



# Northern Irrigation Newsletter

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

**Newsletter of the Victorian Irrigated Cropping Council No 13 Feb 2007**

Published by:  
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**Contributions are welcome.**  
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## **Editorial**

Welcome to the summer edition of the VICC newsletter. This is my first edition as editor and executive officer. The board and I would like to thank Sam Lolicato for his outstanding work as executive officer for the previous six years. We wish him all the best in his new venture.

In this edition you will notice a new format. We intend to publish more often, but with fewer, more relevant articles. Due to the activities of VICC and the ICF, you also now receive the excellent IREC publication. It is hoped that these in tandem will provide cutting edge information in the toughest drought in history. So we pose the question, what will this season be like, and what are the best bets? I hope you find some answers in the articles.


Rob Fisher

## **Seed for 2007**

There have been varying reports as to the availability of seed for this season. One service VICC can provide is to give our members access to each others seed supplies. If you have a quantity of seed available which you would like to sell, simply e mail the details to [vicc@dragnet.com.au](mailto:vicc@dragnet.com.au)

Include tonnage, variety and other relevant information, and a phone number if you would like, not price however. If on the other hand you are seeking a quantity of seed, email your requirements to VICC. We will then put you in contact with relevant farm supplier. You can then deal on an individual basis. Please note this is a confidential service for members only and will not be passed onto anyone else. It is not open to commercial seed suppliers.

## What's New?

 20 - 21 February 2007	Advisers (South)	Bendigo, VIC	Jon Lamb Communications 08 8362 5417 (Phone) 08 8363 1052 (Fax) <a href="mailto:jlcom@chariot.net.au">jlcom@chariot.net.au</a>  <a href="#">Registration Form [PDF 407KB]</a>
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## The Coming Season

Dale Grey  
Managing Climate Variability Agronomist  
Cobram 0358 710 600

After a 2006 we'd all rather forget, now's an ideal time to look at the current world weather scenario to hopefully provide some better news for 2007.

The first item affecting our weather to some extent is the existing El Niño. Whilst an El Niño has only a limited bearing on Victorian weather, its presence isn't helpful. In August last year the equatorial Pacific Ocean surface started to warm progressively to 1°C above average from Ecuador to Papua New Guinea. This level of warming was considered weak and was less than in the 1997/98 or 2002/03 cycles. The positive news is that the ocean surface has recently started to cool and meteorologists are now nearly all in agreement that the current El Niño event is starting to break down. Further evidence pointing to this includes trade winds strengthening, and cloudiness near the international dateline returning to near normal values. Further, a large area of cold water which sits between 100-200 m below the sea surface, is progressively working its way towards the South American coast. This will upwell to the surface and start to cool the warm water further. Most world computer models now predict that the El Niño will break down in Autumn as per normal.

In the Indian Ocean, things have also returned to some degree of normality. The large area of unusually cool water next to Indonesia has progressively diminished since October. This cool water, when considered in conjunction with the unusually warm water off East Africa, is classified as in Indian Ocean Dipole +ve event. Historically these events, whether they accompany an El Niño or not, lead to a reduced chance of spring rainfall. The cool water off Indonesia, coupled with the warm water off the WA coast, set up the strong high pressure systems over the Great Australian Bight, which resulted in very little frontal rain. Before Christmas we began to see the break down of this pattern with lows, fronts and troughs coming from the W, SW and NW indicating a return to conditions more conducive to rainfall. Many people have the gut feeling that rainfall is good after a drought. This feeling is well confirmed by the historic data. An analysis of the 10 lowest growing seasons at Echuca reveals that most of them had above average rainfall in the following year. The average growing season rainfall at Echuca is 283mm.

Table 1 The 10 lowest growing seasons at Echuca and their following years.

year	apr-oct mm	el-nino	IOD+	year	apr-oct mm	Following year	Break
1982	91	✓	✓	1983	514	IOD+	21 <sup>st</sup> - 24 <sup>th</sup> Mar 61.6 mm
2002	93	✓	✓	2003	515	neutral	11 <sup>th</sup> - 14 <sup>th</sup> Apr 36.4 mm
1914	97	✓		1915	387	neutral	13 <sup>th</sup> - 17 <sup>th</sup> May 54.1 mm false brk Apr
1902	118	✓	✓	1903	529	La nina	23 <sup>rd</sup> - 27 <sup>th</sup> Apr 33.7 mm
1994	126		✓	1995	451	neutral	17 <sup>th</sup> Apr 22.4 mm
1972	129	✓	✓	1973	892	La nina	28 <sup>th</sup> - 30 <sup>th</sup> Mar 28.4 mm wet Feb
1976	140			1977	307	IOD+	18 <sup>th</sup> - 21 <sup>st</sup> May 21 mm false brk Apr
2006	149	✓	✓	2007	?	?	?
1946	151		✓	1947	484	neutral	No distinct break until 28 <sup>th</sup> June 15.5 mm
1944	156		✓	1945	341	IOD+	19 <sup>th</sup> - 23 <sup>rd</sup> Jun 44.4 mm false brk May

There are 11 years in the historic record that have had an El Niño and IOD+ similar to last year. Of these years, the average GSR was 220 mm but the years following averaged 369 mm. Only 1997 followed by 1998 were two years of below average rainfall. 1998 was a La Nina that failed to deliver big rains until November.

Time will tell what happens in 2007, the historic record suggests a strong probability of good seasonal rain. Whilst the oceans appear to be returning to more favourable conditions, their current status is a poor predictor of spring rainfall at this time of the year.

## **2006 Trial Summary – VICC Trial Block, Kerang**

This is a brief summary of the results from the 2006 winter trials. A more detailed analysis will be available in late February.

Most trials were pre-irrigated in early April, sown by direct drill, and the bulk of the N fertiliser held off until later in the plant's development (stem elongation). Spring irrigations occurred in late August, early October and late October.

### **Variety Trials**

#### **Barley**

Sown 18<sup>th</sup> May. Trial average was 5.8 t/ha, with Capstan topping the trial with 7.1 t/ha. The mid-late season varieties yielded better than the shorter season varieties.

#### **Canola**

Sown 10<sup>th</sup> May into moisture. Some patchy emergence and establishment due to not receiving any more rain until June. Site average was 2.0 t/ha, with 44C11 the best at 3.1 t/ha. Not too much can be drawn from the 2006 results as there was a fair amount of variability in the yield data due to the patchy establishment in some plots. An interesting result was the better performance of the earlier types compared with the later maturing types this season, probably due to the sudden halt to flowering in early October caused by hot weather.

#### **Faba Beans**

Sown 11<sup>th</sup> May. The trial was abandoned due to Bean Leaf Roll Virus infection. This aphid borne virus severely affected parts of the trial, killing the plants by October. There appeared to be little resistance among the varieties present.

### **Oaten Hay**

Sown 23<sup>rd</sup> May. Site average was 12.0 t/ha and Glider topped the trial at 14.5 t/ha. Warmer conditions in September/October saw most varieties 20 cm shorter than last year.

### **Triticale**

Sown 18<sup>th</sup> May. Trial average was 4.9 t/ha, with Abacus the highest yielder at 5.9 t/ha.

### **Wheat**

Sown 17<sup>th</sup> May. Trial average was 5.7 t/ha. The best variety was Arrivato at 6.8 t/ha and of the bread wheats, Mitre at 6.7 t/ha. With no stripe rust present, several of the MS varieties did quite well compared with 2005 where they suffered yield losses of up to 50%. Another trend was for the poorer yields in the early maturing varieties such as Ventura, which could be attributed to the frosts of late September and bird damage.

### **Management Trials**

Due to the dry warm conditions, stripe rust was barely detectable, even in a sucker such as H45. Therefore there were not yield responses to seed or foliar treatments.

Wheat yields were optimised by splitting nitrogen applications between pre-drilling and topdressing, partly due to the lack of topdressing opportunities at stem elongation (possible N deficiency in the plots that received only starter N) and lower than desired plant establishment (early N encourages vegetative growth and tillering).

Grazing of both spring and winter wheats had little effect on final grain yields as long as the grazing was completed by the beginning of stem elongation.

The continuing work on matching sowing rates to sowing dates provided mixed results, but confirmed the penalties and reduced vegetative development of late sown crops and the need to increase sowing rates.