition to overall project management, they lead the extension of the successful "The Break" suite of communication products across the Southern region.

Component 2 above is being led by Dr. Peter Hayman (SARDI) working with Barry Mudge (Low rainfall farmer from Port Germein, SA) and Mark Stanley (Regional Connections). It looks specifically at the decision-making process behind the use of seasonal climate forecasts and how we may be able to make this process more robust.

As a starting point, we know that what has happened in the past (e.g. historic rainfall decile) can be very informative about what might happen in the future. Seasonal Climate Forecasts potentially provide some additional information that can be brought into the decision analysis.

*Early conclusions from this work are as follows:*

*Farmers are regularly faced with the need to make important decisions, the outcomes of which can be highly variable depending on the climate state which occurs after the decision is made. While not appropriate in all cases, some "slow thinking" objectivity about the range of possible outcomes can be beneficial to the decision-making process.*

*There are times when the additional information contained in seasonal climate forecasts can have an important role in making decisions more robust. Identifying these times will be aided by due recognition of both the level of skill in the forecast and the amount of change from historic climatology.*

*Equally important will be the need to identify those times when either the skill of the forecast is poor, or the projected change is insufficient to affect the decision process.*

In the long run there are likely to be economic benefits of "slow thinking" but also psychological benefits. Clarifying the difference between good decisions that used the best information at the time and decisions that are lucky or unlucky depending on the season is likely to reduce stress.

To subscribe to The Break, please contact <https://confirmsubscription.com/h/r/00140824AC7E078C> or **Email:** [the.break@ecodev.vic.gov.au](mailto:the.break@ecodev.vic.gov.au)

An expanded version of the thinking behind Component 2 above can be found at the following link:  
<https://grdc.com.au/resources-and-publications/grdc-update-papers/tab-content/grdc-update-papers/2018/08/climate-sensitive-decisions-fast-graphs-for-slow-thinking>

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## Drought Support & Assistance Measures for Primary Producers

PRIMARY  
INDUSTRIES  
& REGIONS SA  
PIRSA

Mary-Anne Young, PIRSA.

A number of services and forms of assistance are available to help primary producers with worries because of the dry season (and frost).

The Rural Financial Counselling Service is a good first call to make – a free, independent, confidential person can cast an eye over your finances, help you do a business analysis, identify forms of assistance and support you are eligible for and assist with applications, particularly the Farm Household Allowance. Even if you are fairly confident of your strategies for dealing with the season, it could be reassuring to discuss them with a rural financial counsellor.

Freecall 1800 836 211 [www.ruralbusinesssupport.org.au](http://www.ruralbusinesssupport.org.au)

Family and Business Support Mentors can help people discuss and address difficult issues that have come about as a result of the drought. People who find themselves stressed, unable to make decisions or take action to deal with their circumstances, can meet with and talk to a FaB mentor who has connections to a range of services and programs, including the Rural Financial Counselling Service.

Call Kay Matthias (FaB Mentor Coordinator) 0427 430 243; PIRSA's Hotline 1800 255 556 or email [PIRSA.Recovery@sa.gov.au](mailto:PIRSA.Recovery@sa.gov.au)

Farm Household Allowance is available for eligible farmers and their partners suffering financial hardship (not just drought related). This comprises fortnightly payments + supplements as well as other benefits. Many producers are eligible for this support but not applying; in many situations people are "self-assessing" i.e. assuming for some reason or other they are not eligible so not applying. It is well worth discussing with a Rural Financial Counsellor.

There are several other services, agencies, organisations and charities providing support and assistance to primary producers.

For further information, go to [www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants\\_and\\_assistance/drought\\_support](http://www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants_and_assistance/drought_support)  
Or contact me: [Mary-Anne.Young@sa.gov.au](mailto:Mary-Anne.Young@sa.gov.au) Mob: 0418 897 775

# MIXED COVER CROPS

FOR SUSTAINABLE FARMING

## Summer Weed Control – The Key to Successful Cropping in Low Rainfall Environments

In a winter cropping system, the return on investment from managing weeds in summer fallow (i.e. the period between crops) is high. Economic benefits flow from both extra amounts of high value water and nitrogen, crop establishment benefits and reduced issues with weed vectored disease and insect pests.

Stopping weed growth in the fallow can lead to yield increases in the following crop via several pathways. These include:

- Increased plant available water
- A wider and more reliable sowing window
- Higher levels of plant available N
- Reduced levels of weed vectored diseases and nematodes
- Reduced levels of rust inoculum via interruption of the green bridge
- Reduced levels of diseases vectored by aphids that build in numbers on summer weeds
- Reduced weed physical impacts on crop establishment.

How farming country is managed in the months or years before sowing can be more important in lifting water use efficiency (WUE) than in-crop management. Of particularly high impact are strategies that increase soil capture and storage of fallow rainfall to improve crop reliability and yield.

While many factors influence how much plant available water is stored in a fallow period, good weed management consistently has the greatest impact.

[www.grdc.com.au/GRDC-Manual-SummerFallowWeedManagement](http://www.grdc.com.au/GRDC-Manual-SummerFallowWeedManagement)





## Heavy vehicle work diary exemption for growers

GPSA is pleased to confirm that the NHVR has renewed the 160km work diary exemption for primary producers who are transporting produce. This exemption was originally introduced in 2015 and allows primary producers to transport produce in a vehicle over 12 tonnes within a 160km radius of their base.

More information on NHVR's heavy vehicle fatigue laws can be found on their [website](http://www.nhvr.gov.au). [www.nhvr.gov.au](http://www.nhvr.gov.au)



Source: GPSA Newsletter



## APVMA Changes to 2,4-D Labelling

**Grain growers considering applying 2,4-D need to know about the APVMA's changes to the 2,4-D label:**

- The full instructions can be found here <https://apvma.gov.au/node/32941>.
- Do not spray when a surface temperature inversion is present.
- Applicators must now use at least a Very Coarse (VC) spray quality.
- When using a boom sprayer, boom heights must be 0.5m or lower above the target canopy.
- Downwind buffers now apply (typically less than 50m, subject to rate and product being applied) between application sites, downwind sensitive crops and environmentally sensitive aquatic areas.
- Additional record keeping is required. Operators need to update spray records, with greater detail, within 24 hours of application and keep these records for a minimum of two years.

GRDC has a comprehensive range of free resources on spray application:

<https://grdc.com.au/spray-drift>.



Source: GRDC Newsletter.

# Clearfield® wheat gets a yield boost with the release of

## AGT's Razor CL Plus

Dan Vater, General Manager, Marketing & Seed Production

**New AGT variety Razor CL Plus offers yields competitive with Mace and Scepter, along with tolerance to Intervix® herbicide.**

Australian Grain Technologies have set a new yield benchmark for Clearfield® wheat varieties with the release of Razor CL Plus.

The Clearfield® production system involving cereal varieties that are tolerant to Intervix® herbicide continues to play an integral part of in-crop weed management throughout SA. However, until now, there has been a significant yield gap between the best Clearfield® varieties (Kord CL Plus, Grenade CL Plus), and the best non-Clearfield® varieties (Mace, Scepter).

Razor CL Plus (tested as RAC2517) addresses this issue, offering yields competitive with Mace and Scepter, along with tolerance to Intervix® herbicide. Long term NVT yield predictions show that Razor CL Plus offers a 12-13% yield advantage over Grenade CL Plus and Kord CL Plus, 3% yield increase over its parent Mace, and a 7% yield advantage over another newly released Clearfield® variety Chief CL Plus.



“We believe that Razor CL Plus offers the best overall package of yield, adaptation and disease resistance out of all of the currently available Clearfield® varieties,” commented AGT wheat breeder, James Edwards. “Being bred from Mace, Razor CL Plus shows the same wide adaptation as its parent, but is slightly quicker maturing which can be an advantage in the lower rainfall environments where the Clearfield® system is particularly useful to help control brome and barley grass.”

Razor CL Plus has an ASW quality classification, and therefore growers will have to determine whether the yield advantage that Razor CL Plus offers over other Clearfields® generates additional income in their unique situation.

“AGT is committed to releasing varieties that provide value to growers,” noted Marketing Manager Dan Vater.

“Growers need to decide whether a high yielding ASW variety is more profitable than a lower yielding APW or AH variety. It will depend on the price split between the quality grades at time of sale, how often they produce grain that actually makes the higher grades, and the intent behind using a Clearfield® variety. Generally, Clearfield® varieties are used on poorer, problem paddocks where the grower may accept ASW quality if the trade-off is more yield and increased weed control options”.

Razor CL Plus seed will be available through Booleroo Centre Seeds for the 2019 planting season and subject to an End Point Royalty of \$3.30 + GST per tonne.

**Disclaimer:** “AGT is a sponsor of the UNFS. This article is supplied and not endorsed by the UNFS”.



## New Chairman and trustee announced for SAGIT board

The South Australian Grain Industry Trust is welcoming a new Chairman and trustee to its board, bolstering its wealth of expertise leading the South Australian grains research sector.

Ardrossan farmer and existing Group A Trustee Max Young has been appointed to the role of Chairman, replacing Michael Treloar who is standing down after four years in the position. Mr Young is joined by newly appointed Group B Trustee and former plant breeder and researcher and now grower Professor Andy Barr.

“This year has been particularly tough for farmers and researchers alike,” he said. “For many, it is a matter of getting through this season and looking forward to a fresh start next year.

“As trustees of SAGIT, our role is to administer the grower levy and invest in research which provides real outcomes for growers in this state. The trustees, with support from the excellent management team, are able to manage this in a very efficient and cost-effective manner.”

“As a trustee it has become very clear that supporting investment in grains research ultimately leads to an increase in profitability for growers. Therefore it is important this investment continues to allow SA growers to be champions of innovation and remain at the cutting edge of this amazing industry.”

Source: SAGIT media release



South Australian Grain Industry Trust trustee Max Young is taking on the role of chairman, replacing Michael Treloar who has held the position for the past four years.



Disclaimer: "SAGIT is a sponsor of the UNFS. This article is supplied and not endorsed by the UNFS"



## Get the farm business facts with new resources

The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) is further assisting growers with their farm business decision-making through the release of new national resources.

The GRDC has published another five Farm Business Fact Sheets focused on the topics of structuring your business for generational transfer; applying corporate principles and processes to the family farm; capital gains tax implications on the sale or transfer of farmland; transferring farmland into a self-managed superannuation fund investing in a sprayer.

Source: GRDC media release

Disclaimer: "GRDC is a sponsor of the UNFS. This article is supplied and not endorsed by the UNFS"



## **“Something to listen to”**

### **New GRDC Podcast Available: Unlocking opportunities to conquer sandy soil**



**Research is demonstrating that substantial opportunities exist to increase the productivity of crops grown on poor-performing sandy soils in the southern cropping region with some treatments applied to sandy soils delivering returns on investment of up to 520 per cent.**

**Researchers involved in the ongoing studies advise growers to assess the potential to increase yields and any associated risks before implementing any new treatments and practices.**

**The GRDC investment, ‘Increasing production on sandy soils in low and medium rainfall areas of the southern region’, is exploring cost-effective techniques to diagnose and overcome the primary constraints to poor crop water use on about five million hectares of under-performing sandy soils in the southern region.**

**The study is a collaborative effort involving CSIRO, Primary Industries and Regions South Australia, the University of South Australia, Mallee Sustainable Farming, Ag Grow Agronomy and Trengove Consulting.**

**CSIRO research scientist Therese McBeath says a spectrum of crop constraints and interventions across different types of sand and environments is being assessed at several sites in SA, Victoria and southern New South Wales.**

**Interventions include application of soil wetters, improved fertiliser management, lime applications, deep ripping and more aggressive tillage, incorporation of clay or organic matter, and delving.**

**“There has been significant work into sandy soils in recent years, and research has been separated into mitigation strategies which are low-cost annual interventions that typically have a small impact on yield, and high-cost, high-impact and long-term amelioration treatments,” she says.**

**“This project aims to bring all these intervention strategies together, so when a grower is approaching a sandy soil on their farm they can think about all the options available, to decide what management practice is best from a financial and productivity perspective.”**

**Dr McBeath discusses the research investment in a new GRDC podcast, now available for downloading here: <https://grdc.com.au/news-and-media/audio/podcast/improving-crop-productivity-in-sandy-soils>**

**The podcast featuring Dr McBeath is the latest in a new series of GRDC podcasts in which some of the grains sector’s most pre-eminent researchers, growers, advisers and industry stakeholders share their insights and advice on the latest seasonal issues, ground-breaking research and trial results with on-farm application. The series is updated with weekly episodes collected from across Australia’s grain regions and is firmly focused on delivering information to growers and advisers that will help improve profitability.**

**To listen to the new GRDC podcast series go to <https://grdc.com.au/podcasts>.**



# Upcoming Events Calendar

## December 2018

6	2018 Crop Protection Forum, Glenelg	E: ccdm@curtin.edu.au
18	UNFS Committee Christmas Dinner, Laura	Kristina Mudge 0438 840 369

## February 2019

6	Strategic Board Meeting 7pm, Booleroo Centre	Kristina Mudge 0438 840 369
12 - 13	GRDC Grains Research Update ,Adelaide	Matt McCarthy 03 5441 6176
14	GRDC Grains Research Update (Maitland SA)	Brett Symes 03 5441 6176
13 - 15	3rd International Controlled Traffic Farming Conference, Ballarat;	Chris Bluett 0409 336 113
19	MSF Mallee Research Update/NRM Forum, Waikerie	www.msfp.org.au

## March 2019

3 - 8	22nd International Farm Management Assoc Congress, Launceston	Liz Hafner 03 6231 2999
5	Operations Committee Meeting 7pm, Booleroo Centre	Kristina Mudge 0438 840 369
6	SADGA Durum Wheat Pre-seeding Forum, Tarlee SA	Deb Baum 0418 322 821
13	Hart Getting the Crop In Seminar, Hart	Sandy Kimber 0427 423 154
15 - 16	South East Field Days, Lucindale	Lyn Crosby 08 8766 7001
26	MLA & AWI Sheep Industry Forum <i>'It's Ewe time !'</i> , Jamestown SA	Anne Collins 0427 486 115

## April 2019

4 - 5	Ag Excellence Forum & Awards, Adelaide	Kerry Stockman 0418 841 331
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## July 2019

16	Hart Winter Walk, Hart	Sandy Kimber 0427 423 154
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## August 2019

1	UNFS Members Expo, Booleroo Centre	Kristina Mudge 0438 840 369
20 - 22	AgQuip Field Days, Gunnedah NSW	Melanie Ison 02 6768 5800
25 - 29	19th Australian Agronomy Conference, Wagga Wagga	Linda Bennison 0428 900 622

## September 2019

17	Hart Field Day, Hart	Sandy Kimber 0427 423 154
24 - 26	Yorke Peninsula Field Days, Paskeville	Elaine Bussenschutt 08 8827 2040

## October 2019

15	Spring Twilight Walk Hart	Sandy Kimber 0427 423 154
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"Wishing all our members and families a  
**Merry Christmas and Happy New Year**  
from Ruth, Kristina, Mary and Hannah  
and all of the  
Strategic Board and Operations Committee Members."





# Upper North Farming Systems

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