

A night out to look forward

Be proactive when preparing for next season and don't let it catch you unprepared. This was the message from the 'Preparing for next season' meeting run by the Upper North Farming Systems Group (UNFS) in the first week of December.

Forty growers attended the meeting and found the speakers provided timely reminders of their management options for 2007.

Mary-Anne Young, Rural Solutions SA focussed on the soil surface cover. The key message was keep it covered as standing stubble reduces the risk of erosion

UNFS vice chairman, Richard McCallum, found Mary-Anne's practical advice very timely. She advised, rather than using scarce paddock feed now, it is better for soil protection to confine stock before soil cover is low and reserve stubbles for nearer the break in the season. By doing this paddocks are not left with low levels of cover and vulnerable to erosion for four or five months.

There has been much speculation about nutrient carry-over from 2006 to 2007 due to reduced crop performance. Dr Nigel Whitem, SARDI reports that generally carry-over will be minimal because early growth was good and will have used seedbed fertiliser inputs.

He reported that in the Upper North phosphorus has the most influence on crop performance. If expenditure on fertiliser is to be limited in 2007, he proposed that appropriate fertiliser rates are applied to three or four paddocks to meet their phosphorus, nitrogen and trace element requirements. On the remaining paddocks phosphorus levels should be maintained where possible but if necessary rates could be reduced and nitrogen and trace elements not used. To understand nutrient availability on a paddock basis, he believes soil testing is vital this year.

The succinct message from Peter Neale, Rabobank's Rural Manager at Clare, was to prepare your future budgets based on an average year and to visit your bank manager before they have to visit you. He emphasised your manger is there to help.

Additional speakers were from Mid North Health and the Community Work coordinator who explained the resources including employment assistance from Drought Force (www.workplace.gov.au and search Drought Force), that are in place to support growers in areas exceptional circumstance.