

**Minutes**  
**Western Downs Maranoa RAC Meeting**  
**held 20<sup>th</sup> March 2012**  
**at Muckadilla Hotel**  
**commencing 9.30 am**

**1. Opening, Welcome by Chairman**

Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed members and guest.

**2. Attendance**

C Nason (Chairman), J Crocker, E Hill, V French, A Borrell, P Banks, J Sturgess, D Scanlan, J Colborne.  
Nominees: Dr L McIntyre (CSIRO), Dr A Ward (DEEDI), R Taylor (NP GRDC)

Guest: P Crocker

Coordinator: J Obst

**3. Apologies**

D Poulsen (DEEDI), M Dieters (UQ) A-M Bach, T Kapcefevs, P McIntosh, L Ward, A Snars, J Hacker.

**4. Confirmation of Agenda**

Confirmed

**5. Confirmation of Minutes (30<sup>th</sup> August 2011)**

Agreed that minutes were true and correct.

**6. Business from Minutes (not covered elsewhere on agenda)**

Nil

**7. Correspondence and Business (not covered elsewhere on agenda)**

Nil

**8. RAC Members' Reports**

Each RAC member (not Nominee) reported briefly on current & emerging production issues limiting profitability and any emerging opportunities. Summary of issues reported on:

- **Lack of PROFITABILITY in grain production is the industry's biggest concern.**
- Consecutive flooding caused considerable damage to cropping areas in SW region.
- Many growers (including the larger grain growers where economies of scale are better) questioning profitability of grain growing and seriously considering changing to animal industries.
- PinG reviewing its functions / performance and expanding effort into CQ.
- Some interest being generated around guar production and processing in CQ.
- Some evaluation being given to providing an oilseed crushing in Queensland. Present crushing at Newcastle.
- Increased chickpea production in Roma region for 2012 winter season. Could be 8,000 ha planted. Major concern about post farm gate logistics.
- Spring planted mung beans damaged by heavy summer rains.
- Crown Rot and Yellow Leaf Spot continue to be major problem for wheat growing.
- Spring planted sorghum yields were good. Most growers decided against spring sorghum due to low price forecast.
- More grazing oats being planted for 2012 winter season.
- Feather Top Rhodes Grass and to a lesser extent Fleabane emerging as major issues and are putting at risk zero tillage practice.
- A big challenge for growers is to determine cropping choice based on soil moisture, nutrition, climate forecast and price indications. If growers can make the 'right' choice then this increases the chances of profitability.
- Big potential for Crown Rot and lesser extent Yellow Leaf Spot in 2012 wheat crop.
- Generally excellent sub soil moisture however soil Nitrogen levels are low. Growers applying 50 to 60 units of N when in fact >100 units N are required.
- Barnyard Grass is getting difficult to control. Fleabane generally under control.
- A lot of spring sorghum yielding >5 t/ha with some crops averaging 8 to 9 t/ha.
- Windmill Grass difficult to control west of Rome. More difficult than FTRG. ( check out website [www.glyphosateresistance.org.au](http://www.glyphosateresistance.org.au))
- Barley production is on the decline.
- Amicide Advance 700 giving good results on Fleabane.
- Big shift out of cropping and into animal industries. Beef (MLA) and Crop (GRDC) research investors need to discuss and determine opportunities for collaboration.
- Growers have to produce APH wheat quality to be profitable.
- Most growers are under applying N if targetting APH quality

- Concern over Double Knockdown strategies for hard to control weeds. Need smarter technology based around 'camera recognition' in order to lower overall weedicide use.
- Needs to be bigger emphasis placed on use of robotics in grain production.

**9. Review of WDM RAC Priority Issues**

The members divided into 3 groups for the purpose of identifying up to 5 major issues (particularly emerging) for reporting back to a plenary session.

**10. Grain Research Consultation**

In view of the difficulty which the WDM RAC has been experiencing in getting a regular attendance of grain growers to its meetings, the Chairman invited all members / nominees to comment on consultation arrangements. A general discussion followed this invitation. Mr Scanlan, as Chairman of GRFL undertook to take the committee's thoughts back to his board for further action.

**11. Finalising Highest Priority Issues for 2012**

Each of the 3 Groups reported in the plenary session on the 5 major areas of concern regarding grain production. Attachment 1 outlines the group reports.

**12. Nominees' Reports**

Each Nominee reported on their Research Agency's operations with a focus on Activities and Outcomes relevant to the Western Downs Maranoa grains region)

- 12.1 DEEDI: Dr A Ward
- DEED RDE projects reasonable aligned with WDM RAC priority Issues
  - Extension positions at St George and Roma again vacant. Applications to fill close Monday. Industry people included in selections.
  - DEEDI in discussion with GRDC regarding pulse agronomy project. Strong focus on western areas. Not just about black soils. DEEDI has a good team to take on this project.
  - Summer and winter cereal agronomy programs being developed.
  - QAAFI leading nutrition management
  - QAAFI leading weeds management
  - Negotiations continue on the future of the northern barley breeding program.

- 12.2 CSIRO: Dr L McIntyre
- Soybean breeding focus from Burdekin to Riverina regions.
  - Wheat project focused on predicting severity of crown rot and head blight.
  - Wheat adaptation: no ongoing funding for heat, drought adaptation.
  - High yielding irrigated wheat.

- 12.3 QAAFI: Dr A Borrell
- No funding to do further frost research in wheat for the North (UQ/DEEDI). Northern region will have to rely on germplasm from the southern and western programs even though testing has shown that adaptation is poor.
  - Similar ongoing funding problems for northern wheat drought adaptation program (UQ/DEEDI) with reliance being placed on using genetic material from the southern and western genetic programs.
  - There is an urgent need for a commitment to keep the northern UQ/DEEDI wheat physiology team together as funding has ended and a one year funding extension is required.
  - Major sorghum core breeding program is up for refunding. Industry support is important to ensure ongoing funding.
  - Researchers are presently spending up to 25% of their time seeking future funding for their programs.

- 12.4 GRDC NP: R Taylor
- GRDC appointing Northern Project Manager to be located in the northern region.
  - Northern Region Trial Coordinator being appointed
  - GRDC through Northern Panel invested \$30.73 M in Northern Region in 2010-11.
  - GRDC funded projects must demonstrate a direct line of delivery.
  - GRDC funded researchers must demonstrate some direct contact with grain growers.
  - GRDC funded research projects must clearly acknowledge GRDC funding.

**13. Next Meeting**

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|------|------------------|-----|
| 13.1 | Date:            | TBA |
| 13.2 | Venue            | TBA |
| 13.3 | Invited Speakers | TBA |

**14. Closure**

Attachment 1: Summary of the 3 Group Reports on Constraints on Profitable Grain Growing in Western Downs Maranoa Region

| <b>GROUP A</b>   | <b>GROUP B</b>  | <b>GROUP C</b>   |
|--|---|--|
| Need to develop decision aids to assist growers to determine which crops will maximise profitability based on soil moisture, nutrition, climate forecast, time of planting, price outlook etc. | Major concern about the un-profitability of grain production resulting in a possible reduction in annual production which will flow on to a reduced pool of funds from levies which in turn begs the question as to how research funders will manage this.  | Develop crop sequencing options particularly with respect to introducing pulses for different planting windows.  |
| Develop management options to control difficult weeds including Feather Top Rhodes grass , Fleabane, Windmill grass, Wondering Jew and which allow growers to maintain zero tillage practices. | Present cropping systems have introduced a new set of problems for grain production with the emergence of difficult to control weeds. Need to look at the bigger picture and think more strategically.<br>Growers need different packages for different situations to adopt a G x M x E approach. | Develop options to effectively manage difficult to control weeds in zero tillage systems with focus on improving performance of detect sprayers. Determine the economics of reverting to conventional practices to control weeds.  |
| Develop an understanding of soils with respect to net nutrient removal, rotations, biology   | Needs to be a stronger focus on discussion groups, forums, informal field walks to assist in information exchange and adoption of new technology. Group facilitation is necessary. Important not to overlook the older growers as new communication technologies are introduced.                  | Improve the interpretation of soil test results and determine the interaction between N, P, K. Determine critical limits for major and minor elements for each soil type. Develop decision aids to assist with determining the economics of applying N particularly with reference to grain quality. |
| Develop genetic resistances and management practices to effectively manage crop diseased particularly crown rot, yellow leaf spot, all rusts in wheat.   | Marketing   | Provide genetic resistance and develop management options for Crown Rot in wheat and better understand the role of planting seed as a possible source of infection.  |
| Continue pre-breeding for the northern region environment with a focus on maximising yields in favorable seasons for cereals and pulses  | Climate variability including frosts  | Develop a better understanding of soil microflora with respect to nitrogen, disease depression   |
|  |   | Need to improve weather forecasting  |