



Northern Irrigation Newsletter

For Mixed Farmers and Croppers in the Irrigation Areas of Northern Victoria.

Newsletter of the Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council
No.13

Summer, Feb 2007

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Executive Report

Since the last Newsletter at the end of February we have experienced an autumn season that offered promise and so far, a winter that has offered only frost and drought for most of us. There have been a few changes in that time. Our regular DPI representative, Rob Fisher has resigned from the Department and is now conducting his own private crop consulting business. Rob has played a big part in developing the great partnership that we have with DPI and beneath his rough exterior he has great affinity with the farming community. We wish him well and hope that he can maintain his close links with VICC. Damian Jones is filling Rob's shoes at DPI for at least the next six months. Damian has undertaken to maintain the strong links between DPI and VICC.

One of our stalwart Board Members, Graeme Lawrence has upgraded his farming operation by moving from Echuca close to Canary Island near Boort. We hope that he can provide extra representation for his new territory, as well as keep up with his increased workload on the farm.

GRDC funds for the Double Cropping project have started to kick-in. Through the Irrigated Cropping Forum, we have set up accounts and have contracted DPI to set-up and manage the project at Madowla Park, near Echuca. The Steering Committee has met twice and the first experimental treatments have been established. Also, the sister project to this one is up and running in the Murrumbidgee Irrigation Area. This is another GRDC-funded project managed by the

Irrigated Cropping Forum. The first stage is a farmer survey conducted by Charles Sturt University to gain better understanding of the barriers to adoption of higher value irrigation rotations.

The Irrigated Cropping Forum held an AGM in May, which Peter Schwarz and I attended. Professor Shahbaz Khan was elected as chairperson, Rob Fisher was elected vice-chairperson and Peter Schwarz was elected as Treasurer. These are significant positions because the ICF now manages over \$375,000 pa on behalf

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PO Box 292,
Tatura, Vic. 3616

Phone: 03 5824 1406
Fax: 03 5824 3062
Email: vicc@iinet.net.au

Contributions are welcome.

Editor: Sam Lolicato.

Board Members:

Peter Schwarz (Chairman)
Laurie Fitzsimmons (Vice-chairman)
Graeme Lawrence (Treasurer)
Ray Thornton
Scott Mathews
Trevor James
Colin Grinter
Helen Reynolds
Rob Fisher
Damian Jones (DPI)
Sam Lolicato (Executive Officer)

Printer:

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The Newsletter is distributed to approximately 1000 farmers and key industry personnel.

Advertising is welcome.

Advertising rates (incl.GST):

Piece \$50
Quarter page: \$110
Half page: \$180

Full page:	\$360
Back half page:	\$240

of local grain growers. The Committee resolved to develop a website with pages for each of the regional groups. This work is well underway and the web address will be available soon.

Another new ICF project is in the pipe-line to assist the wheat breeders at Wagga to continue efforts to develop wheat varieties specifically for irrigation (\$250,000 pa for 3 years). This will probably include an evaluation site near Deniliquin. We are hopeful that later we may be able to find funds to support another evaluation site for the advanced selections in northern Victoria. The first stage of the new project is already underway, with a consultant working to identify the current and potential production of irrigated wheat in northern Victoria and southern NSW.

You may have heard of the large amount of money that will be made available through the newly established National Water Commission (ie. more than \$2 billion over 3 years). There are quite a few rules for applying and some of them are quite vague. However, the Goulburn-Broken and North Central CMAs and Goulburn-Murray Water have formed a consortium to put in a bid, basically to assist with reconfiguring the irrigation system to gain water savings. To increase the probabilities of successfully implementing the project, the group invited Murray Dairy, Northern Victorian Fruitgrowers and VICC to come on board as industry and community partners. We have had some influence on the final drafting of the proposal to ensure there are good potential on-farm benefits and that the benefits are fair and equitable across industries. The proposal was recently submitted and we are waiting for the outcome.

Finally, organisation for the GRDC Irrigation Update for northern Victoria and the NSW Murray Valley is well advanced. The program looks very good (see other parts of the Newsletter) and we hope to see you at the event.

GRDC Irrigation Update for Growers in August

Do not forget to put this important event into your diary. Thursday 3rd August, 8.30am at the Rich River Golf Club, Moama.
See program and flyer in this newsletter.

Thanks to:

**Pioneer Hi-bred
Bayer CropScienc
IK. Caldwell**

AGT

**Australian Grain Accumulators
Australian Stock Exchange
*For supporting the GRDC Grower Update***

For cropping support contact:



**DPI Kerang 03 5452 1266
DPI Cobram 03 5871 0600**

Free publications

Make sure you do not miss out on the following good-quality FREE publications:

- IREC Farmers Newsletter (Contact VICC)
- Victorian Winter Crop Summary 2006 (Contact DPI Kerang or Cobram)
- VICC / DPI Trial Results 2005 (Contact DPI Kerang or Cobram)

VICC Trial Block Summary

Planting of trials has been completed, totalling 19 trials. Apart from the barley, canola, fabas, oaten hay, triticale and wheat variety trials, we have also sown trials and demonstrations looking at N fertiliser management, faba rate and row spacings, medic pasture options, time of sowing and of course, foliar fungicides on wheat.

The annual field day will be held in the second week of October, but there is the opportunity to come and look at the block at any time.

For more information, please contact Damian Jones, DPI Kerang on 03 5450 9525.

Double Cropping Project Update.

A steering committee has been formed. This committee is open to any experienced farmers, who think they can contribute. The committee has met three times and they have chosen a good central location for the experiment on Madowla Park, just east of Echuca. The site has ready access to water and is well-drained.

The first cropping phase of the project has been established. The following winter cropping options were sown in early May:

Baudin Barley
Beacon Canola
Nura Faba Beans
Shaftal Persian Clover
Ventura Wheat
Winteroo Oats for hay

These varieties are not necessarily my first choice as irrigation varieties, but have characteristics that may make them more suitable for double cropping, such as shorter maturity or shorter habit, so as to make the sowing of the summer phase easier or more timely.

At this stage the summer options will be:

Maize Grain
Maize Silage
Soybeans
Forage Sorghum

For further information, contact Damian Jones at
DPI Kerang on 03 5450 9525.

Daimo's jokes of the week

VICC conducted an annual 'Young Farmer of the Year' competition. Rules for entry were rigid. Candidates had to be six feet in height, forty-two inch chest, had to be farming for at least two years. Previous winners of the competition could enter too. The prize each year was a fortnight in Spain with Miss Australia. On the night of one contest the judges walked down along the lines of men, inspecting them. Muscles bulged, chests expanded, shoulders were drawn back as each Adonis posed for the judges. At the end of the line there stood a sickly looking weakling, bent and worn-looking. 'How did you manage to gain entry to the competition?' asked the chief judge. 'I won it last year, sir,' came the answer.

The Executive Officer of VICC was complaining to his friends about how badly he was being paid. "I get a really poultry amount each month," he said. "You mean 'paltry'," corrected one of his friends. "No. I don't. I mean 'poultry'," replied the EO. "What I earn is chicken feed."

A Victorian couple decided to go to Northern Queensland to thaw out during a particularly icy winter. They planned to stay at the same hotel where they spent their honeymoon 20 years earlier.

Because of hectic schedules, it was difficult to coordinate their travel schedules, so the husband left Melbourne and flew to Cairns on Thursday, with his wife flying the following day. The husband checked into the hotel. There was a computer in his room, so he decided to send an email to his wife.

However, he accidentally left out one letter in her email address, and without realising his error, sent the email.

Meanwhile, somewhere in Houston, a widow had just returned home from her husband's funeral. He was a minister who was called home to glory following a heart attack. The widow decided to check her email expecting messages from relatives and friends.

After reading the first message, she screamed and fainted. The widow's son rushed into the room, found his mother on the floor, and saw the computer screen, which read:

To: My Loving Wife
Subject: I've Arrived
Date: October 16, 2004

I know you're surprised to hear from me. They have computers here now and you are allowed to send emails to your loved ones. I've just arrived and have been checked in.

I see that everything has been prepared for your arrival tomorrow. Looking forward to seeing you then!

Hope your journey is as uneventful as mine was.

P.S. Sure is freaking hot here

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Oilseed News

Selected articles from Oilseed News
by Felicity Pritchard,
Oilseed Industry Development Officer –
Victoria and southern New South Wales
Irrigated Cropping Forum,
110 Natimuk Road, Horsham, Vic 3401
Ph: (03) 5382 4396 or 0427 600 228

Oilseed industry development officer

(March 2006)

Canola and soybean growers now have a new representative for Victoria and southern New South Wales.

Horsham-based Felicity Pritchard is the new Oilseed Industry Development Officer, and she has set her sights on expanding the area of oilseeds, particularly canola and soybeans, grown in the region.

Ms Pritchard will work with grower groups and the peak oilseeds group, the Australian Oilseeds Federation, to help get information out to growers and provide feedback to researchers and other industry groups about a range of issues.

“I’m really looking forward to the challenge of this new role,” said Ms Pritchard today. “I will be covering a range of issues, from marketing to agronomy to research”.



Ms Pritchard said that she will work with companies, agencies and grower groups to help overcome issues that the industry faces in order to expand the oilseed industry.

She has come to the role with seven years’ experience working with highly successful Topcrop (farming) groups in the Victorian Wimmera and has more recently worked as a Crop Industry Training Specialist at Longerenong College, near Horsham. She completed post-graduate research in the agronomy of canola and related specialty oilseeds in the mid 1990’s.

“In the longer term, I would like to see not only higher yields and an expansion in the area sown to

canola and soybeans in the region, but also better water-use efficiency and more profit to growers for a more financially and environmentally sustainable farming system.”

Ms Pritchard is employed by the Irrigated Cropping Forum and the three year position is funded by the Grains Research and Development Corporation and the Australian Oilseeds Federation.

Canola oil content highest since 1997

The oil content of last year’s Australian canola crop was the highest since 1996, and one per cent higher than the previous year, according to newly published data.

The “2005/06 Quality of Australian Canola” publication by NSW Department of Primary Industries and the Australian Oilseeds Federation, showed that the average oil content for the 2005 harvest was 42.2 per cent, ranging from a low of 36.5% at Ardlethan in New South Wales to a high of 46.1% at Borden in Western Australia.

The national yield of 1.5 tonnes per hectare was also slightly higher than the 2004 average.

Kaniva farmer who grows his own fuel becomes science award finalist

A Kaniva farmer who uses his own canola crops to power his vehicles was recently recognised for his efforts and for being a finalist in the major annual Victorian DPI Science Award.

Earlier in the year at Grains Innovation Park in Horsham, the Parliamentary Secretary for Agriculture, Geoff Howard, presented a certificate to Steven Hobbs, who grows crops to produce bio-diesel fuel.

“Mr Hobbs has established a small scale processing operation that transforms vegetable oil into fuel with the same characteristics as conventional fossil diesel fuel but reduces emissions by up to 60 per cent,” Mr Howard said.

“Given the problems of global warming and the fact that fossil fuel reserves are finite, the importance of this sort of innovation is obvious,” Mr Howard said.

Mr Hobbs said he is currently building a plant to produce 300,000 litres of oil per year and will be sourcing canola from local growers. He is also looking at the potential of mustard seed as a biofuel with DPI Horsham researcher, Wayne Burton.

Mr Hobbs said that about eight per cent of his crop rotation is enough to supply his farm's entire energy needs.

He has been selling the canola meal to local feedlotter and also using some to add condition to his beef cattle. This year, Mr Hobbs is contemplating using the meal to grow lambs in a feedlot, potentially selling them for \$90 a head, rather than his current return of \$60 a head.

Pulse crop news

Selected email news from:
Trevor Bray
Pulse Development Officer South East
PULSE AUSTRALIA
"Blue Plains"
RMB 159
YENDA NSW 2681
02 6963 6926 Ph/Fx
0428 606 886 Mob

Grain Legume handbook updates

The 2006 updates for the "Grain Legume (pulse) Handbook" are now available, along with a few new handbooks for any who wish to purchase. The biennial updates have been very popular with agronomists across Australia since the first handbook print in 1987.

Orders to:
Wayne Hawthorne
Pulse Development Officer - South Central
Pulse Australia
PO Box 524 Naracoorte SA 5271
ph/fax 08 8764 7455
mob 0429 647 455
pulse.wayne@bigpond.com.au

Information on the website -
www.pulseaus.com.au

- Pulse Seed Treatments & Foliar Fungicides" Fourth edition May 2006 "Southern Technote Flash"
- What you should know, and be aware of when purchasing pulse seed.

Nura Faba Bean

A Variety Management Package (VMP) for Nura is available.

Please contact Trevor Bray if you are an irrigated faba grower and want to be on his email distribution list.

New free electronic service to target pests

A new free electronic newsletter and pest identification service is available to keep growers and agronomists informed about pest-related issues – and solutions - as they emerge during the growing season.

This service, PestFacts, is designed to help advisers and growers deal with the increasing challenges being presented by mites and insects, which are having an increasing impact on grain production in southern Australia.

PestFacts coordinator, University of Melbourne Research and Extension officer, Dr Paul Umina, said the newsletter aims to help growers by providing timely information about pest outbreaks, effective controls and current information about relevant and new research findings.

PestFacts is part of a GRDC-funded initiative, and draws on the field observations of consultants, growers and researchers across south-eastern Australia as they report on the location and extent of invertebrate pest outbreaks.

A free pest identification service is also available. PestFacts also issues warnings (or reminders) for a range of invertebrate pests of all crops, including pulses, oilseeds, cereals and fodder crops. It is based on the PestFax model that has run successfully in WA for many years.

PestFacts is part of the National Invertebrate Pest Initiative (NIPI) established to improve the flow

of information about pests and their control to the grains industry.

To be part of this free service, simply contact the coordinator, Paul Umina, on (03) 8344 6502 or by sending an email to pumina@unimelb.edu.au.

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What are the best layouts and rotations?

GRDC funded a survey of twelve leading farmers in the southern NSW irrigation areas to answer this question. The results have just been released by Charles Sturt University. The main points are:

- Rice is very important for a reliable income.
- Farmers have the capacity to grow many types of alternative crops successfully, but they need a good reliable market to justify it.
- Bed farming is good to save labour (once they are set up), to reduce waterlogging in wet years and improve timeliness.
- Bed farming is not good for sheep and many are not convinced of the financial benefits.
- Double cropping is limited by the short time frame between crops.
- Rotations cannot be too prescriptive.
- It is becoming more difficult to manage intensive cropping operations and livestock.
- Direct seeding and minimum tillage is becoming accepted by most croppers.
- Decisions about irrigation layout and design are influenced by several factors including political and seasonal uncertainty of water supply, natural and physical features and labour.



Extreme sport



Allied Mills

RICE

- **Are you looking for better returns from your heavy clay soils?**
- **Have you considered growing rice?**

Rice grown on suitable clay soils is a profitable and sustainable summer cropping option. Allied Mills is seeking more growers of rice in Victoria to meet its expanding demand for rice products.

For more information about growing rice in Victoria, contact Mill Manager

Andre Goossens

03 5431 5001

or

04 1838 0158.

Soil Health Project

Sixteen local irrigated cropping farmers have been supporting Dr Peter Fisher and his team based at the Tatura Institute by providing paired paddocks for comparing low organic matter paddocks with high organic matter paddocks. The team has been taking samples from the topsoil in each paired paddock (down to 30cm) and measuring soil structure.

Recently a workshop was held at Echuca to report on the progress of the project to the farmers who own the paddocks. In nearly all the paddocks there has been better soil structure in the high organic matter paddocks. The project still has a year to run and the scientists and farmers are already trying to draw useful messages from work. They are looking at the management that has provided high and low organic matter, the types of organic matter, methods for measuring organic matter and soil structure and attempting to relate all of this to the practical farm situation. More detailed information will be made available in the next twelve months, starting with a short series of fact sheets dealing with soil management.

Meanwhile you might be interested in the knowing how the project is measuring soil health. A primary measure is soil structure or soil stability, which currently relies on three basic tests:

1. Slaking test - when small aggregates of the soil are placed in a small dish of water. Most soils will fall apart or slake, while some with very good structure will hold together.

2. Dispersion test - when the same sample of soil (above) slakes, it is observed for a while (up to 20 hours). If the clay particles in the soil disperse into the water like a cloud, then it is classed as dispersive (poor structure).

3. Wet Sieving test - This requires very special equipment. Soil aggregates are placed in the top of a column of four sieves (with finer grades from top to bottom). The entire column is then repeatedly emersed in water at the rate of 36 cycles per minute. The soil is rated by how much ends up at the different levels in the column and how much is washed into the water container. Well-structured soils will tend to hold together.

Keep this in mind when you later see the results of this project.

GRDC Irrigation Update, 3rd August 2006, Rich River Golf Club, Moama

MORNING PROGRAM

8.30	Registration	
9.00 5 min	Welcome. Peter Schwarz, Chair Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council	
9.05 35 min	LARGE ROOM Triumphs and tribulations of "Farmer Driven" R&D, Alexandra Gartmann, CEO Birehip Cropping Group.	
9.40 35 min	LARGE ROOM Concurrent Session, Irrigation scheduling of wheat under centre pivots - case study, Lindsay Evans (NSW DPI)	SMALL ROOM Concurrent Session, Dual Purpose crop & forage options for irrigation, Guy McMullen, NSW DPI
10.15 30min.	LARGE ROOM Concurrent Session, Overcoming soil limitations, Ian Delmenico, Cropright.	SMALL ROOM Concurrent Session, Value adding grain through livestock, Geoff Duddy, NSW DPI.
10.45	<i>Morning tea (30 min.)</i>	
11.15 15min.	LARGE ROOM Local R&D and directions, Dave Shannon, Chair Southern Panel GRDC	
11.30 35 min	LARGE ROOM - Concurrent session, Soils & stubble management, Clive Kirkby, CSIRO	SMALL ROOM Concurrent Session, Grain storage options, Peter Botta, DPI Vic.
12.05 35min.	LARGE ROOM Concurrent Session, No-till case study, Rob Ruwoldt, Vic No-till	SMALL ROOM Concurrent Session, Hard wheat marketing options, Matt Holgate, AWB
12.40 30min.	LARGE ROOM Concurrent Session, Precision Ag., Adam Inchbold, Riverine Plains Group.	SMALL ROOM Concurrent Session, Grain futures trading, Dougal Hunter, Australian Stock Exchange.
1.10	<i>Lunch and Displays (60 mins.)</i>	
<u>DRAFT AFTERNOON PROGRAM</u>		
2.10 35 min	LARGE ROOM Living with herbicide resistance, Andrew Storrie, NSW DPI	
2.45 30min.	LARGE ROOM Concurrent Session, Spray application technology, Andrew Storrie, NSW DPI	SMALL ROOM Concurrent Session, Pest facts and mite species of crops & pastures, Paul Umina, Univ. Melb
3.15	<i>Afternoon tea (30 min.)</i>	
3.45 45 min	LARGE ROOM - Colloquium Biofuels - Expanding grain markets & Cheaper fuel? Bill Elliott, BBI International, Cheryl White, Future Fuels - Moama.	
4.30 15 min	LARGE ROOM Summing up & evaluation, David Wolfenden, GRDC Southern Panel.	
4.45	LARGE ROOM & BAR Socialising	

Membership Subscription

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| Prime lambs | Beef
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Membership for 2006 is \$25.
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Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council

Benefits of Membership

Greater access to relevant information:

- GRDC Irrigation Update (large discount)
- Newsletter (free)
- Farm visits and field days (discount)
- Topical seminars (discount)
- Short courses (discount).

More and better targeted information and research:

- Involvement in selection of issues, topics and speakers for information days
- Involvement in selection and direction of research and development projects
- Involvement with local on-farm R&D
- Assistance with R&D funding proposals

Better industry communication:

- Improved communication between farmers and service providers
- Clear strategic planning
- Better alignment between industry needs and R&D investment
- Improved representation



Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council
For mixed farmers and croppers



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