

Collaboration achieves novel communication with young farmers.

The YP Alkaline Soils Group (YPASG) has taken a novel approach to sharing the latest research results and best management practices with young farmers. With support from Rabobank they have created five workshops as part of the Certificate III in Agriculture course, delivered by Tafe SA to students from Yorke Peninsula and the Upper North.

The scheme has completed its second year and just over thirty students have had the opportunity to learn from researchers such as Dr Jack Desbiolles, University SA, agronomists and researchers from Ag Consulting Co, soil scientist Cliff Hignett and chemical application specialist Graham Betts. This year the student also had the opportunity to take part in a financial workshop with a team from Rabobank.

“Before the YP Alkaline Soils Group were involved in the Tafe Course we learnt more about sheep than grain production, but that has now changed,” said Hayden Mattschoss, who attended the first year of the YPASG, Rabobank, Tafe workshops.

“This is important because cropping is the main enterprise on most farms in our area.”

At the ‘Seeding Systems workshop’ Jack Desbiolles presented key findings from his research on no-till seeding systems. He also used his work to demonstrate the importance of accurate seed placement. For example with Krichauff wheat yield reduced by 5% when sown at 55-60mm, by 13% at 80-85mm and by 21% at 100-105mm compared to the ideal depth of 25-35mm. He explained how different covering devices impact on seeding depth, and with local farmers discussed the choice and set-up of seeding systems.

“Hearing from Jack Desbiolles and talking to the farmers about their seeding equipment has given me some good ideas to discuss with the rest of the family,” said Tafe student Ryan Cock from northern Yorke Peninsula.

Another workshop that has been particularly popular has been with Queensland based spray application specialist Graham Betts. His workshop included very practical information on nozzle selection, boom spray set-up and measuring and monitoring spray conditions. In 2005 results from the spray application trials carried out by Ag Consulting Co and the YPASG were also presented.

With an improved understanding of nozzle selection and set-up and of Delta-T, the relationship between temperature and humidity, Matthew McDonald from Port Broughton believes he can improve the effectiveness of the farm’s spray program.

Soils are a key resource on every farm and in the soils workshop Cliff Hignett, formerly of CSIRO Land & Water, explained how to assess and measure soil properties such as texture, structure and water holding capacity. He also looked at research from the YPASG on the impact of deep ripping, deep placement of nutrients, as well as issue such as stubble retention and the impact of tillage on soil structure and nutrient release.

In the last workshop of 2005, Danny Le Feuvre, Ag Consulting Co, discussed the latest trial results on Stripe Rust, the topic the students nominated as their ‘number one’ disease control issue. This workshop also provided the students with the knowledge to identify accurately plant growth stages and to use this information when making decisions about nitrogen and fungicide applications. At this workshop they also had the chance to test drive the auto-steer system being used in the inter-row seeding trials.

A team from Rabobank ran the financial workshop that aimed to provide young farmers with an understanding of the information a bank requires when a farmer approaches it for a loan. Geoff Blight provided an overview of farm loans including looking at issues such as producing cash flow statements. Mark Thompson presented information on equipment finance, while Darren Secomb taught the students how to use financial analysis tools to evaluate a businesses financial position.

Michael Richards the YP Alkaline Soils Group Co-ordinator reports that all parties have been delighted by the student’s feedback. The Tafe workshops are a great opportunity for young people to develop direct links with leading researchers and specialists and to benefit from the latest research in our area. The workshops also provide YPASG and leading researchers the opportunity to work with enthusiastic and talented young farmers providing us greater insight of future issues.