

The Link

FarmLink Newsletter

Vol 38. - Winter 2014



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Dear Members and Sponsors,

Welcome to the winter edition of The Link. It is great to see the countryside looking so good – crops are up and lambs are appearing across the region.

Well since it is always busy I am sure you will agree a lot has happened in the three months since the last edition of The Link!

On the FarmLink front firstly, I would like to welcome Erika McAlister, a 4th year CSU Agriculture student who is on practicum with FarmLink. Erika started last month and has really settled into the FarmLink team. Erika will be with us until September and, amongst other things, is working on our member profiling project. This profiling work is really important to the future prosperity and relevance of FarmLink. Building a profile of our member base will help us deliver more targeted information to you and it will help us design and deliver better research & extension projects and sponsorship packages. So it is a win all around. You can read all about Erika and the first stage of the project - Farmer Member Profiling Project. Erika would really like your help to complete the project and I encourage you to get involved.

On the 23rd May we held the FarmLink Research Ltd AGM and had a great roll up to hear from the Board and our invited speakers. We were lucky enough to have John Kirkegaard (CSIRO) speaking about the Outlook for Dryland Agricultural Productivity Gains and Recent Research Outcome which included discussion of early sowing and grazing opportunities for SNSW; and John Minogue (GRDC Southern Panel) speaking about GRDC investment priorities and the opportunities for FarmLink. In addition to this, there was a great show of support from our sponsors

and research partners with a number being present. I would like to extend thanks to everyone who attended and make particular mention of Kristian Bonetti from our principle sponsor CBA and Luke Gaynor from NSW DPI who generously offered a range of extension opportunities for FarmLink to deliver to our members.

On the 28th May NSW Governor her Excellency Professor the Honourable Dame Marie Bashir opened the FarmLink office at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre. During her visit the Governor spoke of her passionate support for Australian agriculture and congratulated Temora Shire Council and FarmLink for the role they have played, and continue to play, in securing agricultural innovation for the future of farmers in SNSW through TAIC.

In mid-June we will finalise our move to the centre. In making this move we will be consolidating the administration of FarmLink in one place but over the next 6 months we will be establishing regional trial sites and focus groups to ensure that there is local delivery of research and innovation and identification of local research needs from across the whole FarmLink region. If you are interested in establishing or being part of a regional focus group in your area please get in contact with me.

Recently, we commenced our strategic planning process and we will be coming out to you over the next couple of months looking for your input and feedback on the direction and priorities that have been identified. We are undertaking this strategic planning with the support of Peter and Hazel McInerney from 3-D Ag.

CEO Message cont.

Peter and Hazel have been FarmLink members for a long time and at the beginning of this year generously offered to assist FarmLink in any way they could. 3D-Ag is an agricultural consulting firm based in Wagga and, as independent agricultural consultants, specialising in a whole farm approach to agricultural business and management planning, advice and training – we were/are grateful to accept their assistance with our planning for the future.

I would also like to thank TressCox Lawyers for the legal and governance support they are providing us on a pro-bono basis - we are very lucky to have this quality of professional support available to the business.

Finally, I would like to acknowledge the wonderful group of sponsors that we have on board this year – old and new - and thank them for their support of FarmLink and its members.

Commonwealth Bank remains our principal sponsor in 2014.

Our Gold sponsors are AWB Ltd and Bayer Crop Science

Our Silver sponsors are BASF, GrainGrowers Ltd, Hutcheon and Pearce

Our Bronze Sponsors are Suncorp, Rabobank Australia, AGT, PacSeeds, Pioneer Hi-Bred, RMS Consulting, National Australia Bank, Nuseed, CBH Grain, Boyce Chartered Accountants and Southern Ag Venture

Looking forward, we have a number of events coming up and details will be available on the website and on our elink as we get closer. In July we will celebrate FarmLink Research Limited's 10th Anniversary at our Annual Dinner to be held on the 25th July at the Magpie's Nest Restaurant, Wagga Wagga. I hope you will join us. Some other things to put in your diary now include -

- Winter bus tour – 25th June leaving from Coolamon
- FarmLink Annual Dinner – 25th July, Magpie's Nest, Wagga Wagga
- GRDC update – 29th July in West Wyalong
- Food and Farming Forum – 20-21st August CSU Wagga
- GRDC Farm Business Update Advisors – 26th August in Wagga
- GRDC Farm Business Update Growers – 27th August in Young
- FarmLink Advisor Day – 10th September at TAIC
- FarmLink Open Day - 11th September at TAIC
- Australian Universities Crop Competition – 17-19th Sept at TAIC
- Spring bus tour – details to come

I look forward to seeing you at one or more our upcoming events and if you have any feedback or ideas please give me a call.

Be good!



Cindy Cassidy
FarmLink Research CEO

Project Update

Farmer Member Profiling Project



Earlier this year we talked to you and mentioned in our newsletter the need to better understand our members and our plan to undertake a member profiling project to capture member information in a consistent manner. This is the first stage of that process - these questions are for our farmer members and we will be providing a different set of questions for advisors and other members shortly.

The Farmer Member Profiling Project has been created to help us better understand who our members are, what you are doing on farm, what changes you have made to your farming practices and why you value FarmLink.

We plan to regularly update our member information so that we can measure change in farming practice through our activities and also remain aware of your changing research, development and extension needs.

The survey takes 10-15 minutes, the results of this project will assist us to represent member's needs more effectively to funding bodies, develop relevant research priorities and provide better service.

Your responses will maintain the confidentiality of information disclosed. We will use consolidated data and analysis of information in communication with funding bodies, sponsors and other stakeholders but will only use individual's information for internal purposes.

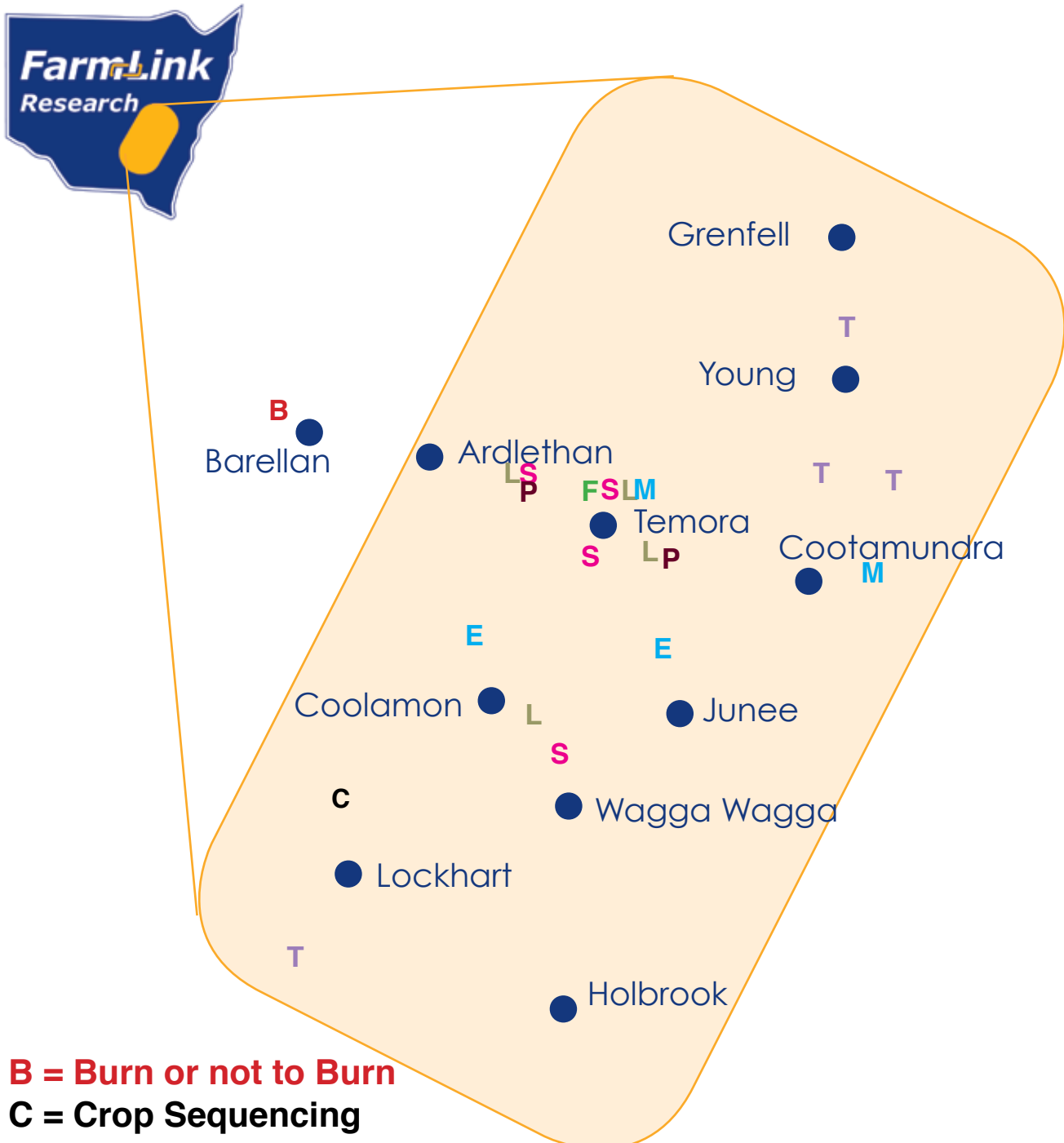
We ask that responses be completed by Friday July 11, 2014.

Please get involved now by visiting link below.

https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FarmLink_FarmerMemberProfilingProject

Project Update

A graphic representation of FarmLink's trial sites for 2014!



B = Burn or not to Burn

C = Crop Sequencing

E = Increasing yield and reducing risk through early sowing in the southern grains region.

F = Baryer and FarmLink Systems

L = Farmers leading and learning about the soil carbon frontier

M = Micronutrients

P = Enabling landholders to adopt profitable and sustainable carbon cropping practices

S = Maintaining Profitable Farming Systems with Retained Stubble

T = Strategic Tillage

Project Update

Increasing yield and reducing risk through early sowing in the southern grains region.

The primary GRDC project with CSIRO is examining three distinct early sowing strategies; all of which aim to result in a greater proportion of farm wheat crop flowering at the optimal time in each growing season thus increasing average farm wheat yield.

1. Winter wheats planted in response to establishment opportunities arising from late summer onwards. These crops may be grazed in the vegetative phase (dual-purpose) or grown exclusively for grain (grain only).
2. Slow-maturing spring wheats planted in response to establishment opportunities arising in mid-autumn.
3. Mid-fast maturing varieties (main season) planted in response to either establishment opportunities arising in late April or 'dry' prior to the break of season.

Farmers leading and learning about the soil carbon frontier

The overall aim of the project is to raise the awareness of farmers about how they can reduce GHG emissions, sequester soil carbon and make improvements in farm productivity.

Specific outcomes are –

- An increased number of farmers/advisors who understand the functions of soil carbon, its economic value and the levels needed to support sustainable and profitable farming systems.
- An increased number of farmers who have used their new knowledge and skills to develop their own farm strategies and plan practices to increase and manage soil carbon.
- An improvement in scientific understanding of practical strategies used to manage soil carbon and the techniques required for carbon sequestration and the functions of healthy soils on commercial farms.
- The provision of baseline soil carbon stocks across a range of regions, climatic zones, soils, land uses and farming practices. This will be a valuable data source with which to assess opportunities for soil carbon.

Strategic Tillage

The primary GRDC project with NSW DI&I seeks to examine the possible impacts of strategic tillage on potential production, profit, and on risks to the soil resource. The project is investigating whether the agronomic and economic benefits of a strategic tillage operation exceed any agronomic costs due to damage to the soil structure. We will be working with the project team to create and disseminate guides for the strategic use of tillage in farming systems.

Project Update

Maintaining Profitable Farming Systems with Retained Stubble

PROJECT PARTNERS: CSIRO, FarmLink Research, Farmers and Advisors.

FUNDING SOURCE: GRDC. This project is part of a wider initiative by GRDC delivered across Australia.

PROJECT DURATION: 2013-2019

PROJECT LOCATION: FarmLink Region

PROJECT AIM: This project will investigate the potential of management systems to increase profitability when farming in full stubble retention systems.

Nitrogen Management

Stubble Retained Systems need more N and need it earlier

Stubble retained, no-till systems need more N than systems where stubble is removed and soil cultivated prior to sowing. Soil bacteria and fungi that break down retained stubble compete with crop plants for N, and this has to be taken into account when budgeting N in stubble retained systems. A rough rule of thumb is that every tonne per hectare of cereal or canola stubble will tie-up (immobilise) 5 kg/ha of N. This means that in a paddock with a typical SE NSW cereal stubble load of 5 t/ha, 25 kg/ha of N will be tied up if the stubble is retained, and this must be compensated for with fertiliser N if yield is to be maintained.

Also, retaining stubble during the summer fallow and direct drilling can make more water available to crops compared to cultivated systems, and N must be added to turn this extra water into yield.

Crop plants grow slower in uncultivated soil, particularly when it is cooled by surface retained stubble. Wheat grown in stubble retained systems typically have higher incidence of yellow leaf spot which also reduces early plant growth. Providing up-front N increases early growth and can help alleviate these constraints.

Managing N in stubble retained systems

The process for managing N in stubble retained systems is relatively simple, and there are good rules of thumb to help with decision making, which are outlined below;

1. Soil test in March-April
2. If soil test results show less than 40 kg/ha N in the top 60 cm then apply some N at sowing. If there is more than 40 kg/ha mineral N then wheat and barley will make it to Zadoks stage Z30 (start of stem elongation) and canola will get to 6-leaf without losing yield potential.
3. Top-dress the majority of N at Z30-31 (mid-July – early August) based on your best assessment of yield expectations. Add 40 kg/ha N per tonne of anticipated wheat grain yield, 80 kg/ha N per tonne of canola and 35 kg/ha N per tonne of barley. In SE NSW this can be done 'by the calendar' without waiting for a rain event.
4. If conditions are favourable top-dress more N at Z39 in cereals (flag leaf emergence, early September) but at this time of year a rain after application is required to ensure plant uptake.

1. Soil testing

You can't manage what you don't measure and soil testing is a vital first step in N management. This can be done by an advisor with appropriate soil coring equipment. Make sure samples are taken to at least 60 cm and as a bare minimum segmented into two depths (0-10, 10-60 cm). Segmenting the top soil away from the subsoil minimises the chances of measurement error caused by poor mixing of the N rich top-soil with the lower N sub-soil. Typically 6-8 cores are taken across a paddock and bulked into depths for analysis. Ensure bulked samples are very well mixed, and kept cool following sampling (keep in an esky in the ute, then transfer to a fridge/freezer back at the office). When sending samples away for analysis do this by express post, and send early in the week so that samples do not sit around in a hot post office over the weekend.

2. Soil test results

Soil tests report two forms of plant available N – nitrate (NO₃) and ammonium (NH₄). These need to be expressed as kilograms per hectare of N (kg/ha N). If they are reported as mg/kg (or parts per million, PPM) this number can be converted to kg/ha N by multiplying by bulk density of the soil (1.4 is a good rough value for SE NSW) and the sampling depth in decimetres (1 decimetre = 10 cm) over which the sample was taken, see worked example below.

Nitrate (NO₃) value should always be much higher than ammonium (NH₄) values on the test. If this is not the case, regard the results with extreme suspicion. Ask the lab to retest the samples, and if they are still high it is likely that samples got hot between sampling and analysis and results should be ignored

Project Update

Maintaining Profitable Farming Systems with Retained Stubble

How to calculate Total Mineral N

Soil test result;

Depth (cm)	Nitrate NO ₃ (mg/kg)	Ammonium NH ₄ (mg/kg)
0-10	10	3
10-60	5	1

Calculate total soil mineral N by adding nitrate and ammonium;

Depth (cm)	Nitrate NO ₃ (mg/kg)	Ammonium NH ₄ (mg/kg)	Total mineral N (mg/kg)
0-10	10	3	13
10-60	5	1	6

Convert mg/kg to kg/ha N by multiplying by bulk density (1.4 kg/ha) and depth increment in decimetres (1 decimetre = 10 cm).

Depth (cm)	Nitrate NO ₃ (mg/kg)	Ammonium NH ₄ (mg/kg)	Total mineral N (mg/kg)	Depth increment (dm)	Total mineral N (kg/ha)
0-10	10	3	13	1	18 (13 x 1.4 x 1)
10-60	5	1	6	5	35 (6 x 1.4 x 5)

Total mineral N = 18 + 35 = 53 kg/ha N

3. Applying N at sowing

If soil tests results show that there is less than 40 kg/ha of mineral N (nitrate + ammonium) in the top 60 cm of soil, some N (at least 20 kg/ha N) should be added at sowing. If there is more than 40 kg/ha N then cereal crops will make it to Z30 and canola crops to 6-leaf without losing yield potential. If the soil test is less than 60 kg/ha N then you may want to add some N as the chances of getting a yield response are high.

There are different ways of adding N at sowing all of which are effective and have various pros and cons;

- At sowing with the seed. Fertiliser products with a higher N content (e.g. 27:12) can be used to do this, urea blended with MAP or in air-carts with three bins urea added independently of seed and MAP. Be aware that higher rates of N fertiliser with the seed will reduce crop establishment, particularly with wide row spacing and low seed-bed utilisation (SBU) and particularly in canola (See table below).
- At sowing deep- or side- banded. Same as above but higher rates can be applied as the fertiliser is separated from the seed and any effect on crop establishment is reduced.
- Pre-drilled prior to sowing. This puts the N away from stubble and safe from gaseous loss and can be done well in advance of sowing, but requires another pass which is expensive and has the potential to delay sowing.
- Spread and incorporated by sowing. Fast and cheap, but should be done close to sowing to avoid gaseous losses.

4. Top-dressing N

The most reliable time to top-dress N in cereals is at early stem elongation (Z30-31) which in SE NSW typically happens from mid-July to mid August depending on sowing time, variety and temperature. At this stage of development, tillering has largely finished and the risk of producing excessive tillers and 'haying off' cereal the crops has passed. Temperatures are still low, showers are frequent and on acid soils chances of gaseous losses are low. Consequently, urea can be safely spread 'by the calendar' at this time of year without waiting for a rain event to put it out in front of. The majority of the crops anticipated N supply should be added at this time. If seasonal conditions are favourable N can be 'topped up' up until flag leaf emergence (Z39) in cereals (typically early September in SE NSW), but at this time of year rain is required to ensure plant uptake and prevent gaseous losses.

Canola can be top-dressed earlier than cereals without risk of haying off, and this can be done by the calendar in June-July when temperatures are low, rain more frequent and chances of gaseous losses very low.

There is no Australian data that suggests any yield benefit of different forms of N for top-dressing (liquid vs. granules) and urea is by far the cheapest and most cost-effective source of N.

Project Update

Maintaining Profitable Farming Systems with Retained Stubble

5. N budgeting – N requirement

The following are handy rules of thumb for calculating N requirement of a crop;

Wheat (11% protein): 40 kg/ha N per tonne of grain yield

Canola: 80 kg/ha N per tonne of grain yield

Barley: 35 kg/ha N per tonne of grain yield

In wheat, grain protein less than 11% indicates that crop yield was probably nitrogen limited. Targeting 11% protein will ensure yield is maximised and APW protein levels are achieved. The extra N required to achieve H1, H2 or APH may or may not be worth it, depending on the spread in prices and cost of urea.

6. N budgeting – N supply

The supply of N available to a crop consists of ;

1. Soil N available at sowing (as measured with soil test)
2. Net mineralisation in-crop (mineralisation – immobilisation)
3. Applied fertiliser N

Estimating net mineralisation in the N supply is tricky because it varies greatly depending on season and paddock history. Net mineralisation is a function of temperature, water availability, organic carbon and stubble type and amount. The majority of mineralisation happens in spring, and can vary from negative values in cold, dry years in paddocks with heavy stubble loads to more than 80 kg/ha in paddocks with a legume history during wet springs. Fortunately this component of N budgeting is 'self correcting' in that more N becomes available in higher yielding seasons. What figures you end up using are very much a personal choice. However, allowing for mineralisation in N budgets means that reserves of soil organic N and carbon will decline over time. In the case of stubble retained systems (particularly if continuous cropping without legumes) it is probably best to assume no net mineralisation when calculating N budgets, as N tie-up cancels out any mineralisation.

7. Estimating likely yield

Estimating likely yield is the trickiest part of N management and there is no perfect way to do it, as in SE NSW yield greatly depends on weather in September and October. Simple rules of thumb based on water limited yield potential can be useful, as are moisture probes and 'gut feel'. Yield Prophet® is able to give probabilities of different yields occurring based on seasonal conditions to date and historic climate, but it is not a perfect forecast and growers still have to decide what level of probability they are willing to accept. At the end of the day, growers and advisors still need to take a punt on what they think the season will bring and manage accordingly. The uncertainty associated with yield forecasting means that in practice N management has more to do with farm finances than agronomy. How much N fertiliser the farm business can afford to purchase and apply in any given season, and the business consequences of not getting the money back in the current season if targeted yields are not achieved should drive decision making. If N top-dressing decisions are made in conjunction with a farm adviser, they should be aware of financial position when making recommendations.

Given that cash flow and attitude to risk generally limit N application, inputs should be targeted to crops where a return on investment is most likely. Weed-free crops sown on time following a break crop or well managed pasture will have the highest yield potential. APH varieties that are better able to withstand weather damage (e.g. Ellison, Spitfire) are also less of a risk as there is a greater chance of receiving a premium for high protein if spring turns hot and dry.

8. Putting it all together

Once you have an estimate of anticipated yield that you are comfortable with, the maths of N budgeting are simple.

Total N requirement (kg/ha N) = 40 x anticipated yield (t/ha)

Top-dressed N requirement (kg/ha N) = Total N requirement – soil mineral N prior to sowing – starter N – mineralisation

See the worked example for wheat below.

EXAMPLE

Anticipated wheat yield = 4 t/ha

Total N requirement (kg/ha N) = 4 x 40 = 160 kg/ha N

Soil mineral N prior to sowing (from soil test) = 30 kg/ha N

N applied at sowing = 27 kg/ha N (applied as 35 kg/ha MAP (20% N) and 43 kg/ha of urea (46% N))

Mineralisation = assumed 0 kg/ha (many years of canola-wheat sequence with retained wheat stubble in current season)

Top-dressed N requirement (kg/ha N) = 160 – 30 – 27 – 0 = 103 kg/ha N (223 kg/ha urea)

Author: James Hunt, CSIRO

Events

Did you sow your Canola early this year?

FarmLink's Winter Bus Tour will be looking at early sown trials and much, much more.

- Time of Sowing Canola Trials - DPI
 - Early sown Canola on a commercial farm
 - Speed tiller, disc sown crops and GRDC Stubble Initiative Trials
 - Crop Sequencing and Rye Grass Herbicide Resistance Trials
- Morning tea and lunch are provided

WHEN: Wednesday 25th June, 2014 8.30am to 4.30pm

DEPARTING: Coolamon Sport and Recreation Club

WHERE: Ganmain, Dirnaseer and Eurongilly

COST: \$75 per person \$50 for FarmLink and Landcare Members

RSVP: 20th June to Erika McAllister for catering purposes EMAIL: erika@farmlink.com.au

PHONE: (02) 6980 1333

This project is assisted by Murrumbidgee Landcare with support from Caring for Our Country (Community Landcare Grant) and the Regional Landcare Facilitator, Murrumbidgee.

Need a night out?

Why not come along to FarmLink's Annual Dinner and celebrate the 10th Anniversary of FarmLink Research

We would like to invite you and your partner to come along to our Annual Dinner. Each year we look forward to coordinating this event as it is a great opportunity for members to step out of their work gear and treat themselves to a night of great food and even better conversation with people who share the same passion, agriculture.

So why not join us, if you haven't been to our Annual Dinner before, then make this year your first! We have lots to celebrate and look forward to here at FarmLink and we would like to share it with you.

This notice is a head's up! You will be receiving your formal invitation very soon.

Magpie's Nest Restaurant

Pine Gully Road, Wagga Wagga

Friday 25th July, 2014



News

We've moved office. Come visit.

The Governor of NSW, Her Excellency Professor the Honourable Marie Bashir AC CVO officially opened the new offices for FarmLink Research at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre on May, 28.

Her Excellency Marie Bashir commemorated the office opening at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre (TAIC) with the planting of a Jacaranda tree outside of the offices. Her Excellency was joined by Mayor of Temora Shire Council Mr Rick Firman, Deputy Mayor Mr Graham Sinclair and FarmLink Research Chairman Bernard Hart and Chris Golder, Temora Ag Bureau.

FarmLink Research has been managing the TAIC on behalf of Temora Shire Council for over two years. Ms Cindy Cassidy, FarmLink Research CEO said partnering with Temora Shire Council to secure the future of the former Agricultural Research Station has allowed us to make a valuable contribution to agricultural research and education activities in the region.

"We are proud of the role we have been able to play in saving the station and reinvigorating agricultural innovation in NSW," said Ms Cassidy, FarmLink Research CEO.

"Through management of the facility and the extension activities taking place on a regular basis we are providing farmers and the community with new practices and tools to achieve profitability, productivity and sustainability."

"From a practical perspective consolidation of staff and resources at the TAIC will ensure more efficient and productive operation of the commercial and trial functions at the Centre and within the FarmLink business," Ms Cassidy said.

The TAIC will hold its annual Open Day on Thursday 11th September, 2014. This event is open to the public and showcases the research and activities that are taking place at the Centre. On the 10th of September a Open Day will be held for Advisor's also at TAIC



We welcome your visit!

**Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre
361 Trungley Hall Road, Temora NSW 2666
PO Box 521
Phone: 02 6980 1333**

www.farmlink.com.au

Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre Update

Manager's Update

Tony Pratt

The Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre (TAIC) has had a favorable run into this year's seeding program with an Autumn that many around the district have labeled one of the best they have seen. There is adequate soil moisture at present but all would agree that we will need winter rain events to continue to top up or maintain a not yet full moisture profile.

Pasture growth has been outstanding and sheep on the centres Lucerne paddocks are looking well satisfied. Seeding commenced on the 9th of April sowing some feed barley and continued the program with some wedgetail wheat, lupins and canola, finishing at Easter. This all went onto good moisture and has emerged looking pretty good so far. Our main season wheat and barley program was completed in mid May.

The trial program for this season is also well advanced with some companies taking advantage of the great conditions to get some early sown trials in at the start of April. Since then there has been a steady flow of specialised small plot seeding equipment into the Centre and our trial showcase paddocks are full.

FarmLink's Open Day on September 11th will be a patchwork of innovative and impressive trials. More information will be made available to you over the coming months.

We have also had a busy time with the seminar room and facilities being utilised for a range of workshops and information days. As well some local companies have held staff training days and client demonstration workshops. The Centre offers seminar facilities at a nominal fee, if you would like to book the facilities for one of your events, please contact our office on 02 69801333.

Companies with Trials at TAIC in 2014

Actagrow
Advantage Wheats
Agricen
AGT
BASF
Bayer
Bluechip Livestock
Cargill
CBFS Pty LTD
Chemfura
Craig Wilson and Associates
CSIRO
CSU

Farm Oz
FMC
Genfarm
Injekta
Intergrain Seeds
Landmark
Loveland Products
Nuseed
Nufarm
Pacific Seeds
Pioneer Hi-Bred
Syngenta
Sip Cam



Above: Tony Pratt, TAIC Manager and Research Officer, FarmLink Research

TAIC Rainfall

Rainfall for 2014, so far
Jan 20.6 mm
Feb 29.6 mm
Mar 83.9 mm
Apr 56.4 mm
May 71.3 mm
June to-date 50mm
TOTAL = 311.8 mm



Hire Facilities

FarmLink Research offers seminar venues and meeting rooms ideal for your corporate requirements at TAIC.

To find out more contact FarmLink's Administration Officer, Cathie Fox on 02 69801333.

Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre Update

Trial in Focus

Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge

The Peter Westblade Memorial Merino Challenge (PWMMC) is in its 10th year, where each Challenge runs for two years. The PWMMC commenced research at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre four years ago. The Challenge is independently run by Craig Wilson and Associates and compares the genetics of commercial Merino bloodlines across Australia.

The final shearing of the PWMMC 2012-2014 was held at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre on March 6-7, 2014 where over 200 people attended. This Challenge compared 60 flocks from some of Australia's leading merino breeders.

Challenge conveynor, Craig Wilson from Wagga Wagga said the variance in profit between the top and bottom performing teams was a massive 70 per cent.

He said this figure showed how there was big gains to be made in the Merino industry by selecting high-performing genetics and making individual operations far more profitable. The top ranking team entered by TA Field Estates achieved a total lifetime value of \$219.10 per head.



Above: Craig Wilson, PWMMC conveynor.

PWMMC 2012-2014 TOP FIVE TEAMS

1. TA Field Estates, total life value= \$219.10, bloodlines: Hazeldean (ram), Mixed (ewe)
2. Glendale Partnership, total life value = \$198.10, bloodline: Centre Plus (ewe and ram)
3. GF and RK Davidson, total life value = \$214.52, bloodline: Middle View (ewe and ram)
4. Damien Hosie, total life value = \$208.52, bloodline: Pastora (ewe and ram)
5. Coombes and Poole, total life value = \$197.32, bloodline: One Oak (ewe and ram)

The data gathered from the Challenge is vital to each individual's Merino enterprise. "People see it as a good investment," Mr Wilson said. And some of those involved have already made major changes in focus and sought out new bloodlines if it meant there was an opportunity to improve the bottom line.

One of the participants in the first challenge used the information to benchmark their flock. As a result they were able to determine that their sheep enterprise was outperforming the cattle operation. Since that time the producer has replaced cattle with high-performing Merino genetics. Mr Wilson said.

Mr Wilson said the information from the Challenge clearly showed there is such a vast difference in profit margins between the various teams. "There is the capacity to be making a lot of money, or to be losing money," he said.

"If you consider what the bottom figure was, over the lifetime of the sheep, there was a 70% per head difference in profit," he said.

Each of the teams started out with 30 wethers and to perform well the sheep needed to achieve good results in meat and wool values. "There are teams that excelled in both their meat and wool production," Mr Wilson said.

Throughout the two year Challenge more than 50,000 records were collected and analysed, where a final report is produced.

PWMMC 2014-2016

The PWMMC 2014-2016 commenced in April 2014 with 50 flocks from across Australia. Currently, half of the entrant's lambs are undergoing the Meat Challenge at Collingullie, NSW and the remaining lambs are being run at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre.

For more information contact Craig Wilson on 0428 250 982

To view a short video from the final shearing visit: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bs3NijmYIA>

Diary Dates

June 2014

FarmLink's Winter Bus Tour

25 June, 8.30am - 4.30pm departing from Coolamon
Cost \$50 FarmLink and Landcare members
RSVP 20th June: 02 6980 1333

Pasture Research Update

25 June, 9.00am - 3.00pm
Eurongilly Hall
\$20 RSVP 18th June: 02 6938 1829

July 2014

Graham Centre Sheep Forum

4 July
CSU, Wagga Wagga

FarmLink's Annual Dinner

25 July
Magpies Nest, Wagga Wagga

GRDC update

29 July, 9am - 2pm West Wyalong
Cost \$40.00
Contact: Matt McCarthy 03 54416176

Beat Herbicide Resistance Workshop

30 July - 8.30am - 3.00pm
TAIC
\$30 RSVP Peter McInerney 0428317746

FarmLink Gold Sponsor



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global reach



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Wagga Wagga: 02 6933 6000
Parkes: 02 6861 1100

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August 2014

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GRDC Farm Business Update Advisors

26 August
Wagga Wagga

GRDC Farm Business Update Growers

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Erika McAllister

Charles Sturt University Practicum Student

Hi, my name is Erika McAllister; I'm a student studying a Bachelor of Agricultural Science at Charles Sturt University.

As part of my studies I have been given the opportunity to undertake a 12 week practicum with FarmLink as a student intern being mentored in a marketing and communications role. I began my practicum with FarmLink on the 28th of April and I have been enjoying every day.

The first couple of days I settled in and discussed a professional development plan with my mentor Karen Giddings. Under the mentorship of all the employees at FarmLink I've had the opportunity to gain a thorough knowledge of the organisation and its current projects and tackle a few tasks of my own. One such task was submitting an application for funding from Murrumbidgee Landcare to run our Winter Bus Tour (which has been approved!).

The weekly staff meetings serve to keep everyone at FarmLink updated on what projects are being worked on and how the FarmLink team can collaborate together for tasks, this has been a very good example of communication and has allowed me to see a great demonstration of effective teamwork.

Looking forward I've been working on a Farmer Member Profiling Project with Karen Giddings. I believe this Project is a great tool that will provide all of FarmLink's members with the opportunity to help FarmLink understand its members and improve its communication channels. By understanding its members FarmLink will be able to better shape research priorities, pitch project applications to funding providers and communicate relevant information right back to you.

The survey will be on the FarmLink website and sent to you in an email and all you have to do is follow the link and start filling it out. So what I need you to do is jump online and fill out the survey by the 11th of July as I'm only with FarmLink for a short time.

FarmLink is a great workplace and all of the employees are friendly. I've felt welcome and the tasks I've been given while challenging have been satisfying. I look forward to learning more and my practicum being a benefit to FarmLink and it's members.



Above: Erika McAllister.

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