

Minutes
Western Downs Maranoa RAC Meeting
held Moonie Cross Road Roadhouse
On Wednesday 21st February 2007
commencing 9.30am

1. Opening & Welcome by Chairman

2. Attendance

N Boland (Chairman)
M Duffield
A Coleborn
J Crocker
C Nason
V French
Dr A Borrell (also deputising as QDPI nominee)
D Scanlan

Nominees

Dr L McIntyre CSIRO
Dr D Freebairn NP GRDC

J Obst (RAC Coordinator)

Guest: Andrew Hirst

3. Apologies

D Poulsen (DPI Nominee) M Dieters (UQ Nominee) D Hemming, W Barkle, Dr P Banks
R Daniel (Northern Grower Alliance)

Accepted

4. Confirmation of Agenda

Confirmed

5. RAC Coordination

The Coordinator referred the members to the attached report. The main issue being that GRF/GRFL has replaced Twyford & Associates on the GRDC funded project "Northern Region RAC Coordination" commencing 1st July 2006.

6. Confirmation of Minutes (21st July 2006)

Moved J Crocker Seconded V French

Carried

7. Business from Minutes

7.1 Sorghum Workshop-Bribie Is:

The Coordinator reported that the RACs were invited to attend the recent Sorghum Planning Workshop to brief scientists on priority issues relating to sorghum. Four (4) RAC representatives attended.

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

8.1 In: GRDC Northern Investment 2006-07 / Ethanol Report

The Coordinator encouraged members to closely read the GRDC Northern Investment Report 2006-07 to compare these projects with WDM RAC 'priority issues'.

8.2 Out: Letter of thanks sent to S Tidswell GRDC

Inward and Outward correspondence notes.

9. RAC Members to Report

- No winter or summer crops in the Roma area with fallows being maintained
- Limited winter crop around Dulacca with no summer crop. Crown rot was evident
- Early winter cereal crops south of Moonie reasonable with excellent chick pea yields. Late wheat has high screenings. Most wheat delivered to feed lots.
- Around Moonie there was limited wheat however chick peas were excellent. Deep planted wheat at 12 cm with 65 cm rows was most successful.
- Many growers using cattle to control weeds in fallows. Weeds hard to control in drought conditions. Large areas of fallow with minimal stubble cover.

- Fair wheat production north of Goondiwindi with no screenings and high protein.
- Small area of sorghum around Billa Billa being grown on one rainfall event before planting.
- Should be a reasonably large area planted to wheat in 2007 and strong interest in grazing oats.
- Chick peas demonstrated ability to yield well without in-crop rain.
- Detector sprayers will make a lot of headway. Already around 3 operations in the Goondiwindi region. Cost around \$100 K for 24 metres.
- The early planting of winter crops (as early as April) appears to give the best results often requiring increasing planting depth and row widths to achieve establishment. It is about managing frost risk.

10. RAC Nominees to Report

10.1 CSIRO

Dr L McIntyre gave a presentation on CSIRO Plant Industry GRDC funded project titled "Wheat traits, genes and germplasm for adaptation to water limited environment in the northern region". PI also has a research project focused on fusarium (mainly crown rot). Points of interest included:

- 18 of the 1800 lines tested in 2006 showing promise of higher yields.
- The project is focused on higher yields under water limiting conditions
- Grain quality is not an objective however grain size and uniformity are.
- CIMMYT material seems better suited to the northern environment
- There appears potential to increase yields by 10 to 20%.
- At all of the 3 trial sites last season (Gatton, Southern & Central Queensland) higher yielding lines were identified.
- The trial sites also include different cropping systems to consider variety X management interaction.
- The project is pre-breeding focused with any useful lines being made available to the pedigree breeding programs.

10.2 DPI&F (copy of report attached)

Dr Borrell presented the DPI report in the absence of Dr Poulsen. Points of interest included: (Dr Poulsen's paper attached)

- EGA: Update on EGA's initiative to form a strategic alliance with a commercial partner (Pacific Seeds) for pedigree wheat breeding.
- Feed Wheat Breeding: While Dr Rex Williams was initially appointed to this position he is now in a leadership role. The position will be advertised in June 07. Currently 2 promising feed wheat lines have been identified.
- Eastern / Western Farming Systems Projects: These projects which were previously divided by a North / South line through southern Queensland and northern NSW have been re-aligned and divided by an East/ West line along the Qld / NSW border. The FS Project in southern Queensland is called the Southern Queensland Farming System Project. CSIRO is the lead agent.
Resolved to invite CSIRO to outline measures to ensure that the focus of the project does not gravitate to the eastern region. **Action Required**
- Rust Breakdown: A new pathotype of stripe rust has been identified in SNSW. None found in NNSW or Qld in 2006. Also a new strain of stem rust found in Africa and Middle East.
- GLO2: Possible replacement fumigant for phosphine. Considerable work still to be done for suitability of GLO2 in the northern region.
- Herbicide Resistance: Barnyard resistance to glyphosate found in NNSW.

10.3 UQ

Dr Dieters provided a written report advising that a post graduate position has been established to research pre-sprouting of wheat.

10.4 GRDC

Dr Freebairn reported on GRDC initiatives. Points of interest included:

- Due to the drought GRDC will reduce its RDE investment in 2007-08.
- Brochure is being released on Subsoil Constraints
- Developing the decision making skills of grain growers
- Re-structuring of the Eastern and Western Farming System Projects. Over \$13 M spent on the WFS project over the past 10 years.
- Dalby Grower Update and Goondiwindi Advisor Update.

10.5 GRFL

D Scanlan former Chairman of GRF and now Chairmen of GRFL reported on the winding up of GRF and its replacement GRFL, a not for profit incorporated company. GRFL acquired the assets of GRF which are a little over \$1 Million. GRFL currently has 5 Directors with 2 vacancies to be filled. The Board will be meeting soon to determine its future direction and initiatives. Expanding the membership base will be considered.

There was general discussion over the situation of scientists not having sufficient time to publish research papers for peer review and to focus on pulling together the crucial points leading into the next research project or the outcomes requiring extension to grain growers. Due to the reliance on external funding, researchers working in the public sector can be driven by securing the next lot of project funding before their current project is finished. Sufficient time should be provided for the scientist to write up the research for peer review and for extension to industry.

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Guest Speakers

11.1 R Daniel- Northern Grower Alliance role in Western Farming Systems

Mr Daniel was not able to attend due to illness.

11.2 Dr A Borrell DPIF- Future sorghum breeding objectives for the WDMaranoa

Dr Borrell gave a presentation on the objectives of the current core sorghum breeding initiative. Points of interest included:

- The projects focus has been on developing genetic resistance to midge and the introduction of stay green.
- This breeding approach while having been very successful has resulted in a narrowing of the gene base
- The project has gone back to widening the genetic pool through crossing with a diverse range of international material including wild sorghums (including those from Australia) seeking to increase seed size & uniformity, quality (for animals and ethanol)
- There is promise of genetic resistance to ergot
- Waxy sorghum for cattle and dairy cows.

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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 of most importance included:

- Climate Change
- Shortage of labour and skills
- Further growth in the beef industry
- Community Expectations, Environmental Requirements, OHS

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Review Crop Importance Profile 2005-08 and 2015-2018

The RAC members completed a Crop Importance Profile for now 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	Wheat Milling Feed	Decrease Increase	Wheat production is the major focus with an increasing focus on feed markets
Important	Sorghum	Stable	Sorghum is the most important summer crop with focus on supplying the local feed markets
	Chick Pea	Stable	Chick pea is the main pulse crop although production remains below the desired target
	Barley Feed	Stable	With the focus on feed wheat production feed barley remains a lesser interest.
Other	Mung Beans	Stable	Considered an opportunity crop requiring specialist management
	Millets	Stable	Opportunity crop with good prospects as a short cover crop.

14 Review List of Priority Issues

The members broke into 3 groups to review nominated Priority Issues for WDM 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 WDM RAC are attached.

Highest Priority Issues are as follows:

Varieties	Wheat	Breed high yielding wheat varieties for the milling & feed markets with good WUE index, large uniform grain size, multiply disease & nematode resistances, wide planting window, resistance to pre-harvest sprouting & black point, suited to wide row & deep planting window and some with single tillering
	Sorghum	Breed sorghum varieties with improved standability, a wide planting window and some with single tillering large and uniform seed. Also need to breed quality for the ethanol market
Practices	Weeds	Develop BMP for resistant & 'hard to kill' weeds in particular Fleabane. Other 'hard to kill' weeds include milk thistle, turnip weed and saltbush, malvestrum, polymerica sp. (takeall)
	Spray Technology	Develop BMP and achieve a high level of grower adoption to improve efficacy, reduce usage, avoid herbicide resistance and prevent drift.

	Diseases	Develop BMP for disease control in wheat in a range of cropping systems with particular emphasis on the biology of Crown Rot
	Soils	Develop a better understanding of soils to maximise WUE and extend this to growers using BMP
	Systems	Develop BMP to include the option of a pasture phase.
	Insects	Develop BMP for controlling stored grain insects in on-farm grain handling and storage systems
New Products	Biofuels	Invest in research which increases the competitiveness of a viable domestic biofuel industry based on grain and biomass
Communication Customer Rel.	Capacity	Invest in building the capacity of all segments of the grain industry with particular focus on scientists, agronomists and growers

15. Topics for detailed discussion at next meeting

The following were identified as possibly topics for the next meeting

- CSIRO wheat breeding
- Southern Queensland Farming Systems
- Carbon sequestration and trading
- Mice control
- In crop spray technology
- Climate Change

16. General Business

16.1 Crop Levies

There was general discussion regarding the current research levies (presently 0.99% fgv) and whether or not this was a sufficient contribution by grain growers to maximise the potential benefits from increased RDE.

Resolved to write to GRFL recommending that it commission a Discussion Paper titled 'A Case for Increasing Growers Contribution to Grains RDE'. **Action Required**

16.2 Wheat Variety Notes

Mr French informed the meeting that there was a high probability that DPIF would discontinue publishing the Wheat Variety Notes.

16.3 Recognition for MR French

The members thanked Mr French (who announced his departure from DPIF) for his outstanding service and contribution to the grain industry in the Western Downs Maranoa region.

17. Date & Venue for next meeting

University Queensland Gatton Campus on 8th August 2007.

18. Closure

Meeting closed at 3.30 pm.