

Minutes
Darling Downs RAC Meeting
held Dalby Agri College Seminar Room Dalby
On Tuesday 20th February 2007
commencing 9.30am

1. Opening & Welcome by Chairman

The Chairman opened the meeting and welcomed members. The recent awards to members C Joseph (Australian Rural Leadership Awards) and Dr J Thompson (Australian Day Award) were recognised.

2. Attendance

R Taylor (Chairman)
L Berry
W Bidstrup
C Hornick
S Pfeffer
R Skerman

B Warren
T Jorgensen
M Burgis
S Cook
P McIntosh
J Rochecouste

J Farrell
J Thompson

Nominees

R Williams (QDPI)
Z Hochman (CSIRO)
C Joseph (GRDC)
W Newton (GRFL)

J Obst (RAC Coordinator)

Guests

Dr D Rodriguez, G Milne, L Larkins

3. Apologies

Received from D Alexander, R Bartels, P Carberry, J Boland

Accepted

4. Confirmation of Agenda

Confirmed

5. RAC Coordination

GRFL has replaced Twyford & Associates as Northern Region RAC Coordinator in project funded by GRDC through AgForce Grains commencing 1st July 2006.

6. Confirmation of Minutes (21st July 2006)

Agreed to accept the Minutes as true and correct

7. Business from Minutes

7.1 Wheat Quality Workshop

The Chairman said that he attended this GRDC /AWB Wheat Quality Forum. He expressed disappointment that the focus was entirely on bread/ noodle quality with no interest shown on quality for the domestic feed grain markets.

7.2 Sorghum Workshop-Bribie Is:

The Coordinator reported that he along with 3 other RAC representatives attended this Workshop. A presentation was made to the scientists on the importance of sorghum in grain production systems and the priority issues requiring ongoing research.

8. Correspondence and Business (not covered elsewhere on agenda)

8.1 In: GRDC Northern Investment 2006-07

8.2 Out: Letter of thanks to Pacific Seeds

Correspondence Inwards / Outwards was noted

9. RAC Members to Report (following is a sample of key points mentioned in relation to the past winter and current summer crops and up coming winter crops)

- Very poor winter and summer crops west of Macalister. Midge outbreaks in sorghum
- Very low sub-soil moisture so far entering this winter crop season
- Planting seed stocks for niche and major crops shaping as a limiting factor for winter crops

- A major issue this summer crop is that many growers who planted on limited moisture simply should not have and now have lost some opportunity for winter crop. Crop modeling indicated 'not to plant'.
- Concern with hybrid sorghum seed vigor with some lines expressing very low vigor.
- Concern over longer term manufacture / supply of glyphosate due to poor profit margins
- Concern over the possible failure of major farming amalgamation ventures and the potential for forced sales to lower land prices
- Failed sorghum crops have resulted in the washing out of forward sales supply contracts. Some willingness to roll sorghum contracts through to new season wheat.
- Continuing swing from grain to cattle in the Southern Downs region
- With US corn above \$4 bush pricing sorghum above \$200 tonne del Brisbane and prospects for these prices holding for several years on the back of corn demand in US for ethanol, there will be a swing from dryland cotton to grain in the Darling Downs region.
- Emerging bio-fuel markets will influence the grain industry. R&D investment in bio butinol possibly using green waste / sugarcane could result in processing in the north
- Using millets as short cover crops to build soil moisture for winter crops is showing promise and will challenge current practices
- Suggest that the herbicide resistance buildup issue needs to consider the spray technology being used with the resistance research. R Williams agreed to discuss with A Storrie. **Action Required**
- Root Lesion Nematode (RLN) sampling continues at Formartin and Kindon. Mung bean is a host for *P thornei* and sorghum a host for *P neglectus*
- Barnyard resistance to glyphosate has been a sleeper waiting to awaken. The weed has a very rapid turnover of generations producing a major seed bank.
- There is a general industry concern over the buildup in resistance to glyphosate
- Find out if the new Weeds Manual published by the Weeds CRC can be supplied to RAC members. **Action Required**
- Fleabane control a continuing problem
- Industry needs to keep a watching brief on the determination of Security Sensitive (SS) chemicals.

10. RAC Nominees to Report

10.1 CSIRO

- Change in role for Dr Carberry heading up new CSIRO initiative
- Eastern and Western Farming Systems coming to an end with a new farming systems project combining the east and the west regions north on the Qld /NSW border. Funding of approx \$550 K / annum. CSIRO is lead agent for administration.
- A Steering Committee has been formed to set up and oversee the SQFS Project.
- A number of major research initiatives are coming to an end including sub soil constraints, precision agri, climate variability and bio-fuels.
- Dr Lindsay Bell has replaced Dr Anthony Whitbread on the Grain & Graze Project.

10.2 DPI&F (refer to the attached report provided by QDPI)

10.3 GRDC

- The 2007-08 RDE investment program will be reduced due the recent drought and reduced levy income.
- GRDC has revised its reserve policy which will reduce the cut back in research investment due to drought.

10.4 GRFL (refer to attached notes)

11 Guest Speakers

- 11.1 Dr Daniel Rodriguez Presentation on APSFARM / Emerging Technologies
Abstract attached
- 11.2 Glenn Milne Crop Nutrition on Darling Downs.... where are the gaps?

Following are some points of interest from Mr Milne's presentation

- Generally growers and agronomists have a good handle on N
- Community has some concern over applied N adding to atmospheric N₂O.
- VAM is doing an excellent job in providing P with plants drawing from deep in the profile and placing it in the top soil
- Plants also taking K from deep down in the profile and depositing it in the top soil
- S is being depleted with only S being added through MAP
- Zn similar to K with respect to VAM
- Haven't seen any advantages in liquid fertilizers although foliar application could be used as a catch up
- Preference is to place nutrients in the plant root zone

11.3 L Larkins Condamine Alliance

Ms Larkins reported on the objectives and operations of the Condamine Alliance

12 Review List of Opportunities and Threats

To ensure that the RAC was considering the future direction of the regional grain industry when determining current and emerging priority issues it discussed the most likely opportunities and threats. Those identified as most important included:

- Future Markets
- International Price Outlook
- GMO

13 Review Crop Importance Profile 2005-08 and 2015-2018

The individual RAC members completed a Crop Importance Profile for the present time and in 10 years time based on profitability and sustainability taking into account the major opportunities and threats identified in 12 (above). Based on this, the crop options were categorised as follows:

Importance Category	Crop	Forecast Change by 2015-18	Comments
Dominant	Sorghum	Stable	Sorghum is the major crop with some concern that it may be over dominant in the cropping system
	Wheat	Stable but with increase in feed and decrease in milling focus	Concern that wheat yields have not improved over the years. There has been a shift to supplying the livestock market at the expense of the milling market
Important	Barley	Stable	Production is focused on supplying the feed market
	Chick Pea	Stable	Chick pea is the main grain legume crop
Other	Mung Beans	Stable	Considered an opportunity crop requiring specialist management
	Maize	Potential Increase	Could be some swing from irrigated cotton to irrigated maize
	Sunflower	Stable	Now a minor crop
	Millets	Stable	Suited to the lighter northern Downs soils

14 **Review of Priority Issues for 2007**

The members broke into 3 groups to review Priority Issues for DD taken from the PIP 2006. Each group was asked to review, add, amend, combine & delete and prioritise the issues based on the pre-meeting re-prioritisation results and the discussions that had taken place in the meeting so far.

Groups were encouraged to think strategically, removing broad sweeping issues and replacing with specific detail where possible, keeping the issues in "grower speak" and to prioritise on economic impact from profitability and environmental consideration.

Each group reported back to the members on their results and following any amendments, additions, deletions and re-prioritisation the Priority Issues for 2007 were agreed to. This included identifying the highest priority issues. The complete list of the 2007 Priority Issues for DD RAC is attached.

Highest Priority Issues 2007 are as follows:

Varieties	Sorghum	Breed sorghum with high yield potential, good tolerance to moisture & heat stresses, standability (stay green), midge resistance, large & uniform seed size & suitable for a wide planting window. Resistance to charcoal rot. Breed for high starch content for the livestock and bio-fuel markets.
	GM	A GM approach to all crop breeding is strongly supported to compliment traditional breeding technology
	Wheat	Breed all wheat varieties with multiple disease and nematode resistances, more tolerance to frosts, improved WUE and longer coleoptile length suitable for the milling ,livestock (in particular) and industrial markets
Practices	Soils	Develop BMP to maximise yield benefits to be gained from the interactions of soil biota, sub-soil constraints and soil fertility and their management individually
	Winter Cereals	Undertake research to determine what is preventing winter cereals (wheat & barley) from reaching their full yield potentials
	Weeds	Develop integrated management systems using BMP for controlling weeds, in particular fleabane, adopting the most up to date spray technology & extend this to grower through workshops.
	Spray Technology	Improve the understanding of farm chemical requirements including spray drift. Develop technologies to effectively manage drift and extend information to operators' through BMP to achieve high adoption levels.
	Precision Agriculture	Facilitate the adoption of PA recognising the high entry cost of this technology
Communication Customer Relations	Information Transfer	Hard copy booklets remain preferred method for providing R&D information. Growers are not yet using CDs, DVDs, Websites to any major extent

15. **Possible Topics for detailed discussion at next meeting**

- Sorghum breeding – Dr David Jordan QDPI
- Nutrition- Dr Neil Menzies UQ
- Precision Agriculture-???
- Herbicide resistance- Dr Steve Walker QDPI
- Bio-fuels- Deb O'Connell CSIRO
- Carbon Trading & N2O- Dr Peter Grace QUT
- Wheat Breeding- Dr Ray Shorter CSIRO

16. General Business

Nil

17. Date & Venue for next meeting

Venue: QDPI Green Room Tor St Toowoomba

Date: 7th August 2007

18. Closure

Meeting closed at 4.00pm