Local Farmer Group Network  
Faculty of Natural & Agricultural Science  
University of Western Australia

**Media Release**

28 September, 06

SPRING OF SUCCESS AT ‘MUKA’

Seeding systems were tested after a variable start to the season was a feature of the Ninghan Farm Focus Group field day last week. The emerging farmer group on the eastern edge of the wheatbelt demonstrated they could run a very extensive on-farm trial program to answer many questions group members have.

Over 70 farmers attended the day which included visits to two trial sites south and north of Mukinbudin and lunchtime presentations from grain marketing organisations.

The group have established 15 trials with their own seeding equipment to address local production issues.

The highlight of the day was at the main trial site, south of Mukinbudin where 10 different farmer seeders were compared for crop establishment and trifluralin tolerance.

According to group president Luke Sprigg, “the real challenge for farmers in this area was timely and good establishment of their wheat crop”.

“The field day is an excellent opportunity for members and visitors to see how different seeders stack up under tough seeding conditions. We had trials on seeding system, break crops, disease management, long season wheat varieties and biological agents to enhance crop nutrition,” Mr Sprigg said.

“The group hired two buses which allowed the field day participants to get a birds eye view of the wheat and barley row spacing trials sown at Bonnie Rock and Kununoppin at different seeding rates to see which combination works best in our area.”

The Ninghan Group was formed to address the low rainfall district’s major cropping concerns, which included crop establishment and weed management.

The Ninghan Group is a member of the University of WA based Local Farmer Group Network (LFGN), which is funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

Ninghan Group committee member John Hobbs said that Agritech’s seeding systems trial this year has proven to be a real test of the effect of different seeders on crop establishment with the Gumbo Boot and the DBS showing the best results at this stage.

President, Luke Sprigg’s Bonnie Rock property hosted the trial on wheat row spacing by seeding rates on a large scale. Luke said “the trial has highlighted some promising effects of going to wider rows, but because of the variable nature of the site it is difficult at this stage to determine results.”

WANTFA hosted a cover crop trial at the main site. Toll Temby, WANTFA Committee Member, spoke on the Mukinbudin trials using cover crops to improve moisture retention and crop
productivity in Western Australian farming systems. The Muka site is one of three sites and despite being sown late it will still provide an indication of the benefit of cover crops in the existing low rainfall environment.

David Johnson, AWB Pool Manager was the key speaker. He provided an outlook for 2006 which is very positive for the world grain markets.

The Ninghan Group was established in 2004 under the direction of local farmer Kim Maddock, who has been an enthusiastic driver for on-farm research in and around Mukanudin.

The group’s 80 members are spread between Bonnie Rock, Trayning, Bencubbin, Westonia and Merredin.

The Ninghan Farm Focus Group also has a strong relationship with the Department of Agriculture and Food, Summit Fertilisers, CSBP and WANTFA, who all have sown many small plot trials to address the group’s production issues.

www.lfgn.org.au
Media Contact:
Lisa Mayer, LFGN Communications Officer 08 6488 7937

NinghanMedRel.doc