

The Link

FarmLink Newsletter

Vol 36. - Summer 2013



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WE WISH YOU & YOUR FAMILY
A HAPPY, HEALTHY & MERRY, MERRY CHRISTMAS!
FROM ALL THE TEAM AT FARMLINK**



Dear FarmLink Members,

I am very pleased to welcome you to this, the Summer edition of The Link and my first as FarmLink CEO. Since joining FarmLink in late October I have been impressed by the commitment, passion and sense of purpose that typifies the staff, executive and members of FarmLink. I hope that over the next few years we can capitalise on that energy and expertise to generate greater recognition of the value that FarmLink creates for regional agriculture and our local communities.

With another eventful harvest drawing to a close across the region and Christmas almost upon us it doesn't hurt to look back at all that has been achieved in 2013. On the FarmLink front we had;

21st Feb - Conservation Agriculture Field Day was held at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre in conjunction with CANFA. The field day showcased conservation farming equipment displays and demonstrations and over 600 people attended.

31st July – Mixed Farming Forum is a biennial FarmLink event showcasing research and innovation in farming practices for mixed livestock and grain enterprises. The MFF provided an excellent forum to communicate outcomes from the Grain and Graze 1 and Grain and Graze 2 projects along with related supporting material. This year it was held at Temora Ex-Services Club and over 150 people attended with overwhelmingly positive feedback. The program for the day can be accessed on our website.

11th-18th Aug – Learning the best from the West – WA Study Tour was a 10 day farm and agribusiness tour of Western Australia supported by GRDC, Grain & Graze 2 & FarmLink. 32 FarmLink members and two of our staff, Jon Cobden and Tony Pratt

participated on the tour.

11th Sept - The FarmLink Research EXPO at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre. It provides an opportunity for our research trial partners to demonstrate the outcomes of their research at TAIC and for FarmLink to showcase the TAIC site. Highlights this year included the opening address from Ian Armstrong and Michael McCormack. FarmLink members and general public attended the Expo and we are hoping to build the profile of and participation at this event into the future.

I would like to congratulate FarmLink staff, executive and members on what looks to have been a very successful year. Needless to say 2014 is going to be another busy year! A few things of note include commencement of the GRDC funded 'Maintaining profitable farming systems with retained stubble' project, a full farming program to implement at TAIC, ongoing involvement with St Anne's school as well as numerous events, workshops and field days. Please have a look at page 7 for the first quarter of '2014 dates' and note them in your diary and we will provide you with details as the events get closer.

I hope to meet as many of you as possible over the coming year. Please don't hesitate to contact me if you have any comments or suggestions!

Wishing you a Merry Christmas and all the best for the New Year.

Regards

Cindy Cassidy,
CEO

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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: 2014-2019

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.

BACKGROUND:

Long term trial data from this region has shown negative impacts on yields when retaining stubble to be 0.3t/ha in wheat and 0.4t/ha in canola, (Kirkegaard et al).

Technological advances in GPS guided steering have increased the success of establishing crops with inter-row sowing and disease management techniques have also significantly improved. The Water Use Efficiency project identified several key areas that growers could address to increase profitability when retaining stubble such as summer weed control, ground cover maintenance, early sowing, grazing of crops and stubble and crop sequences.

FarmLink Research in collaboration with CSIRO's Dr James Hunt and Dr John Kirkegaard have secured funding to conduct research in the FarmLink region. A project steering committee consisting of regional growers and advisors along with the research teams undertook a consultation process to identify key issues limiting production in stubble retained farming systems. From the consultation process small plot and farmer sown trials were designed to look closely at the identified issues.

IDENTIFIED ISSUES:

- **Crop sequences for seeding equipment.** Disc seeders have been widely adopted in our region to facilitate trouble free establishment of crops into large stubble loads. The disc seeder system has no registered pre-emergent herbicides available for weed control. Farmers and advisors are leading the development of systems that will successfully control a range of weeds. Crop sequences will be an additional tool to combat problem weeds in both the disc and tyne seeding equipment. **This will be a small plot trial established into an existing population of annual ryegrass at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre.**
- **Rotary harrows with disc seeders for improved herbicide efficacy.** Local growers have been trialing the use of steel rotary harrows to increase herbicide efficacy, establishment percentages and reduce the impact of stubble born diseases.

A farmer sown strip trial will be carried out to determine the differences between a range of treatments.

- **Harvest and post harvest stubble management.** Some growers are harvesting at low heights to allow easy establishment of the following years crop. This can reduce harvest efficiency and increase chances of weather damage. **A replicated farmer sown trial looking at the impact of short and high stubble height compared to post harvest treatments of burning and K-line trash.**
- **Stubble management, nutrition and moisture conservation in mixed farming systems.** This is an extension of the Water Use Efficiency Project south of Temora. **Each plot will contain strips of knife point, spear point and disc openers to compare the impacts on each of grazing, stubble retention and burning.**

Along with the treatments outlined above we have the capacity to establish other experiments to investigate additional issues arising during the life of the project. Data will be collected on a wide range of aspects such as **soil moisture, nutrition, establishment, early vigor, dry matter production, yield, diseases, pests, canopy and soil temperatures.** These measurements will enable the impacts of a range of stubble management practices to be determined.



Pictured above: FarmLink Research CEO, Cindy Cassidy and CSIRO's Senior Research Scientist, James Hunt discussing the sampling of stubble and stubble management near Temora.

For more information contact FarmLink Research on 02 69244633 or visit the project section of our website.

New Project

Project Update

‘Catch more, store more grow more’ - Water Use Efficiency

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: 2008-2013

PROJECT LOCATION: Temora

Frost News

An interesting development from this years frost incident at the Water Use Efficiency trial site was a significant increase, 29%, in frost damage in the nil graze, stubble retained plots when compared to the nil graze stubble burn canola plots. We are waiting to complete the scores for the wheat plots and harvest data to complete this assessment, more information will be made available at the 2014 GRDC/FarmLink Grower Update in March.

Disc vs Tyne - Illabo

PROJECT PARTNERS: Grassroots Agronomy, FarmLink Research and Lehmann Family, ‘Hillside’, Illabo.

FUNDING SOURCE: FarmLink Research and Lehmann Family

PROJECT DURATION: 2008-2013 (ongoing)

PROJECT LOCATION: Illabo

PROJECT AIM: To assess the difference of disc vs tyne seeding systems in commercial practice.

2013 Harvest

The sixth harvest has just been completed at the Illabo site. The yields were outstanding with Hindmarsh barley achieving 6.26t/ha in the tyne area and 5.91t/ha in the disc area.

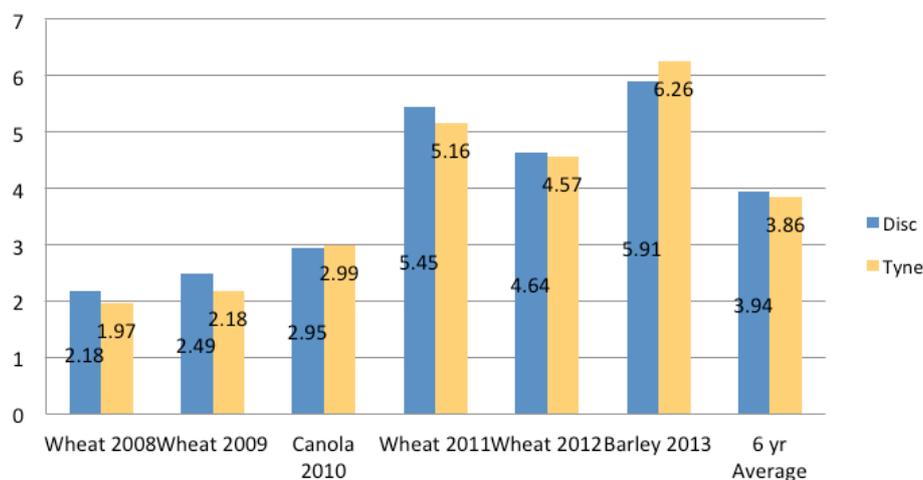
This is the first season that the tyne area has yielded more than the disc, (see long term yields below).

Site Details

This site is in effect a stubble management system comparison and has confirmed that the disc system can be as successful as a tyne system with appropriate management.

The site is lightly grazed and stubble is retained in both treatments. There is a large amount of stubble residue from previous years, which increases moisture retention in the top soil. This moisture is available at sowing and aids in timely crop establishment which is one of the many benefits of stubble retention. The site is also under full controlled traffic and there are strong indications that this system is also providing additional yield benefits and making paddocks more even in yield.

Disc vs Tyne Yields, Illabo 2008-2013



More information will be made available in the 2013 FarmLink Research Report. Or contact Paul Breust, Research and Extension Coordinator on 02 69244633.

Project Update

ABC's Landline visits Disc vs Tyne site at Illabo



The Disc vs Tyne demonstration site at Illabo was the centre of attention recently when ABC's Landline Reporter Chris Clark spoke with Tony Lehmann ('Hillside', Illabo), Greg Condon (Grassroots Agronomy) and Paul Breust (FarmLink Research).

Chris Clark was interested to find out the advantages and disadvantages of both systems and to see if there were any yield penalties. (See previous page for six year data on yield comparisons of the two different seeding systems).



Landline will feature this story in early 2014. For more information contact FarmLink on 02 69244633.

Above: Paul Breust (FarmLink Research), on the automated weigh bin getting ready to take a grain sample as Chris Clark (ABC Landline Reporter), Mark Farnell (camera) collect footage.

Left: Tony Lehmann ('Hillside', Illabo) and Greg Condon (Grassroots Agronomy) chatting about the variables of disc and tyne systems with the ABC Crew.

Events

Grain and Graze 2 - Profitable Sheep Nutrition and Management Workshops

PROJECT PARTNERS: CWFS, FarmLink Research, Rural Management Strategies, NSW DPI and Farmers.

FUNDING SOURCE: GRDC and DAFF

PROJECT DURATION: 2010-2013

PROJECT LOCATION: FarmLink region.

Workshops

Throughout the month of October, four profitable sheep nutrition and management workshops were held in the FarmLink region where over 70 farmers and advisors attended. The workshop was delivered by Hamish Diskson from Productive Nutrition.

Key Messages

- The quality of hay or silage is determined by three main parameters. These are: Neutral Detergent Fibre (NDF), Megajoules of Metabolisable Energy (MJ ME) and Crude Protein (CP). A feed analysis is needed to determine these factors. A feed test is an important management tool for any producer whether you are selling the hay or utilising it for your own livestock.
- If you had good quality hay or silage testing at 10.5 MJ ME, 12% CP and 50% NDF and poor quality hay or silage testing at 8.5 MJ ME, 7% CP and 65% NDF and were feeding 20 kg lambs, their intakes on the two types of feed determined by the NDF value is 480gms and 360gms respectively.
- This means that lambs on the good quality feed would be consuming 5.3 MJ ME and lambs on the poor quality feed would be consuming 3 MJ ME. A 20 kg lamb requires a minimum of 5 MJ ME per day and a minimum of 14% CP. This means without additional supplementation or access to good quality feed the lambs on the poor quality hay or silage will not be able to reach growth targets.
- NDF values below 30% can result in possible rumen health issues such as acidosis.
- In early-mid pregnancy muscle cell formation is developed.
- Weaning weight target should be 45% of adult weight.

Are you interested in Farm Works™ Training - Yield Mapping Software?

FarmLink is hosting a training day on the 6 February, 2014 at FarmLink Research, Junee.



\$50 per person, seats are limited.

Farm Works™ Mapping is desktop software that uses information gathered during the growing season to help you make smarter management decisions. Data can be imported from most precision farming displays or entered manually.

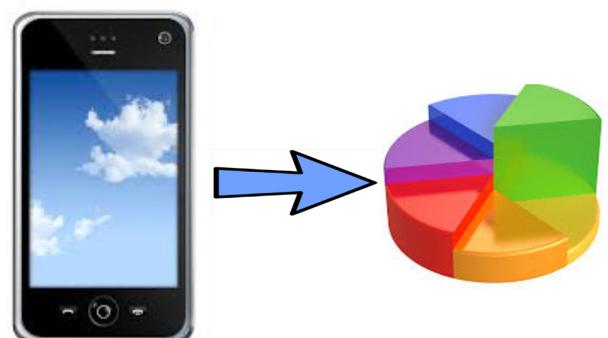
Participants will need to provide their own laptop with wifi access.

FarmLink Research - Survey

We Need To Know What You Think

In the first quarter of 2014, FarmLink Research will be contacting Members via phone so that we can gather information to measure the quality of our benefits to you and identify the gaps in our service. We would also like to gather information about your farming enterprises in order to assist us to promote the value of our members and network to corporate investors. Your response to the survey is voluntary and we promise to protect your privacy and treat the information you give us as confidential.

More information will be made available to you in early 2014.



News

Calling for Applicants: Peter Westblade Scholarship

The Peter Westblade Scholarship aims to assist with the provision of practical skills training, mentoring and establishment of industry networks for young people who are passionate about the sheep and wool industry and aspire to have a career in this dynamic industry.

Now entering its third year, the Peter Westblade Scholarship will provide cash and in-kind support of up to the value of \$10,000 over a 12-month period.

Applications are welcome from young people involved with any level of the industry, from the farm to all the sectors that provide services or research to the sheep industry.

For more information contact; Sally Martin M: 0400 782 477; Email or visit www.peterwestbladescholarship.com.au to download the application form.

FarmLink Successful in Sustainable Ag Grant

FarmLink has recently been awarded a Lachlan CMA Sustainable Ag Grant. This grant will support the implementation of sustainable agriculture activities for high school students when they visit the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre.

TAIC Harvest

Harvesting of trials was completed late November at the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre (TAIC). Yields and quality were reasonable with barley being a stand out.

Rainfall received at TAIC up to Nov 2013 was 409 mm and growing season rainfall was 291mm. These measurements were taken from the rain gauge at the weather station opposite the TAIC main office.

Below: Harvesting of trial plots at TAIC, November 2013.



Stubble Management Under the Microscope



The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) are investing over 1.9 million dollars in 'Maintaining Profitable Farming Systems with Retained Stubble' research project for the next five years in the FarmLink region.

Project collaborators, FarmLink Research and CSIRO will manage this project in southern NSW that is part of a wider initiative run by GRDC across Australia.

As part of the new project this years harvest at four different sites across the FarmLink region will be under the microscope. Last week Paul Breust and Karen Giddings (pictured above) were recording and collecting images and video footage of the comparison of varying stubble heights and trash at 'Pretty Plains' near Downside.

According to ABS in 2012, nationally, agricultural businesses reported 18.9 million hectares of land that had some form of crop stubble and/or trash management practice applied to it. Western Australia contributed around 35% of the area where crop stubble and/or trash management practices were conducted.

Growers in southern NSW have largely adopted stubble retained systems for operational and natural resource management benefits.

Stubble retained systems generate a range of challenges including greater resilience on herbicides for control of weeds, negative effect on plant establishment, increase in soil and stubble-borne diseases and yield penalty.

More information about the 'Maintaining Profitable Farming Systems with Retained Stubble' research project will be made available in 2014 or visit FarmLink's website.

If you have any information you would like to share with FarmLink about how you are managing your stubble you can email Paul Breust at Paul@farmlink.com.au or phone 02 69244633.

Diary Dates

December 2013

Frost affected farmer meetings

Landmark Office – Marrar 27 York Street
Friday 13 December 2013 – 12noon RSVP – 12 December
to di.pritchard@dpi.nsw.gov.au

Speed tiller and trash cutter demonstrations

12-13, December, RSVP: FarmLink Research 02 69244633

February 2014

Yield Prophet Workshops

4-5 February, Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre & Wagga Agricultural Institute
Fully booked

Farmworks Training - Yield mapping software

6 February, Junee, \$50 per person, seats are limited
RSVP: FarmLink Research 02 69244633

GRDC Advisor Update

11-12 February, Temora
More information: GRDC

Conservation Agriculture Field Day

20 February, Condobolin
More information: 02 68451044

March 2014

GRDC/FarmLink Grower Update

12 March, Wallendbeen
More information: 02 69244633

Soil Carbon Workshop

TBC March, Temora
More information: 02 69244633

2014 FarmLink Membership Renewals

All Members will receive their invoices for membership renewal in early January 2014.

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Cindy Cassidy, CEO

In conversation with Karen Giddings, Communications Coordinator

1. Can you give us a brief background on what you did prior to FarmLink Research?

Before FarmLink, I most recently worked with Wheat Quality Australia for three years initially as its inaugural Executive Officer and then as the General Manager, Technical. Prior to that I worked with AWB International for 10 years in a range of roles but my final role there was as Industry Development and Technical Services Manager. I worked with AWBI until deregulation of bulk wheat exports and then, working as a consultant to GRDC, I assisted in the transition of some of the AWBI technical functions to industry. This resulted in the creation of Wheat Quality Australia.

I have a science degree from Macquarie University and Master of Agriculture (crop breeding) from Sydney University and I grew up and went to school locally. My family farms near Ariah Park – the Cassidy's Mick & Lyn, Ben & Sal. My brother Chris works in Temora with Moses & Son and my sister Kym lives in Melbourne. My daughter, Olivia is following the family tradition, commencing in kindergarten at St Anne's Central School in Temora this year.

Even though I lived in Melbourne for nearly 20 years, my life and career has centred on agriculture and I have been very fortunate in the opportunities and experiences that agriculture has provided me so far. I have met amazing people, travelled to interesting and exotic places and had the chance to develop leadership and management skills – this is still a work in progress! I am confident that this next chapter with FarmLink will be just as interesting and rewarding.

2. What is it about FarmLink Research that makes you want to work here and take on the role of CEO?

The work that FarmLink does is local and delivers immediate benefits – this provides a great opportunity to make a real difference to the way that farming is conducted in the region. I also like the fact that FarmLink was established by local farmers to deliver specific outcomes for local farmers so the benefits are recognised making it pretty easy to justify its existence.

3. If you could give FarmLink Research one thing what would it be?

Greater security of funding. This creates confidence and allows for longer term planning and better decision making.

I think we can achieve this by increasing our profile – with members, researchers, funders, agribusiness - and identifying ways to better demonstrate the value that FarmLink creates for the whole community. We can then use this to unlock sponsorships and other funding opportunities.

4. What do you feel are the strongest elements of FarmLink Research?

It's people – the staff, members and executive. The real strength of FarmLink, and the thing that will see it continue, is the expertise and commitment of the FarmLink people.

5. As CEO how do you plan to continue establishing and growing FarmLink Research? What type of growth goals do you have for FarmLink Research?

My immediate focus will be consolidation – funding, operating practices, governance and structure. FarmLink has experienced significant growth in turn over and staff in recent years and I think it is timely to consolidate that growth.



Above: FarmLink CEO, Cindy Cassidy.

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