NO MUCKING AROUND AT ‘MUKA’

It’s all systems go for the Ninghan Farm Focus Group, which has taken advantage of sporadic rain in the Mukinbudin and surrounding areas to establish this year’s round of farm-scale trials.

In a burst of activity last month group members established 15 trials, many with their own seeding equipment.

At the main trial site, south of Mukinbudin, 10 different seeders were utilized to compare seeder systems.

Group president Luke Sprigg said it was important to look at issues that affected farmers locally.

“This year we’re investigating seeding system break crops, disease management, long season wheat varieties and biological agents to enhance crop nutrition,” Mr Sprigg said.

“We’ve sown wheat and barley row spacing trials 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.

Last year the group set up a series of break crop locations with peas, oats, canola, pasture legumes and fallow. Wheat was sown in the same crop locations this year with and without nitrogen fertilizer,

This would provide members an insight into the best break crops for the area.

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 one of this year’s large scale trials would also look at reducing the impact of frost, which he described as one of the district’s biggest challenges.

“In April we sowed different long season wheat varieties to observe if they can avoid frosts compared to the traditional varieties we normally sow in May,” Mr Hobbs said.

Meanwhile, different disease control strategies to combat leaf rust, that involves a combination of treatments, are being investigated at committee member Geoff Ryan’s Trayning property this season.

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 Mukinbudin.

The group’s 70 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

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