March 2007  

The LFGN Newswire provides information about a range of local group activities, training, field days and funding opportunities for the benefit of local farmer groups. You are welcome to forward this Newswire to others who may be interested and encourage them to join the email list by emailing admin@lfgn.org.au Visit www.lfgn.org.au for previous editions of Newswire.

LFGN GROUP LEADERS SKILLS WORKSHOP – 6TH AND 7TH MARCH  

Over twenty local farmer group members representing fifteen farmer groups attended the workshop last week which focused on group management and leadership. Bruce Yardley, one of the best off-spinners in Australian cricket, was the guest speaker for the Group Leaders Dinner at the University of Western Australia Watersports Complex. An in depth brief on climate forecasting by David Stephens from DAFWA and long term economic outlook for agriculture by Dr Ross Kingwell, DAFWA was incorporated into the workshop. 

For a short summary of the workshop proceedings will soon be found on the website at http://www.lfgn.org.au/resources/reports.

REGIONAL LFGN MEETINGS TO BE HELD IN MARCH-APRIL  

Regional meetings which bring local grower groups together are planned for March and April. The purpose of these meetings is to assist neighbourhood farmer groups to discuss collaborative projects, share resources and develop regional networks.

Meetings are planned for:  
Geraldton Ocean Centre Hotel – 8.00 am on the 20th March  
Lake King’s Lakes Breaks B&B – 8.00 am on the 22nd March  
York, Castle Hotel – 8.00 am, 28th March  
Merredin at DAFWA office – 8.00am 29th March  
Esperance, Comfort Motor Inn – 8.00am 12th April

For more information on these meetings please contact Paul Carmody (0427 997878) or email info@lfgn.org.au

GROWING SEASON OUTLOOK – MARCH 2007  


- ENSO state is neutral  
- DAFWA ESS indicates good chance of a La Niña developing in autumn  
- Local indicators are favourable for rain  
- ESS indicates average March to October rainfall for WA and average to above average March to October rainfall for eastern Australia
• All temperature models (5) indicate above median temperature for south-west WA for next 3 months
Contact Meredith Fairbanks, Department of Agriculture and Food, Ph (08) 9368 3448 for more information

2007 AGRIBUSINESS TRIAL NETWORK PROJECT ANNOUNCED
GRDC Western Panel has announced the successful candidates for this season Agribusiness Trial Network, they are;
• **Facey Group** to support their work on non wetting soils
• **Morowa Farm Improvement Group** to work with Neil Ballard in evaluating cereal responses following different pasture species.
• **Synergy Consulting** to work with 3 groups in the Goomalling, Dowerin and Wyalkatchem regions looking at control of resistant ryegrass in no till systems.
• **Kaylx** (formerly Agric Tech) to work with the **West Wagin Group** to develop better area specific agronomy varieties.

INSTITUTE REPORTS R&D BOOSTS PRODUCTIVITY GROWTH
The Australian Farm Institute was established to conduct research into public policy issues impacting on the Australian farm sector, and to promote policy solutions that maximise the economic and social wellbeing of farmers. To do this, the Institute contracts leading academics and consultants (both within Australia and internationally) to carry out research projects on specific farm policy issues, promoting the outcomes of this research to policy makers.

The Institute most recently reported on how R&D has contributed to high productivity growth rates for Australian farmers. Higher than most sectors of the economy, farming has productivity growth rates among the highest achieved by farmers internationally. Research from the Australian Farm Institute looked at trends in productivity growth in Australian agriculture, and the important role of research and development. For more information visit Australian Farm Institute [http://www.farminstitute.org.au/](http://www.farminstitute.org.au/)

JEDDACUTTUP TOP CROP GROUP TRIAL PLANS IN PLACE
The Local Farmer Groups in the Ravensthorpe district have got this years planned trials sorted out. The district was one of the few regions to have reasonable success with their trial last year. For a summary list of what trials are planned visit the Jeddacuttup Top Crop and Pasture Group website [http://www.lfgn.org.au/groups/south_east/jerdacuttup](http://www.lfgn.org.au/groups/south_east/jerdacuttup) to look at Trial Plans for 2007.

LONG TERM NO TILL SITES FOR WANTFA IN PLACE
WANTFA have been working hard to set up what promises to be a very interesting series of trials funded by GRDC this year. The aim of the three year project (June 2006-July 2009) is to improve the quality of no-till by developing a cropping system with permanent soil cover. There are two primary sites chosen for the trial which hopes to be extended well beyond its initial three year funding. These are Mingenew Irwin Group (MIG) and the new WANFTA site at Cunderdin Ag College. The first crops in the trial’s four main treatments to be seeded this year are; “Maximum carbon input, maximum rotation diversity, maximum flexibility and maximum profit”. Local Farmer Groups are encouraged to set up their own sites or variations of these trials to add to the understanding of complex farming systems. For more information on these trials contact Project Manager, Ken Flower 08 96225584 or email ken.flower@wantfa.com.au

DISC SEEDER ON FARM RESEARCH 2007
A GRDC funded research project has been established to identify the benefits and limitations of disc seeders experienced by grain growers and contractors under no-till cropping systems and to highlight innovative solutions. It will answer questions such as:

- How successful are disc seeders in a range of soil types, rainfall levels and cropping systems?
- What are the common limitations encountered on-farm?
- How are disc seeders most successfully integrated into no-till farming systems?

Results will be widely published and combined with research results to develop machinery and cropping system guidelines for grain growers. To access the research project visit: [www.unisa.edu.au/amrdc/disc-seeder-survey](http://www.unisa.edu.au/amrdc/disc-seeder-survey) For more information contact Dr Jack Desbiolles, Agricultural Machinery Research & Design Centre University of South Australia, Email: jacky.desbiolles@unisa.edu.au

**CURRENT STATE OF BIOTECHNOLOGY INTERNATIONALLY**

According to the latest report from the International Service for the Acquisition of Agri-biotech Applications (ISAAA), biotech crops were grown by about 10.3 million farmers in 22 countries in 2006. The global area planted to GM crops in 2006 was approximately 100 million hectares. For a copy of the report go to [http://www.isaaa.org/Resources/Publications/briefs/35/executivesummary/default.html](http://www.isaaa.org/Resources/Publications/briefs/35/executivesummary/default.html).

**FORUMS REVEAL SOIL ORGANIC MATTER MORE COMPLEX**

Over 160 agri-industry, researchers, natural resource managers and extension staff attended the inaugural Soil Health Forum held on March 6th at the University Club of UWA. A highlight from the forum is that there is now more data, science and information available on soil health than ever before, which is mainly due to pressure from farmers who are looking for ways of improving their productivity. Dr Sparling conveyed to the attendees that the most important part of setting up a soil quality monitoring system is to have everyone talking the same language. In particular WA needs to make sure research, agribusiness and farmers all agree on the key indicators and their measurement.

Dr Sparling, Dr Jeff Baldock from CSIRO South Australia, spoke on the role of organic matter in soils. He explained that most of the organic matter in Australian agricultural soils is made up of crop residues, particulate organic material, humus and recalcitrant organic matter (mostly charcoal). For summary of Perth or Kellerberrin Forum or further information contact Jessica Sheppard, Soil Health Extension Officer for the Avon Catchment Council on (08) 6488 3756 or email jessica.sheppard@uwa.edu.au.

**GROW YOUR NITROGEN DON’T BUY IT? PROCEEDINGS**

Proceedings of an Industry Forum hosted by CLIMA in 2006 on “Grow your Nitrogen don’t buy it?” is now up on the CLIMA webpage providing information, handouts and audio visual presentations associated with the Industry Forum hosted by CLIMA in 2006. The day provided an opportunity to link the perspectives of farm consultants and advisers and other industry members with R&D providers. The aims were to:

1. Identify constraints and opportunities in the inclusion of annual legumes in farming systems.
2. Inform industry members and researchers of annual legume Research and Development information currently available of relevance for WA.
3. Enhance the role of annual legumes in WA farming systems in the future.
The webpage link is: http://www.clima.uwa.edu.au/seminars/workshops_and_forums

FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES

ROUND 9 ENVIRO FUNDS APPLICATIONS OPEN TILL APRIL 27TH
Eligible projects include native vegetation planting, fencing to protect remnant vegetation, monitoring water quality, species, habitats or other natural resources, indigenous projects that pass on caring for country techniques and traditional knowledge, projects that increase the community’s skills and knowledge for undertaking on-ground projects, as well as demonstrations of new techniques for sustainable farming, forestry or fishing, are also eligible.

SMALL GRANTS FOR SMALL RURAL COMMUNITIES
A small grants program for small rural Australian communities will offer grants to benefit people in rural and remote communities of up to $5000. Small, well targeted grants can be useful to small rural and remote communities and to make small grants more accessible to communities in rural Australia the Foundation for Rural & Regional Renewal we have established this new and innovative funding program.

ETHANOL CONFERENCE TRAVEL SUPPORT OPPORTUNITY
Partners in Grain through the support of GRDC are offering to sponsor interested farmers to attend the International Ethanol Conference in Melbourne next month.
Applicants must demonstrate current involvement in the WA grains industry and how their acquired conference knowledge will subsequently benefit grain enterprises, community and industry.
Application forms must be submitted to Renaye Stokes by Monday March 26, 2007.
More information about sponsorship, including application forms, is available through Ms Stokes, Tel 08 9956 8528, or email rstokes@agric.wa.gov.au

Conference information is available at www.ethanol2007.com

COMMUNITY WATER GRANTS 2007 – ROUND 3
The Australian Government's Community Water Grants programme offers grants up to $250,000 to help local community organisations save, recycle or improve the health of their local water resources. Grants are available for projects related to water saving and efficiency; water recycling and water treatment - improving surface and groundwater health. The grants are designed to encourage better water use and will improve water health through practical on-the-ground projects.

Potential applicants are encouraged to work through the new ‘Planning your project section’ of the website before applying - http://www.communitywatergrants.gov.au/planning/index.html

GREENING AUSTRALIA’S EXCHANGE INCENTIVE FUND – NO DUE DATE
The Exchange Incentive Fund is a small funds grant managed in partnership between
Greening Australia and Land & Water Australia and funded through the Australian Government’s NHT. The aim of the fund is to help regional practitioners better research their natural resources by increasing access to current knowledge and generating new knowledge on native vegetation. Funds are available to regional groups and networks, and researchers, for events or activities to be carried out before 1 January 2008. Further information including guidelines and application forms can be accessed at [www.lwa.gov.au/Apply_for_Funding/Exchange_Incentive_Fund/indexdl_3694.aspx](http://www.lwa.gov.au/Apply_for_Funding/Exchange_Incentive_Fund/indexdl_3694.aspx).

**SEEDS OF RENEWAL (FUNDED BY FRRR & ANZ)**
A small grants program providing funding to small, rural and regional not-for-profit organisations for projects and activities to aid the growth of their community. This program aims to be simple, with a straightforward and swift application and approval process. What can be funded?

- Projects with a charitable purpose
- Applications from not-for-profit organisations with an ABN; and
- Communities that have a population of 15,000 people or less.
- Drought affected communities in an EC (Exceptional Circumstances) declared region.

(Please go to the following link if you are unsure about your circumstances)

Closing date is **30 April 2007** and applications can be submitted to FRRR by post only.

**WORKSHOP OPPORTUNITIES**

More details on the following workshops can be found on the LFGN website at [http://www.lfgn.org.au/current_opportunities](http://www.lfgn.org.au/current_opportunities)

**NEW ANNUAL LEGUMES FOR MEDIUM & LOW RAINFALL OPPORTUNITY**
WA team for Pastures Australia Initiative are looking to work with local farmer groups to overcome the constraints to adoption of new annual pasture legumes in the medium and low rainfall mixed farming zone of southern Australia.

Funded under the Pastures Australia Initiative (GRDC, AWI, MLA) for 3 yrs. They are calling for expression of interest from Local Farmer Groups for testing of these new legume species. For EOI details visit [http://www.lfgn.org.au/current_opportunities](http://www.lfgn.org.au/current_opportunities)

**SUBSOILS TEAM CONTINUE UNDERLYING TRUTH**
DAFWA and UWA representatives, together with LFGN were instrumental in providing an excellent series of workshops over the last two years. Now Local Farmer Groups will have the opportunity to tap into these workshops once again. The Subsoil Constraints research team are rolling out another series of soil pit days. Over 120 soils pits have been dug across the wheatbelt in the last two years which have provided researchers with some interesting trends but more are needed. For an opportunity to participate in these workshops go to [http://www.lfgn.org.au/current_opportunities](http://www.lfgn.org.au/current_opportunities)

**GRAIN MARKETING WORKSHOPS –**
Groups interested in improving their grain marketing skills can register for a regional workshop in March/April 2007. Many workshops have already been locked in. Professor Dennis Wise from Muresk, is an experienced grain market analyst who will host up to 10
courses throughout the West Australian grainbelt for farmer groups. For more information contact Fabiola Cousins, 08 9690 1530 or email F.Cousins@curtin.edu.au

CSIRO PLANT AVAILABLE WATER WORKSHOP
A limited number of workshops on managing your soil water are available in April and June 2007 for groups who would like to find out more about this concept. For those groups who have already completed the Plant Available Water Workshop with Neal Dalgliesh, a follow-up workshop is available to interpret and discuss collected data. If your group is interested in participating in either the April or June/July series, please contact Yvette Oliver from CSIRO on (08) 9333-6469.
For more information visit http://www.lfgn.org.au/current_opportunities

INDUSTRY TRAINING COUNCIL ASSISTS FARMERS WITH RURAL WORKER SHORTAGE
Australian farm business owners face a continued struggle to fill positions with appropriately skilled workers. During February and March farmers in WA’s Wheatbelt, including owners, managers and employees, will have the opportunity to attend ‘Hiring for the Future’, free one day workshops presented by the West Australian Primary Industries Training Council.

The workshops will cover all aspects of employing both domestic and international staff in rural based enterprises including:
- Hiring overseas workers
- Traineeships
- Rural career pathways

Dates are:
- Wednesday 21st March, Bruce Rock Shire Hall
- Thursday 22nd March, Mukinbudin Sporting Complex

For more information please contact the WAPITC on 9359 4000, 1800 118 000 or admin@wapitc.org

A HEALTHY ‘BOTTOM LINE’ FOR FARMING FAMILIES PROJECT – ESPERANCE, MARCH 2007
Two workshops are planned for the Esperance region 19 – 20 March, Cascades and 21-22 March Esperance. A total of 30 farmers have registered in the fair intensity pilot study of farming families health.

Over the two days, participants are provided with practical information on the importance of good health, health and safety and its link to productivity of the farming business. Each participant undergoes a quick physical health check to assess blood sugar levels, cholesterol, body mass index, waist-hip ratios, blood pressure and physical assessment.

For further information on how to participate in this programme, please contact Dale Rooney on 90767063 or Marg Carmody on 90792017.
www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au

CALENDAR OF EVENTS
To view the GGA Calendar of Events go to http://www.lfgn.org.au/calendar/months
Northern Agric group Saline Land Tour 20th March
NAG have organised a bus tour to travel to Morowa to look at management options for saline land. The group will hear about a seaweed development project, the brushwood industry and visit a drainage project. For more information http://www.lfgn.org.au/groups/northern/northernagri?f=9458

Yuna Farm Improvement Group AGM 23rd March
That time of year again and the Yuna FIG are getting things off to a fine start for 2007. They have a half day program for there updates. They normally ask a representative from all the major agribusiness companies in the region to provide a speaker for 20 minutes and the focus will be on managing the season after the drought. Visit their website http://www.lfgn.org.au/groups/northern/yuna

Pre-seeding trials Update, Oldfield Group, Monday 26th March at 1.00 pm
At the Munglinup Community Complex growers will be update on last years trial results from Kalyx (formerly Agritech) and SEPWA trials. For more information http://www.lfgn.org.au/groups/south_east/munglinup

Carbon Trading Seminar– WA Developments and Perspectives 22nd March,
A Seminar on Carbon Trading outlining the WA government’s and corporate response to Climate Change including the need to sequester carbon dioxide. This seminar introduces some of the issues and proposed WA developments aimed at reducing the rising levels of greenhouse gases in the atmosphere, 6.30 pm (for 7 pm, sharp) till 9.30 pm at the State Library Lecture Theatre, Perth Cultural Centre, James Street, Perth.

Salinity, Water and Society - Global issues, local action. New approaches for tackling the salinisation of water resources. Includes irrigation, dry land and urban salinity, and salt water intrusion. Forum will be held at the Adelaide Convention Centre. For further information visit the forum website http://www.internationalsalinityforum.org

Ethanol Conference, 17-20 April 2007 Crown Promenade Hotel Melbourne
A conference that will allow you to meet with key stakeholders and industry decision makers to discuss industry opportunities and learn how to develop successful ethanol projects. Speakers from the new technologies companies for ethanol production will be present. Network with over 500 attendees and 40 exhibitors, from a variety of international industry sectors and government agencies, at Australia’s premier ethanol industry conference. Visit http://www.bbibiofuels.com/ethanol2007/

Wheatbelt Women’s Day 18 August 2007
Bruce Rock for more information contact Lara Currie (08) 9061 1660 brucecurrie@bigpond.com

Northern Agri Group Spring Field Day 21 August, Binnu
Contact Rohan Ford Ph 99331045 or email nookanderri@bigpond.com

Canadian Tour for Oilseed Industry deferred to 2008
The tour has now been postponed till 2008
More information contact John Duff on 08 9475 0322 or email adminjd@consultag.com.au
ARAB Conference in Geraldton – 10\textsuperscript{th} to the 14\textsuperscript{th} September, 2007
Australia Research Assembly of Brassica is coming to Western Australia this year. This is a biennial conference for researchers, consultants and growers with a particular interest in the latest canola and mustard research and development. The Conference is being hosted by Oilseeds WA and the Department of Agriculture & Food. A field trip will include some of the grower group trials which will be established for the event. Grower groups are encouraged to participate in the field tour if not the entire conference. Go to http://www.lfgn.org.au/__data/page/4051/ARABConfAnnouncement_10-14Sept07.pdf

13th International Lupin Conference which will be held on the 14-18 September 2008 in Fremantle. For more information go to http://www.lupins.org/contact/

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