WHEATBELT WOMEN WISE-UP AT WORKSHOPS

Wheatbelt women have learnt the ‘ins and outs’ of grain marketing and will now value add their farming enterprises by utilising pools, understanding futures markets and forward contracts and knowing the implications of marketing options.

With this year’s grain crop likely to be half the average, these skills will come in handy.

Katie Cole and Mae Connelly of the Grain Pool of WA have recently hosted workshops throughout the Great Southern, with Local Farmer Group Network (LFGN) groups.

“I wanted women who didn’t know about grain marketing to learn in a friendly, relaxed forum, where they could ask questions without feeling intimidated,” Ms Cole said.

“The idea was to equip them with the knowledge to make informed decisions about marketing their grain and raise their understanding of what happens beyond the farm-gate, which will hopefully be very positive for their farm entity.”

Ms Cole explained that forward selling, or entering into contracts, could have advantages over selling into the pooling system, in terms of managing risk, however there were also disadvantages.

“Growers don’t need to wait for top-up payments, as with pools, and know exactly how much they will be paid with cash forward contracts, however pools are still a relevant part of grain marketing and have existed for more than 80 years.

“The advantages of a traditional pool are that growers don’t take on any production risk and the payment structure can have a smoothing effect on cashflow.”

Ms Cole added that there were many advantages and disadvantages for every grain marketing method and the method growers chose for selling their grain depended on the individual farm entity’s aversion to risk and when they needed to access cashflow.

“It’s quite common for growers to use multiple marketing methods, allowing them to spread their risk and not put all their eggs in one basket,” she said.

Borden grower, Liz Bungey of the North Stirlings Pallinup Natural Resources Group (NSPNRG), who attended the three workshops, thought they were very informative.

NSPNRG wants more next year to consolidate what they learned and to learn about other marketing options.

“It was great to learn new skills. My husband, Byron and I have been marketing a reasonable portion of our grain for several years, but the workshops fine-tuned my skills, taught me a lot and made me more confident,” she said.
“With the skills I acquired, our business conversations and grain marketing discussions are now much more valuable.”

However, Mrs Bungey suggested many ladies at the workshop who didn’t have previous knowledge, now had an excellent knowledge base to build on.

These skills are even more important in the current uncertain grain marketing climate.

“We don’t know what will happen to the Australian Wheat Board and if we loose the single desk we need to know how to market our grain,” she said.

“As a husband and wife team, we both need to be up to speed and it will ultimately save us money in consultancy fees.”

The Nyabing Farm Improvement Group also recently hosted a workshop for 20 women.

Local Rachel Brown said she now better understands her family farming enterprise.

“Although it was only the first in a series of workshops, we were able to get a good understanding of many aspects beyond the farm-gate that I didn’t understand,” she said.

“I’m looking forward to being able to talk about different aspects of the business with my husband and offer an informed, valuable opinion.”

The Nyabing FIG and NSPNRG are part of the LFGN, which is based at the University of WA and supported by the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

Lisa Mayer of the LFGN said it was excellent to see women becoming more involved and educated about grain marketing.

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