Regional Network Meetings - Executive Summary

GERALDTON, 20 MARCH

Meeting participants
- 4 groups attended out of a possible 8 from the region Northern Ag Region
- DAFWA & MWDC were the Government organisation represented
- To early for the groups to share their trial plans at this meeting
- Recent wind events in the north lead to some discussion in stock management
- Growers want to get on with the new season – get cash flow

Trials for 2007 (not a complete list)
- Mingenew Irwin (Ian Broad) to have one major long term WANTFA rotation trial looking at 4 different strategies (max carbon, max diversity, max flexibility, district practice).
- Nested/cell grazing trial with composite of annual species under grazing pressure.
- Soil health mapping for NAG (Binnu)
- Grain – market workshop hosted by MIG April 26th
- Variable rate lime site is on going at Casuarinas – Walkaway FIG at David Forester
- Silver Fox to provide Casuarinas – Walkaway FIG group with update on biomass imagery
- Grazing system study under way at NAG
- Soil health monitoring has been established at NAG through NAAC and UWA
- Yuna FIG are not committing to trials until break of the season

Regional Issues
- DAFWA is establishing how bad the erosion has been
- Labour shortage and difficulty in getting skilled farm labours
- Invite the New Regional Manager of DAFWA to next meeting
- DAFWA wanting to identify farmers before RSPCA take dramatic action.

OUTCOMES
DAFWA Regional Manager to be invited to next regional meeting of Local Farmer Groups.
Establish regional forum on availability of labour and training needs of farm labourers
LFGN to provide links to personnel brokers for farmer labourers.

YORK, 28 MARCH

Meeting participants
- 4 groups attended out of a possible 6 from the central wheatbelt
- DAFWA & ACC were Government organisation represented
- Groups had a good idea of their trial plans
- Clear focus on production research and development
- GM’s guest speaker (John Snooke) generated good discussion and added extra strength to meeting
- Two large groups and two small groups provided good level of exchange
Trials for 2007 (not a complete list)

- WANTFA long term rotation trial looking at 4 different strategies (max carbon, max diversity, max flexibility, district practice), Cunderdin. Also looking at different cover crop options at Meckering & Mukinbudin.
- Hard seed Cadiz under sowing trial
- Mike Ashworth testing Boxer Gold (Syngenta) in no till situation near York
- Greenhill are planning a number of demonstrations across the district for first time.
  - “Black Urea” post seeding, seeder demo, durum wheat, group tour to Perth
- Facey highlights for the years but have many other trials and activities.
  - MLA/Prime time to know and grow, Women in Agriculture (3 May), Committee tour, Chem. Cert course and Risky Business is also planned
  - SWCC 1 day/wk recently appoint a NRM Officer Christine Thompson.

Regional Issues

- Claying and the potential for it in the Avon.
- High rainfall cropping systems - more R & D for the district.
- GMO trial application should be encouraged.
- ACC has created good access to funding opportunities, but now much of it is in place. Environ fund still available for capital works etc.

OUTCOMES

- WANTFA executive to encourage discussion of possible GM trial application.
- Invite WDC to next meeting via the Minister’s office
- DAFWA to develop High Rainfall R & D for Brookton – York groups.

MERREDDIN, 29 MARCH

Meeting participants

- 6 groups represented out of a possible 8 from the central eastern wheatbelt
- DAFWA was the only Government organisation represented, ACC an apology
- WDC has not participated in any of the regional breakfast meeting to date.
- Good exchange between the groups on processes
- Welcome Corrigin FIG for the first time to Merredin meeting
- Interest split between production and NRM fairly even between the groups
- New DAFWA Development Officer, Chris Schelfhout introduced to the groups

Trials for 2007 (not a complete list)

- Ninghan Farm Focus Group
  - Long season wheat continues, WANTFA cover crops rotation, Long term acid soil management trial, Zinc option onto crop and looking for Potassium and Phosphorous responsive site, NVT wheat, Soil Heath Monitoring site.
  - Some farmer demonstration trials; legume gross margin, copper demo, burnt windrows & weed management, alternative oilseeds , Sandalwood trial and Saltbush trial from SPA.
MERREDIN cont’d

Kellerberrin Demonstration Group
- CSBP now going to do a trial on K, Test “Culture” in wheat, Tactical response trial on calcium in cereals, grazing manured trial sites, barley N rate trials, Boxer Gold evaluation, repeat CEC trial with dolomite, lime, gypsum treatments.
- Reducing treatments in their trials and concentrate on more effective results
- Three field walks as usual for 2007

Corrigin FIG
- Angelo Loi to a do a pasture legume trial
- Group likes to do their own trials. NLP project a focus.

Bodallin Catchment Group
- Soil pit day follow up??
- Two members secured funds for saltbush planting up to 50,000 plants
- Possible trial cattle on saltbush
- Testing Salia oats to correct soil pH
- Lucerne site established

Yeelana Catchment Group
- No trials planned, but establishing Lucerne sites with WA Lucerne Growers.

Regional Issues
- Admin support for Groups\ Roles and responsibilities for Corrigin staff
- Where do the minutes to these meeting go? Regional Manager DAFWA?

OUTCOMES
Ninghan group is looking for admin support. Action: Yeelana to meet with Ninghan to explore opportunities for new ROC to provide administration support through Local Govt.
Grain Marketing Course – more targeting audience required. Action: LFGN to contact Denis Wise to provide feedback.

OUTCOMES, Merredin cont’d
Support required for generating Newsletters from the Groups in region. Action: Vanessa and Chris to explore if Ninghan Newsletter can be inserted in Agmemo. Concept of eastern grower group activities to be inserted in central AgMemo.
Lease of Trial Site – How to manage this was a concern of the Ninghan Group. Action: Advice from Toll was to manage the relationship and recognize it.
ESPERANCE 12 April

Meeting participants
- 6 groups represented out of a possible 8 from the region
- DAFWA, FPC and FarmBiz were the Government organisation represented.
- SCRIPT and GEDC apologies
- Topic on Farm Forestry generated lots of questions and welcome introduction to FPC
- Welcome to Gemma Walker, SEPWA and Nicolle ERF

Trials for 2007 (not a complete list)

North Mallee FIG
- SEPWA trials on wheat and barley (groups own design, CBWA canola trial, Tillage, Biofuels).
- Looking for better segregation of barley in district
- Group expanding.
- Start to monitor soil health but including deep soil samples.

Grass Patch
- Economic analysis indicated do what you do best (crop vs. stock), Crop more variable income.
- Soil health monitoring, SEPWA barley varieties, mustards varieties, Bo tolerant wheat

WANFTA
- Disc seeder study using Brazilian seeder.
- WANTFA rotation trial looking at different cover crop options at Cunderdin, MIG.
- Regional Conference on a Saturday was bad idea

SEPWA
- Women’s day 2 Aug, Training Needs Analysis planned
- April Grain Marketing workshop attendance down due to rain.
- Participating in Grains Council Australia Farm Practice Database
- Sponsored trials better incorporated in programs, Young farmers’ tour to Perth or regional WA Aug 07, planned visit by David Eksteen NSW group in Sept?

Esperance Regional Forum
- Two new project officers, Mallee Josette McDonnell, Sandplain, Nichole Reichelt,
- 12 Projects in the region many funded through SCRIPT
- Young River Catchment rehabilitation, soil health, Blackboy Creek catchment management
- Evergreen pasture trials, Pastures for Profit June 29 Esperance,
- Focus Groups for pasture management and what is to be delivered
- Planning to 3 Training Needs Analysis with local groups by June

Regional Issues
- Catering costs for small towns
- True costs of training
- Mine dust contamination of grain
- Tree farming – has its place but concern over impact Blue Gums can have on rural communities
- Barley variety selection – a good variety of malt that will also yield well if it goes feed
- Feral animals (wild dogs in particular)

OUTCOMES
- LFGN & Farm Biz to investigate workshop opportunities for Farm Planning.
- LFGN to develop Links with Small Business Development Commission for Training support
- North Mallee FIG may consider Training Needs Analysis with support of SEPWA
EVALUATION PROCESS for REGIONAL MEETINGS

At each meeting the group was asked what their expectation of the meeting was and this generated a check list which the group was able to track at the end of the meeting. Also each workshops had the following evaluation questions asked:

1. How did you communicate the outcomes of the last meeting to your group?
2. In what way has LFGN helped your group achieve its goals?
3. How could this be improved in the new project?
4. Which are the most valuable parts of LFGN you would like to see continue?

Acronyms in this executive summary
ACC: Avon Catchment Council
DAFWA: Department of Agriculture and Food
GMO: Genetic Modified Organisms
MWDC: Mid West Development Commission
NAG: Northern Agric Group
NRM: Natural Resources Management
SWCC: South West Catchment Council
SPA: Saltland Pasture Association
WANTFA: Western Australia No Till Farmers Federation
WDC: Wheatbelt Development Commission