



National Hyper Yielding Crop Update

Phillip Mackie, Project Officer, SCF

Stirling's to Coast Farmers are a part of a national Hyper Yielding Crops (HYC) research project led by FAR Australia. The project covers five regions across higher yielding zones of Australia, including the Albany port zone. In our area, we will be looking for five focus farms that will be used to scale up key findings from small-plot research to increase crop yields. This year is the first year of the HYC Research Centre in the region, so the broad-scale demonstrations don't have any new 'key findings' to scale up just yet. SCF have already collaborated with FAR Australia, CSIRO, DPIRD and the SEPWA grower group on a HRZ farming systems project to devise this year's trial design which we have installed with the Hood and Preston families already. The design looks at wheat and barley over two sowing times and the difference between ripped and unripped soil to find the most productive and profitable treatment.

SCF will conduct at least two in-season field walks each year, across the focus farms in our region, including an annual spring walk. The spring field walk will hopefully include national and potentially international speakers pending COVID-19 implications in 2020 and future years. Focus farmers will also be encouraged to talk about their farming approaches at other HRZ regional walks to create peer to peer learning across the country.

The focus farms will look at elements of increasing productivity with the following areas of interest.

- Planning, paddock selection and preparation
- Understanding crop and varietal phenology and optimum flowering window to ensure variety selection and planting date is suited to environment, system and attitude to risk
- Optimising crop establishment - target number of plants and tillers/branches
- Nutrition - feeding the crop to reach potential
- Crop protection - managing weeds, pests and disease
- Canopy management – optimising biomass for grain yield and avoidance of lodging
- Harvest – minimising harvest losses to capture yield and quality.

Linking all the national, regional HYC research centres and focus farms will be the introduction of an annual national HYC awards. Friendly competition will aim to create a community of interest in improving productivity, profitability, and sustainability. In the first year, there will be a focus on wheat with the potential to include

barley in the second year and canola in the third. There will be a limit of 10 entries per region in the first year with one entry from each focus farm included. The nominated paddocks will be monitored with data being collected on soil type, location, crop details, biomass measurements, yield data and grain tests. SCF project officer Phillip Mackie will be managing the data collection process for the ten entries from the Albany port zone. The awards will be presented in three categories, highest yield, highest yield as a percentage of rainfall potential and most profitable crop. The awards provide an excellent opportunity for focus farmers to evaluate how their cropping practices perform locally, but also how they compare to others across Australia and different environments.

If you are interested in increasing crop yields and becoming a focus farm for this project, please contact Phillip Mackie on 0437120891 or email him at phillip.mackie@scfarmers.org.au.

