

Key points

- New leader at Minnipa Agricultural Centre
- SA's only dryland research station
- Minnipa is an asset for all low rainfall regions

Keeping Minnipa firmly on the map

Roy Latta, the new Research Leader at Minnipa Agricultural Centre has hit the ground running. Within a days of his arrival at South Australia's only dryland research station, the opening rains fell and this year's research program was in full swing.

For the past six years, Mr Latta was the Science Leader at the Mallee Research Station, Walpeup, Victoria, so he is familiar with the challenges of unreliable seasons and working in a regional location.

"Working in close contact with the growers and in relative isolation from your peers makes it easy to become absorbed in today's issues and to overlook the research needs of tomorrow," said Mr Latta.

"Minnipa has a terrific reputation for working with growers, while at the same time research such as into fluid phosphorus has put Minnipa on the world research stage."

Mr Latta is keen to embrace and support this diversity in the research portfolio and to encourage the wider publication of the research from Minnipa.

"By publishing in recognised journals our research can be accessed by students and other scientists; this can initiate a two way flow of information with scientists interested in the same areas of work.

"Such contact and dialogue will help the team at Minnipa incorporate the latest knowledge into the trial program to benefit low rainfall farming systems."

Securing funding for the research centre will be a major responsibility for Minnipa's new Leader and he is keen to raise awareness of Minnipa's wider role.

"Minnipa is a huge asset to the Upper Eyre Peninsula, but the spread of its influence across the State through the Upper North and in the Mallee, as well as interstate through the Low Rainfall Farming Systems Collaboration must not be over looked."

However, Roy Latta says his first job is to look, listen and learn from the Minnipa team and from the growers. While many aspects of the dryland farming on the Upper Eyre Peninsula are similar to Walpeup, the soil type and depth are quite different.

As part of his desire to learn more about the specifics of farming in the region, Roy Latta and key Minnipa team members visited Peter Kuhlmann's farm at Mudamuckla, east of Ceduna. Peter is Chairman of the Eyre Peninsula Agricultural Research Foundation.

Peter Kuhlmann runs a mixed farming system with winter cereals, sheep and opportunistic summer crops. Roy Latta was pleased to see this diversity as he believes the low rainfall farming systems need to be diverse, flexible and offer the opportunity to minimise risk.

Throughout his research career Roy Latta has been interested in the role of perennial pastures, better integration of pasture and livestock production in cropping rotations and pulses for low rainfall environments.

He is looking forward to bring his experience to the second phase of the Grain and Graze program, which is in the final phase of negotiation and to phase III of the Eyre Peninsula Farming Systems Project, which will focus on water use efficiency and carbon and nitrogen interactions

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Breakout on EPARF
Eyre Peninsula Agricultural Research Foundation (EPARF)

With nearly 200 members the Foundation plays an important role in helping Minnipa to remain relevant to the region and the needs of low rainfall farming systems.

The role of EPARF is to:

- Advise and assist MAC management in strategic direction and decisions, define research priorities and negotiate funding opportunities through the EPARF Project Management and MAC Farm subcommittees
- Seek sponsorship and provide a pathway to contribute to positive outcomes for Eyre Peninsula farmers
- Maintain a relationship with our research funders and sponsors
- Utilise our reserve to leverage other funds
- Provide a service to our members

This years EPARF will be running a Grower Research Update in collaboration with GRDC and SAFF on 12 August. 2009.

To become a member of the Foundation contact Dot Brace, 08 8680 5104