

e-news

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The Ag Excellence Alliance is supported by

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CARING
FOR
OUR
COUNTRY

e-news is designed to share information and improve linkages between SA Grower Groups, NRM bodies, Researchers and key agricultural stakeholders - *please feel free to share it around to your members and key stakeholders*

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Award for AEA Groups

The second **Ag Excellence Alliance Award**, sponsored by Rabobank, was jointly awarded to the **Mallee Sustainable Farming Systems** and the **Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Group** at the annual AEA Dinner. Nicole Dimos, Extension Coordinator for MSFS, and Bill Moloney, Chair of YPASG, accepted the awards on behalf of their respective organisations. Both Grower Groups will share in \$4000 total prize money to which Rabobank kindly contributed \$1000 with AEA funding the remainder.

Pictured above, AEA chair Mick Faulkner, YP Alkaline Soils Group members Bill Long, Bill Moloney and Michael Richards, Mallee Sustainable's Richard Saunders and Nicole Dimos, with Rabobank's James Robinson at the rear.

AEA Forum & Dinner

The annual Ag Excellence Alliance Forum and Dinner was held on April 6th at the Edinburgh Hotel, Mitcham. The day was packed with information sharing, and learning opportunities.

- Dean Brown, special advisor to the Premier on drought, opened the Forum and provided valuable updates on drought impacts across the state.
- Grower Groups reported and shared their projects and activities over the past 12 months and this component is reportedly the highlight of the day.
- A "Building Productive Teams" workshop after lunch gave Groups an opportunity to identify "the missing peices in team mixes", check out risks to the Group's success and consider the "Group culture" and "Team Behaviour". Please find attached the workshop Action Plan tool. Anyone who would like to be emailed the whole workshop power point presentation please contact Heather Baldock.
- Other guest speakers included Simon Goodhand, SA Caring for our Country facilitator, and Kris Roberts, Director for Industry Development & Renewal, PIRSA, Ag, Food & Wine.
- Forum concluded with annual AEA committe nominations
- Dinner highlight was the announcement of the 2009 AEA Award winners

The request was made at the Forum to obtain copies of Grower Group reports. If your Group is prepared to share your report more widely please forward to Heather Baldock

Introducing the New AEA Committee

AEA nominations for 2009 were conducted at the Forum, with the following people elected to the Committee:

Mick Faulker - Chair Bill Long - Vice Chair Deb Baum Sharon Honner Leighton Pearce Mark Stanley
Jeanette Long Kieran Wauchope Nigel Wilhelm Mark Pedlar Jen Lillecrap

Retiring members, Ken Solly and Peter Cousins were thanked for their huge contribution to the committee, as was Michael Richards for his incredible commitment as the Project Manager for the first few years of AEA.

Heather Baldock commenced as Project Manager in mid January, and admin support will continue to be provided by Lorraine Rice and Leanne Milhano.

Audited financial reports are available for anyone interested, as is a copy of the report prepared jointly by Michael & Heather. Please contact Heather if you require either of these.

Who are the Affiliated Grower Groups

Fourteen Grower Groups are affiliated with Ag Excellence Alliance covering the broadacre area of South Australia, and in the case of one Group, extending interstate.

- **ABA** - SA Advisory Board of Agriculture - with the joint roles of Advisory Board to the Minister of Agriculture, and the governing body of the SA Ag Bureaus. Chair is Mark Dennis, and exec support is provided by Paul Erklenz (PIRSA) and admin Annie Madden. There are approximately 70 financial Ag Bureau branches across SA.
- **Ag KI** - the Grower Group covering all of Kangaroo Island, with chair Rodney Lade, and admin officer Ann Gregory-Holt.

- **EPARF** - Eyre Peninsula Agricultural Research Foundation, covering upper EP, based at Minnipa Ag Research Centre. Chair is Peter Kuhlmann, exec officer is Dot Brace
- **Hart Field Site** - based in the mid north region, chair is Grant Roberts, exec officer Monica Trengove, secretary/treasurer is Sandy Kimber, and trials manager is Peter Hooper
- **LEADA** - Lower Eyre Ag Development Assoc, covering lower EP. Chair is Kingsley MacDonald, and exec officer Kieran Wauchope
- **MFMG** - MacKillop Farm Management Group - covering the South East, chaired by Chris Klose with exec officer Krysteen McElvoy
- **MNHRZ** - Mid North High Rainfall Zone covering the medium-high rainfall area of the Mid North - no formal committee in place but lead by Mick Faulkner, with Jeff Braun as the exec officer
- **MSFS** - Mallee Sustainable Farming Systems - covering Mallee area of SA, NSW & Victoria. Chair is Jim Maynard, extension coordinator is Dr Nicole Dimos, and SA representatives include Chris McDonough, Richard Saunders, Rick Llewelyn, Tania Morgan, Glynn Schmidt and Darren Nitschke.
- **NSS** - Northern Sustainable Soils - covering the northern YP area, chair is Chris Davey, secretary/treasurer Carly Buttrose
- **PinG** - Partners in Grain working with young farmers and partners across SA, chaired by Sharon Honner, project coordinator Kim Blenkiron
- **SANTFA** - SA No Till Farmers Assoc, chair Simon Patterson, exec officer Deb Baum and research & development manager Greg Butler
- **SPAA** - Southern Precision Ag Assoc, chair is Mark Branson, exec officer Kirstie Murphy
- **UNFS** - Upper North Farming Systems, chair Trevor Gum, project coordinator Charlton Jeisman
- **YPASG** - Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Group, chair Bill Moloney, group coordinator Michael Richards, and projects coordinator Don Faulkner

Hart Field Site Happenings

- The Agronomy Conference visited Hart in late September as part of the Conference Field Tour Program
- 2 Integrated weed management workshops were conducted by John Cameron in July, in collaboration with Adelaide University and the Birchip Cropping Group
- a full day of tuition was presented to TAFE students, utilising the Hart shed as a classroom with close access to the field trials. The shed is fully wired and powered with basic amenities making it ideal for this sort of education. The site was also visited by University of Adelaide students.
- the Hart Field Site Group inc. has a new chairman, Grant Roberts. Grant is also an independent consultant and farmer near Clare
- in 2008 Hart continued with improvements to the site and built a washdown bay with chemical collection tank. This facility will be used by the many operators that come onto the trial site each year helping to contain soil and chemical.

Upper North Farming Systems Landholder Survey

The Upper North Farming Systems Group is currently surveying landholders in low rainfall regions across South Australia to determine the extent of perennial species being grown and what varieties have been most successful in countering the effects of drought.

Funded by the Caring for Our Country program, preliminary results indicate that the majority surveyed already grow perennial fodder/pasture plants to help increase fodder/pasture productivity, and control salinity and soil erosion. The major barriers however stopping growers establishing more perennial pasture species were cost, time/work load, low rainfall, poor seasons and lack of information on establishment and management of suitable species.

The project team will now work with growers to help them overcome these barriers and encourage the growth of more perennial pastures.

For more information or to access a copy of the survey, contact Michael Wurst on 08 8664 1408.

Future Farm Industries CRC

Future Farm Industries Cooperative Research Centre (FFI CRC) is playing a crucial role in developing new farming systems and technologies to improve the resilience of Australian broadacre agriculture to climate change, climate variability and drought while providing improvements in farm productivity and sustainability.

The use of perennial plants is a primary focus of the CRC's research because of their ability to cope and grow in declining and variable rainfall environments. The deep roots of perennial plants allow them to capture and effectively use water at depth when there is little rainfall and remove excess water from the soil profile which could otherwise contribute to salinity.

Much of FFI CRC's research is built upon the foundations of its predecessor, the CRC for Plant-based Management of Dryland Salinity (CRC Salinity), which made significant headway in making saline lands more productive and sustainable through the use of perennial plants. CRC Salinity also identified that perennial plants could be applied productively to many non-saline farming systems. A recent example has been the identification of oldman saltbush as a potential feed source in the drier, non-saline parts of Australia.

FFI CRC is undertaking a variety of research programs that will create new perennial plant based farming systems and technologies for the broadacre agriculture regions of southern temperate Australia. To find out more about these research programs and how they are progressing, visit the [FFI CRC website](#). Alternatively, subscribe to the CRC's quarterly publication [Focus on Perennials](#) or the twice-yearly, case study focused [Future Farm](#) magazine by emailing the FFI CRC Communication Manager, Greg.Lawrence@futurefarmcrc.com.au with your contact details.

FFI CRC is a unique co-investment and integration of activities between three major agricultural R&D investors, Australia's largest agribusiness company, and the combined research might of six state agencies, four CSIRO Divisions and four universities. These Participants work together with companies, catchment management organisations and farm research groups to enhance the CRC's adoption and

NRM News

Kangaroo Island NRM - Feral Pig Genetics

A genetic assessment of Kangaroo Island feral pigs has shown a distinct difference between the pigs in Flinders Chase National Park and those on agricultural land in the centre of the Island to the east of the chase. The pigs in the park are travelling along north-south oriented creek lines and are a fairly homogeneous grouping. Among the central populations, three or four less distinct groups emerged in the analysis.

The results are encouraging news for landholders who are trying to control pigs, for the Feral Animal Project team of the KI Natural Resources Management Board, and the Kangaroo Island environment. The two main populations (park and central) can be treated quite independently. As numbers diminish, there is little chance that numbers will be boosted from the other group.

The smaller groups within the central population may also be able to be tackled as management units with a much higher chance of effective control. However, there is the possibility that populations could move into areas that have been vacated.

The genotype project, conducted by the Genotyping Facility of the Invasive Animals CRC, used microsatellite DNA markers to measure gene flow and connectivity in feral pigs from 79 samples collected at 13 locations on KI.

Placestories

You are invited to attend a FREE two day workshop to develop digital Placestories. This is a great opportunity to promote your group, project or on-ground works.

Placestories comprises a series of digital pictures (up to 25) set to a recorded 2 minute audio file detailing the project, group and outcomes.

Each participant will be required to supply their own laptop, digital pictures for their Placestory, a 2 minute script about their Placestory and prior to the workshop download

the required software. It is expected that each participant will have reasonable computer skills.

Positions are limited to 10 per workshop. All Farming, community and Landcare groups are welcome along with NRM staff. Lunch, morning and Afternoon tea supplied. Each session runs 9am - 5pm.

NSW Groups have previously prepared Placestories at Landcare NSW Placestoires. Placestories will be available either on the Placestories web site or can be embedded into your own website.

Region	Location of workshop	Proposed Dates
SAMDB	Murray Bridge	4 th & 5 th May
N & Y	Crystal Brook	7 th & 8 th May
AMLR	Mt Barker	11 th & 12 th May
SE	TBA	18 th & 19 th May
EP	Port Lincoln	21 st & 22 nd May

Contact Leighton Pearce to enrol or for further information on (08) 8582 4477, Fax (0-8) 8582 4488, Mob 0438 866 459,

Email: leighton.pearce@samdbnrm.sa.gov.au

Caring for our Country Funding Applications

AEA submitted a CfoC application for funding to support the organisation into the future, and also jointly submitted an application with the Advisory Board of Ag, and was listed as a partner in the GRDC national application, and that of the Northern & Yorke NRM region.

GRDC Scoping Study - this study has raised many questions among AEA affiliated members as to the why, how, where and when, so below is a summary of the process.

GRDC received funding through the first round of CfoC to conduct scoping studies. SA was divided in two areas – with EP NRM region (under Naomi Scholz at Minnipa Research Centre) and the second region to include KI, AMLR, N & Y, SE, SA MDB NRM regions.

- Mick Faulkner was asked by GRDC of conduct the scoping study for the later area, and it was ultimately decided this would be best completed if Mick undertook this as the AEA chair to engage the professionals AEA had access to.
- The signed contract was completed in early December with the study to be completed by February 20th.
- December meeting conducted by Nigel Wilhelm and Geoff Thomas to gauge difference between "Water Use Efficiency in Mixed Farming Systems" and the current GRDC "WUE" projects. Some overlap, but outcomes very different.
- "WUE in MFS" will have following outcomes which are set by the funding bodies and not negotiable;
 - * Increased profitability
 - * Increased sustainability
 - * Increased ground cover
- Bill Long, Michael Richards and Jeanette Long endorsed by AEA committee to join Mick on responsible working party
- Jan 15th small meeting of people with specialist agricultural skills worked with Gus Hamilton to develop program logic necessary to complete scoping study
- Jan 30th larger meeting of interested parties and prospective partners prepared framework, suggested activities to meet required outcomes
- Responsible working group, Bill & Jeanette Long, Mick Faulkner, Michael Richards and Heather Baldock all met at Long's home at Ardrossan for 3 days with facilitator Gus Hamilton (employed by GRDC) to continue work on program logic, budget and application to run "WUE in MFS" project

- Working Group put in many more hours via phone, email and impromptu meetings between various members to complete by Feb 20
- AEA's application to GRDC/MLA includes activities proposed by AEA's affiliated groups, delivery agents, consultants, agribusiness, government agencies and NRM groups from the regions covered by the AEA scoping study
- Mick, Bill & Michael attended meeting in Melbourne in March to further discuss with GRDC/MLA the process and funding sources
- Applications to GRDC/MLA for this project are over their capacity to fund, so GRDC has prepared a national submission for CfoC

What is program logic - it is a step wise "organisational tree" starting with the project outcomes and working down to the activities that will influence practice change on farms to deliver on the outcomes. This method was also required for completion of the mid to high level CfoC funding applications.

Career Opportunity www.spaa.com.au

Precision Agriculture Project Officer

A new and exciting position at the innovative edge of agriculture is available for a good communicator to join the team with Australia's only Precision Agriculture Association.

SPAA is a non-profit, grower driven, independent and membership based association promoting the adoption of PA technologies to primary producers across Australia.

The PA Project Officer will be responsible for communicating the benefits of PA to a broad range of audiences across Australia and assisting SPAA to increase the adoption of PA practices and technologies by Australian primary producers.

For a copy of the job description contact SPAA Executive Officer Kirstie Murphy P 0408 088 624 E info@spaa.com.au

Applications addressing the job description will be accepted by email. Closing May 1st 2009.

Diary Dates

April

29th YP Alkaline Soils Group AGM @ Minlaton
30th Mallee Sustainable FS Livestock Maintenance Feeding Workshop @ Waikerie

May

1st Ag Excellence Alliance Committee meeting, Adelaide
6th Precision Agriculture Demonstration Day at the Naracoorte Showgrounds – if the opening
rains come before this date the event will be postponed until after seeding

June

16-17th Advisory Board of Agriculture meetings, Adelaide

July

24th MacKillop Sponsors & Members Dinner @ Struan House
28 - 29th Proposed YPASG / SANTFA / Ag Bureau Crop Walks
28th Hart Field Site Group Winter Walk
29th EP Agricultural Research Foundation (EPARF) Field Day

August

12th GRDC Grower Update Southern Region (TBC) @ Cleve
16 - 21st MacKillop FMG Study Tour - Irrigation Systems & Precision Ag in Sth East Queensland
17th Advisory Board of Ag Annual Dinner & AGM @ Victor Harbour
19th GRDC Grower Update Southern Region (TBC) @ Crystal Brook
20th GRDC Grower Update Southern Region (TBC) @ Loxton

September

1st welcome Mallee Sustainable Waikerie Field Day - any ideas for demonstrations etc
15th 10.30am Hart Field Day, gates open 9am, official welcome 10pm, program begins
16th Minnipa Ag Centre Field Day
18th Upper North Farming Systems Field Day
29th - 1st YP Field Days

October

15th Hart Field Site Spring Walk
28-29th MacKillop Field Days

The next Ag Ex e-news is planned for late June, so if your group has an activity to report, or a date for the diary please contact Heather Baldock as per details below

AEA Contacts & Committee

www.agex.org.au

Chair – Mick Faulkner, 0428 857 378, faulkner@sa.chariot.net.au

Vice Chair - Bill Long

Committee; Mark Stanley, Leighton Pearce, Sharon Honner, Kieran Wauchope, Nigel Wilhelm, Jeanette Long, Deb Baum, Mark Pedlar, Jen Lillecrapp

Project Coordinator - Heather Baldock (08) 8627 4056, 0428 101 416,

heather.agex@bigpond.com

Admin Support - Lorraine Rice, (08) 8853 2269. lorraine@agex.org.au