

SCF Focus

STIRLINGS TO COAST FARMERS

SUMMER 2023 NEWSLETTER

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SCF Photo competition winner - Matt Terry

STIRLINGS TO COAST

FARMERS



JOTTINGS FROM THE CHAIR

Sandy Forbes, SCF Chair

Hello to all Stirlings to Coast Farmers Members, Sponsors and Staff.

Welcome to the Summer Newsletter. Reminiscing on this time last year, we were still waiting for winter to end, and harvest was only just starting. This year, as a result of the warm and dry finish, many of our farmers have already finished harvest and lots are not far off. Grain yields have been variable, with the earlier sown crops yielding about average and the later sown crops, which struggled to get going in June and July, yielding quite a

bit less. It has been heartening to hear many say that yields have been better than expected, after a growing season that shut off so quickly. For the livestock farmers, pasture paddocks have rapidly hayed off, and it looks like it will be a long summer of feeding sheep.

Since the last newsletter, the SCF team have been busy with the final events for the growing season, including, what sounds like, an excellent farmer study tour to Tasmania. There have been several grant applications submitted and some new projects contracted. This includes two new and exciting snail projects, one involving fixed cameras and a parasitic fly release and the other, snail dissections to better inform snail bait timing. The SCF team have also been busy over harvest, especially Dan and Sheridan who've been out collecting harvest samples throughout the membership zone for our numerous current projects. We are looking forward to seeing the results!

As harvest is finishing up, I would just like to urge all of our members to take care of themselves and staff over this busy time. Once again, I thank our members, our staff, sponsors and Board members who make this group what it is.

Best wishes for Christmas and New Year! I hope the early finish to harvest means you can all have a well deserved and relaxing break.

Sandy Forbes
Chairman

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CEO REPORT

Lizzie von Perger, SCF CEO

Hello SCF Members and Sponsors,

Another year is almost done, and it certainly provided its share of challenges with the dry May followed by record rains in June and then an early dry finish. For those with sheep, it has also been disappointing to see prices drop so significantly.

On the bright side, many are close to the completion of harvest, which I hope means most get some good time off over Christmas and into January (unlike last year!).

As we come to the end of the year, I reckon it is a good time to reflect. Under the direction of our awesome Board and Committee members, and with our Strategy and R&D Priorities set, we are on a great trajectory, and we've kicked some significant goals in 2023.

We've been successful in just about every grant application we've applied for, which is a great tribute to our good reputation within the industry and our commitment to deliver high-quality, relevant

research.

We are in a good financial position, giving us security going forward. It also means that we can pick and choose the grant applications that are most applicable to the issues you, our members, are facing on-farm.

Over and above R&D, we are actively engaging with state and local government, and this includes our Board meeting with the State Agriculture Minister and Rebecca Stephens in Albany to discuss priorities for the region on behalf of SCF members.

SCF is seeking to work closer with Denmark Ag College and involve them more in our research in 2024. We've again sponsored the essay scholarships with both Denmark Ag College and Mount Barker Community College, with some great entries this year focussed on farm drought-proofing.

We are actively working to promote a plant protein facility in the lower Great Southern, and bulk export of legumes out of the Albany port – so that legumes can be delivered locally, and good consistent pricing can be obtained. We know that to reduce emissions from grain production, legumes in the rotation are key, but we need good prices and local delivery options.

Our events have been very well attended, which I hope, shows we are delivering value - particularly as we know how busy our members are. In particular, our fortnightly Trials Tuesdays were a great way to deliver smaller in-paddock events, and we'll start these up again during 2024.

In wrapping up for the year, a massive thank you goes out to the SCF team - Phil, Kathi, Sam, Dan, Sammy, Taryn, Sheridan, and Trish - for all their hard work this year. There has again been an impressive project list to manage, and they've done an outstanding job! As a team, we'd also like to extend our thanks to Sandy Forbes (SCF Chair), the Board, the Committee chairs and members, the trial site hosts, and our sponsors. Without you all, we couldn't do what we do – which is deliver credible, relevant research and information to our members. We hope both members and sponsors have enjoyed their involvement with SCF this year, and we're looking forward to another cracking year in 2024.

We wish you all the best for the rest of harvest, a Merry Christmas and a much-deserved break and family time before we get stuck into 2024.

Best regards,

Lizzie





Optiweigh lands in SCF territory – Preliminary learnings

Sammy Cullen, Membership Officer, SCF

THE PROJECT

Stirlings to Coast Farmers (SCF) applied for an MLA-funded project to demonstrate the Optiweigh unit, an in-paddock cattle weighing system, on properties in Southern WA. A large component of the project was to show the economic value of utilising the system in terms of improved labour efficiency, closer monitoring of animal weights and using the weight data to optimise compliance with target market weight specifications in order to receive premium prices.

The SCF-bought Optiweigh trailer landed in Albany in March 2023. As part of the project at least two farmers a year, between 2023 and 2025, will be able to give the system a try on their herd of choice, free-of-charge – well almost! There are some strings attached in the form of surveys to be completed for data collection!

In terms of operation, cattle are enticed onto the Optiweigh with an attractant i.e., a loose lick, lick block or salt. Stepping on, they have their EID recorded and front feet weighed. This information is sent to the cloud and an algorithm applied to calculate total body weight. Farmers can use the data from the Optiweigh to monitor overall herd weight and health to (hopefully) aid in decision making and herd management.

THE BRADSHAW GO FIRST!

The Bradshaw family, who run a mixed farming enterprise in South Stirlings, were the first SCF members to get their hands on the SCF Optiweigh in April this year. Over the period of a few months, they were able to trial the Optiweigh system on three different classes of cattle (steers, heifers, and cows & calves).



Image 1: Terry Bradshaw (SCF member) explaining the Optiweigh set-up and benefits at an SCF field walk, July 2023.

SORTING OUT THE SET-UP

It was quickly apparent that there were a few things that had to be tweaked to generate weight data that was useful to the Bradshaws. Firstly, it seemed that the steers required some time to ‘warm up’ to the Optiweigh, with only a few entering the trailer per day in the first week. The positioning of the Optiweigh in the paddock may have also impacted on herd usage. When the Optiweigh was moved closer to the water point (dam), the daily number of animals entering noticeably increased. The compounding influence of having the Optiweigh in with the herd for only two weeks made this initial set of data difficult to use.

It was also apparent that the type of lick/attractant that was used to lure the cattle into the Optiweigh played an important role at the Bradshaws. In the end it was the sweet loose lick recommended by the Optiweigh manufacturers that seemed to work best.

LESSON LEARNT

Once some of the finer details had been sorted out (i.e., the location in paddock, the lick, the time left in with cattle), the Optiweigh system started to generate data that was useful. Image 2 shows a graph of the weight data generated when the Optiweigh was placed in the 50ha paddock with a herd of 71 heifers. The individual dots represent the weight data of each animal that entered the Optiweigh, and the line is the average weight of the herd, generated from the individual daily weights.

THE DATA OUTPUT

There were some issues that came to light after analysing the Bradshaws’ weight data. Most importantly, if you only had outlier cattle (very heavy or very light) using the Optiweigh on any given day, this could skew the average quite significantly – giving cause for, possibly, false concern if the data (individual weights for that day) could not be interrogated more closely. Ideally, the more individual animals using the Optiweigh, the more accurate the average. So, going forward this is the aim of the game.

As a positive however, the Bradshaws were able to use the Optiweigh weight data to make a cattle sale without the need to yard for weighing before the cattle left the farm.

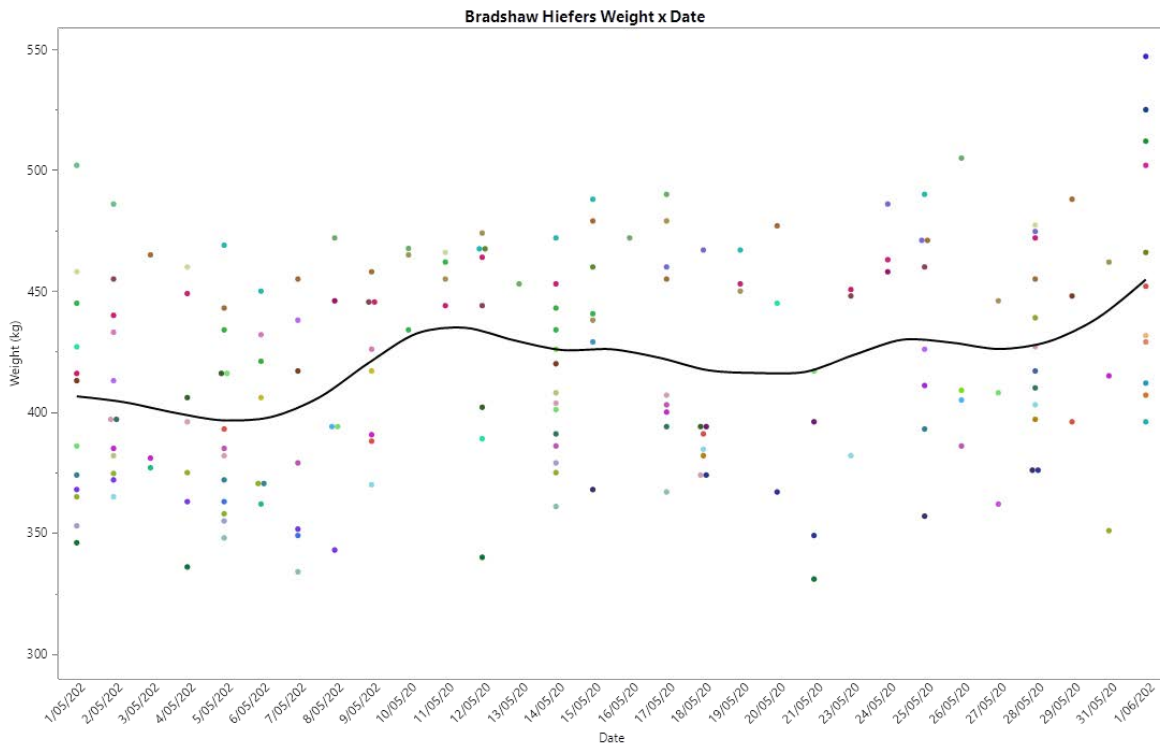


Image 2: Optiweigh weight data output for the herd of heifers – 1 May until 1 June 2023. The individual dots represent each animal, and the line represents the average weight of the herd.

THE ECONOMIC ANALYSIS

The Bradshaws were asked to complete a survey in order to capture data that could be used to undertake an economic analysis and demonstrate the dollar value of the Optiweigh system. The key findings were:

- The Optiweigh was a positive investment with most of the benefit derived from reduced labour costs (estimated at \$5,640/year).
- Assuming the Optiweigh has a life of 15 years, it was determined that it would take 10 years to pay the system off within the Bradshaws' operation.

NEXT STEPS

This MLA-funded project will continue through 2024 and 2025, further trialing the 'Optiweigh' in-paddock weighing system with different classes of cattle, and various paddock sizes and attractants across farms in the Southern region of WA. At project completion, local farmers will have information on how to optimise cattle usage on-farm, as well as information that will aid them in making the economic decision of purchasing a system such as this for their own operation.



Investigating winter wheat varieties for increased yield production – West Kendenup trial.

Dan Fay, Research & Development Co-ordinator, SCF

In 2023 SCF was awarded a tender to investigate the productivity of various winter wheat varieties, to be sown on a broadscale within the high rainfall zone (HRZ) of WA, with investment from the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC).

Winter wheat makes up a small yet growing proportion of wheat production in the Albany Port Zone as farmers seek out new varieties that are better suited to the unique environment that typifies the lower Great Southern region. Traditionally, spring varieties which have been bred for conditions more suited to the WA wheatbelt, Wimmera and central NSW, (shorter season length, medium rainfall, and hot dry finishes) have been grown in our region. However, the push to seed earlier, and take advantage of early rainfall within the Great Southern region has driven the desire to find longer season cultivars that will extend the growing season to take advantage of typically wet March/April conditions.

Mount Barker has a 31-year average rainfall of 38.5mm for March and 45.4mm for April (Silo Data). This provides ample plant available water for wheat to germinate. However, this is too early in the season for spring wheat to be sown, without the risk of frost damage, and low photothermal quotations limiting yield.

SO, WHAT DRIVES WHEAT DEVELOPMENT? SPRINGS VS. WINTERS

The growth development of wheat from vegetative to reproductive stage is primarily driven by a photoperiod or vernalisation demand. As a rule, spring dominant varieties are driven by photoperiod while true winter wheats are driven by a vernalisation period. To put this simply, winter wheats require a cold weather accumulation period to move on from a vegetative state to a reproductive state, and spring wheats are triggered by available daylight. This is why late sown spring wheat crops can progress rapidly.

Within these two groups (winter and spring wheats) there is a range of seasonal lengths, with both quick and slow spring wheats and quick and slow winter wheats. To complicate things, two identical cultivars can develop differently under different geographical and climatic conditions.

The main difference between spring and winter wheat is that spring varieties, when sown at different times or in different years, are relatively flexible in their flowering date. As a result of this, the seeding window and subsequent flowering window can be manipulated to target specific flowering dates to take

advantage of maximum solar radiation and avoid frosts and heat stress. Winter wheats will remain in a vegetative state until their cold accumulation is complete. This means that they have a set period in which they will remain vegetative regardless of sowing date. Crucially it is this cold requirement that drives yield. The vernalisation period gives the plant time to tiller and build ample biomass, beyond what a spring wheat can, even when being grazed. This biomass is the key to driving grain yield.

The vernalisation requirement of winter wheats makes them an unviable option in climates where the growing season is short. If the season starts late and ends early, winter wheats will remain vegetative longer than desired, and will mature too late in the year, risking drought and heat stress, resulting in diminished yields and poor-quality grain. Although the lower Great Southern region can be prone to early cut offs to the season, the ability to seed wheat in late March/early April in most years makes winter wheats a viable option for growers in this region.

AND WHAT DIFFERENTIATES WINTER



WHEATS FROM EACH OTHER?

Two key things: How long the cold period requirement is for each cultivar, and what other genes affect the development, after the cold requirement has been satisfied. Research conducted by CSIRO found that in controlled lab experiments, all wheat genotypes (winter and spring) responded to an increase in photoperiod, while only winter varieties responded to an increased vernalisation period. Basically, winter wheats have two drivers that affect their development and spring wheats have one.

For most true winter wheats, the cold requirement is relatively similar, with RGT Accroc, DS Bennett and RGT Cesario all requiring a fairly similar vernalisation period, and what differentiates these cultivars can be the photoperiod driver that kicks in after the vernalisation requirement is met. This makes



it tricky to assess how cultivars will perform when transplanted to different environments. For example, the vernalisation requirement might be achieved in a very similar time period in Tasmania as it would in Mt Barker, however the plant available water (PAW), temperature and day length that crop finds itself in, after fulfilling vernalisation requirement, could be drastically different.

2023 WINTER WHEAT TRIAL

Currently most of the popular winter wheats grown in the Eastern States HRZ's are deemed too slow for our conditions if they cannot be seeded in late March and early April, and even then, they will be unlikely to be harvestable until January. There are quick winter wheats such as Illabo, but this does not seem to be a perfect fit for our environment as its vernalisation period is not long enough for early seeding, but generally too long for standard spring wheat seeding windows.

However, given wheats often react differently in differing environments, SCF set up a trial to examine how five winter wheat cultivars would perform in the APZ, when seeded alongside each other under the same management strategy.

The trial is hosted by the Slade family in West Kendenup and is a broadscale demonstration trial including the following cultivars:

- RGT Accroc
- DS Bennett
- Illabo
- RGT Cesario
- Mohawk (early sown - 5 April)
- Mohawk (late sown - 12 May)

All cultivars were seeded at 80kg/ha. Each cultivar was seeded on the 5 April, excluding the late Mohawk which was seeded on the 12 May. These were then managed identically within the growing season with development stages being observed in order to determine both suitability and productivity of each cultivar within the region.

RESULTS

Plant Establishment

The plant establishment across each variety was relatively similar.

This is encouraging given the trial was seeded into marginal PAW, and the paddock was prone to non-wetting. However, given these are winter wheats, plant establishment is not a great indicator of yield potential as it is the vernalisation period that is the key driver of tiller numbers. Head counts will be conducted at harvest to assess how many heads per m² were produced for each variety.

Table 1. Plant establishment as plants per m² for 5 different winter wheat varieties sown at Mt Barker.

DS Bennett	RGT Accroc	Illabo	Mohawk Early	Mohawk late	RGT Cesario
22.1	24.2	22	25.1	26.7	20.5

Flowering dates

The flowering dates varied by 43 days from earliest maturing to the latest maturing variety. The quick winter wheats, Illabo and Mohawk, reached flowering around a month earlier than the traditional winter wheats.

Interestingly, research from the high rainfall regions of eastern Victoria would suggest RGT Accroc should be slower maturing than DS Bennett, however, this was not the case here. This highlights the importance of assessing cultivars under local conditions, and assessing how cultivars deal with differing levels of environmental stress.

Table 2. Flowering dates for 6 varieties of winter wheat grown in Mt Barker.

RGT Accroc	DS Bennett	RGT Cesario	Illabo	Mowhawk Early	Mowhawk Late
3 Oct	9 Oct	17 Oct	8 Sept	4 Sept	22 Sept

Harvest

The trial will be harvested in late December/early January. Senescence date, head counts, yield, and grain quality will be measured at this time. It is hoped that this trial will provide critical and locally relevant data that highlights the productivity and adaptability of winter wheats to the high rainfall regions of WA.





Assessing Economic Benefits of Confinement Feeding – confinement feeding ewes, wa\$ it worth it?

Sheridan Kowald, Project Officer, SCF

BACKGROUND

Stirlings to Coast Farmers (SCF) participated in a 2-year MLA Producer Demonstration Site (PDS) project from 2022-2023, which demonstrated 6 (3 each season) active sheep confinement feeding systems within the Stirlings to Coast Farmers membership base.

The economic value of confinement feeding sheep has been hard to quantify for producers in WA, especially when systems and producer’s strategies are highly variable. What we did know going into this project, however, is that local farmers are often impacted by late seasonal breaks which affect the establishment of pastures in the region. This can be from either a lack of rain or too much of it.

Confinement feeding can remove early-season grazing pressure to aid pasture growth and establishment. Producers can also maintain stock numbers through the autumn feed gap, maintain optimum ewe condition scores and thus lamb survival and thrift by implementing confinement feeding.

The overall purpose of the project was to generate data from varying confinement feeding set-ups in the region so that the economics of each scenario, in terms of stock energy requirements, supplement wastage, labour costs, stock feeding times, infrastructure costs and pasture growth, could be collated to better inform farmers decisions.

“I would have sheep in 2 big mobs and be rotating them around pastures by April if I did not have a confinement set-up” (Clare Webster, Kendenup)

OUR HOST FARMERS

Six producers took part as demonstration hosts in the SCF-led project, three in 2022 and three in 2023. Table 1 describes details of each operation and confinement set-up.

Note: All producers were supplying fresh water through water troughs situated in each individual pen.

Producer	Details
Jeremy Walker, Green Range	A 2400ha mixed farm running a merino flock. 4179 ewes were confined for 41 days, March-mid May 2022, feeding a full mixed ration and ad-lib hay, three times a week into a communal feed trough.
Clare Webster, Tenterden	A 2500ha mixed farm running a self-replacing merino flock. 2100 head were confined for 56 days, April until mid-June and another 2277 head were confined for 76 days, April to end of June 2022. Ewes were trail fed a lupin-barley-oats mix that had been treated with ‘Home n’ Dry alkalystems’ product and ad-lib hay, three times a week.
Jason Griffiths, Gairdner	A 7500ha mixed farm running a self-replacing merino flock. 600 head were confined for 25 days and 1400 head were confined for 43 days, from the start of April until mid-May 2022. They were fed a grain mix daily into fence mounted troughs in each pen. Ad-lib straw was given three times a week.
John Howard, South Stirlings	A 4800ha mixed farm running a 70% cropping enterprise with a Merino and Dohne flock. 1740 ewes were confined for 19 days, from end of May until mid-June 2023. Ewes were rationed pellets daily, via mounted troughs on each pen. In addition, barley hay and calcium lick blocks were placed on the ground in each pen 4 times a week.
Greg Hyde, Ongerup	A 5600ha mixed farm running 73% cropping enterprise with a self-replacing Merino flock. 1500 ewes were confined for 28 days, from the end of April till the end of May 2023. Ewes were fed pellets into communal troughs twice a day, whilst adding barley straw on the ground to each pen three times a week.
Mark Zadow, Kojonup	A 1431ha mixed farm running a 41% cropping enterprise with Merino and Dohne flock. 7410 ewes, ewe lambs and wether lambs were confined for 76 days, from mid-April until late-June 2023. Sheep were trail fed barley and lupins three times a week, in addition, they added lime and salt mix into half tires and fed barley straw on the ground in each pen once a week.



“We choose to confinement feed to give the emerging pastures the best possible chance to establish and build up prior to stocking with livestock. Confinement feeding is a more professional way to monitor livestock when supplementary feeding, and we get better value out of the supplementary food.” (Piers Roberts, South Stirlings)

THE ECONOMICS

Overall, host producers’ livestock enterprises were benefited as confinement feeding allowed stock to be monitored more closely and hence managed more optimally. Participating host producers were able to follow an optimal nutrition profile that maximised the trade-off between feed costs and reproduction. In addition, they had a better ability to maintain paddock groundcover, reducing erosion risks and maximising rain infiltration.

All these benefits aside, setting up confinement feeding did come at a cost. Particularly, in infrastructure set-up and feed costs. As a result, the economic benefits of confinement feeding, although profitable in all cases, varied from farm to farm and season to season. For those looking to go into confinement feeding, it may be less profitable if your stocking rates are low as early-season pasture growth is less limiting.

As well as seasonality and stocking rates, when looking at the economics of confinement feeding other factors such as external markets, time of lambing, pasture area, grazing management prior to adopting confinement feeding, confinement set up and confinement period should all be considered.

An economic analysis was conducted for all 6 PDS sites and factored in all of the above aspects to better understand the influence of these factors on the profitability of confinement feeding.

Performance Metrics in Confinement	Producer 1	Producer 2	Producer 3	Producer 4	Producer 5	Producer 6
Condition score in	2.8	2.7	2.6	3.3	4	2.8
Condition score out	3	3.1	3	3.4	4.2	2.8
Reduced feeding time	35%	75%	54%	61%	50%	30%
Labour efficiency gains (hrs/week)	10.75	16.4	24	11	3.75	3.75
Hectares deferred (ha)	960	550	570	350	274	851
Pasture production gains (kg/DM/ha)	64	67	241	410	350	1507
Energy efficiency gains (mj/d/head)	0.8	0.76	0.73	0.78	0.8	0.76
Mortality rate reduction	1%	0.50%	no change	no change	no change	no change
Costs (-) and Benefits (+) in Confinement						
(-) Supplement/feed	\$0	-\$13,750	-\$30,591	-\$13,134	-\$16,940	-\$102,300
(+) Pasture deferment	\$19,034	\$19,449	\$32,376	\$26,101	\$25,150	\$126,797
(+) Labour reduction (@\$40/hr inc super & wc)	\$2,520	\$4,040	\$4,800	\$1,280	\$600	\$800
(+) Mortality reduction	\$739	\$369	\$0	\$0.00	\$0.00	\$0.00
Gross Margin	\$22,293	\$10,108	\$6,585	\$14,200	\$8,800	\$25,300
*Wgha - winter grazing hectares	\$3.6/DSE	\$3.4/DSE	\$1.0/DSE	\$1.14/DSE	\$0.83/DSE	\$2.3/DSE
*wc – workers compensation	\$23.20/Wgha	\$5.62/Wgha	\$11.90/Wgha	\$8.00/Wgha	\$5.80/Wgha	\$30.00/Wgha

* NOTE: Producer order randomised



“The cost of setting up a confinement feeding system and the feed costs involved pay out in the long run - it is going to give the farm more opportunities to get the best possible outcomes in achieving the best results out of the livestock operation. It will enable us to have a better whole farm approach and have timelier early-season crop and pasture growth.” Piers Roberts, John Howards worker, said.

LOOKING AT THE \$\$\$

Farm data collection was conducted to acquire crucial information about each farm's structure, including pasture area and stocking rate, to assess dollar benefits resulting from confinement feeding practices. This data served as the foundation for calculating the additional supplement requirements during confinement (accounting for factors such as waste reduction and the decreased energy needs of livestock in confinement), and labour efficiency gains associated with supplement feeding in confinement versus paddock feeding.

The economic analysis for each host farmer was conducted using the 'Australian Farm Optimisation (AFO)' model which allowed for a comprehensive whole-farm, whole-year feed budget, that considered the economic and biological aspects of pasture growth and quality, livestock energy requirements, farm management and stocking rates (Table 2).

The analysis showed that confinement feeding was profitable for all host producers participating in the project, varying in gross margin benefit from \$6,585 to \$25,300. Importantly, pasture deferment made up >95% of the economic value of confinement feeding. This shows that the economic value of confinement feeding is significantly linked to autumn and winter growing conditions, and confinement feeding before the break of season is less profitable because pasture is not being deferred.

The benefits of confinement feeding were primarily due to:

- Deferment of pasture paddocks resulting in increased leaf area and growth rates – increased pasture production.
- Increased energy efficiency of stock - reduces stock energy requirements by 8-15% (less walking for feed and water).
- Reduced supplement wastage (5-10%).

- Stock health and weight could be easily monitored, and sale stock more easily separated.
- Reduced labour (stock feeding) and cost of supplementary feeding.

After discussion with the host producers, there were some other factors, not included in the economic analysis, that increased the value of confinement feeding for producers, including:

- Benefits to the cropping enterprise where confinement allowed the cropping paddocks to be destocked earlier.
- Benefits to the livestock enterprise where confinement feeding allowed stock to be monitored more closely and hence managed more optimally i.e., following an optimal nutrition profile that maximised the trade-off between feed costs and reproduction.
- Maintained paddock groundcover, reduced erosion, and maximised early-season rain infiltration.

FINAL THOUGHTS

This MLA-funded Producer Demonstration Site project really highlighted to producers in the Great Southern region of WA the economic value of confinement feeding. Going forwards, and particularly as farmers in our local region manage increasingly variable seasons, it will be an important tool to maintain the productivity and profitability of livestock enterprises.



Putting snails in the picture!

Kathi McDonald, Communication Manager, SCF

Stirlings to Coast Farmers is embarking on involvement in an innovative snail control project, featuring a predatory fly release and fixed cameras to monitor snail movement. This is all part of a larger GRDC investment led by the South Australian Research and Development Institute (SARDI) in collaboration with Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD). The project aims to help farmers better time bait application (with cameras) and adopt integrated pest management practices to curb crop damage from snails.

Although old news to many South Coast Farmers, small conical snails have become an increasing problem in broadacre crops through the region. As part of the project, SCF will monitor two remote cameras on local farms to detect snail movement to be able to alert farmers when the pests are active so they can apply bait at the optimal time.

SARDI and DPIRD, with assistance from SCF, will also be releasing predatory flies (*Sarcophaga villeneuveana*) at three sites in the Albany region as a biological control method. In addition, flies will be released at three sites in the Esperance region in collaboration with the South-East Premium Wheatgrowers Association (SEPWA).

Dr Kym Perry and Dr Kate Muirhead from SARDI, joined up with Svetlana Micic (DPIRD) and SCF recently on a hunt for suitable fly release sites. In South Australia, they found that where they released the flies into areas of native bush containing flowering vegetation in spring and summer, they had improved parasitism of up to 30 to 50%. It is apparently the nutrients contained in the nectar and pollen that enhance the adult fly reproduction and lengthen the lifespan.

Throughout 2023 and 2024, SCF will also work together with SARDI and DPIRD to engage with growers along the South Coast at field events at fly release and camera monitoring sites for interested growers. These events will aim to create awareness and increase knowledge around integrated pest management for the control of snails in broadacre agriculture across the South Coast.

The project will build on SCF's previous research into small conical snail control and our mission to deliver locally relevant information and resources to support farmers in the South Coast and Great Southern region of WA.

SCF has been a leader in on-farm R&D for small conical snail management through innovation and collaboration. We are excited to be able to partner with organisations like SARDI and DPIRD on a project like this which combines technology development with biological research to inform, control and deliver an integrated package of new outputs. Keep an eye on our socials and newsletters for updates on the project!



Image 1: *Sarcophaga villeneuveana* which preys on invasive conical snails.



Image 2: Luke Dawson (GRDC), Svetlana Micic (DPIRD) and Heather Adams (SCF member) on the hunt for fly release locations – 20 November.



Image 3: Dr Kym Perry (SARDI) explaining the requirements of a perfect fly release site.



SCF on Tour in Tassie

Lizzie von Perger, CEO, SCF

SCF members were able to travel to Tasmania on a study tour supported by the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) in early October. It was an action packed three days! Here's little of what we got up to.

DAY 1 – Grain drying, GRDC long season NVTs, hyper yielding crops and drainage.

We kicked off the tour with a visit to the Morrisons' property in Cressy. They had recently installed an impressive, huge (European style) grain drying shed. We were shown the mechanics of how it worked and tried to get out of them the cost, significant apparently! Interestingly, it was mostly built for drying and storing grass seed which is worth between \$4-5/kg. They have ended up drying most of their other grains in it as well.

It was then onto the Southern Farming Systems (Tassie Grower Group) research site at Hagley where we waltzed through the GRDC long season wheat NVTs with Brett Davey (SFS Manager). It was very interesting to see how the same varieties differed in growth stage between WA and Tassie with a similar time of sowing. An example was Stockade which, in Tassie, was three

weeks behind the Stockade sown in Wellstead (similar dates) – demonstrating some potential flexibility!

Conveniently next door was the GRDC hyper yielding research site managed by FAR Australia. Darcey Warren (FAR Senior Research Manager) met us there to take us through the various agronomic management tactics to achieve hyper yields (which in Tassie is generally above 10t/ha for cereals). We felt a bit lucky not having to deal with Septoria and Stripe Rust (for the moment anyhow). Note: we all ensured boots and clothing were washed and scrubbed before stepping back on farm here!

As a last-minute stop (thanks to Jon Midwood for organising!) we caught up with grower, James Clutterbuck (great name!), and he kindly showed us around his very well-maintained, hedge-rowed, English-looking property. He didn't even know we were coming and still everything had very recently been mown! He talked us through his various irrigation set-ups (paid for by poppies), potatoes and sub-surface drainage (of which he had some freshly installed). Sub-surface drainage with feeder mole drains has been a game changer for his farm operation.





DAY 2 - University of Tasmania (breeding for waterlogging tolerance), happy lambs and poppies.

On day two, we visited the University of Tasmania Westbury site just out of Launceston. Dr Chenchen Zhao and Dr Pete Johnson gave as an overview of the research they were doing into waterlogging tolerance in barley, acid tolerance in barley, heat tolerance in wheat, cereal disease research (Septoria, scald and net blotch) and salinity tolerance in wheat and barley. We were all pretty impressed, and it is exciting to hear that we may be involved in the waterlogging and acid tolerant barley trials (they were looking for site hosts) in our region. This stop certainly gave us an appreciation, in general, of the amount of research work that goes into breeding for more tolerant crops.

Grower, Rob Bradley, was next on the list. Another beautiful property with the happiest lambs that you are ever likely to see, running through his irrigated ryegrass seed crop! His incredibly diverse operation (prime lamb, carrot seed, potatoes, broccoli, poppies, grass seed and cereals) was managed by being able to rely quite heavily on specific contractors for certain jobs. As an example, the broccoli is commonly planted and harvested by the company it is sold to – leaving only the in-season management to organise. It is something we heard quite a bit, as we were all wondering how the diversity is managed.

Lastly, it was to Tas Alkaloids to hear more about the poppy industry in Tasmania. We didn't quite get a look at the plant, which was a bit disappointing, but we were given some comfy chairs to sit in and be taken through the history. A few may have almost fallen asleep after a long day! Although not quite as profitable anymore, it was on the back of the poppy industry that most farmers were able to pay for their current irrigation infrastructure.





DAY 3 – Peppermint KitKats, canola oil, hyper yielding barley (under pivot) and beer.

Day three took us to Longford, where ‘apparently’ semi-retired grower, Rob Henry, was still running a farming operation growing peppermint, parsley, and fennel, from which he distilled the oil himself, growing canola and running a canola press for oil (salmon industry) and meal (livestock feed), and running sheep (perhaps cattle too, I forget). Quite awesomely, it is his peppermint oil that you find in the ‘Tasmanian Peppermint KitKats’!

Avoiding the Longford bakery (because by then, we’d almost become regulars), we travelled to Campbell Town to meet up with grower, Angus Lyne. Angus also knew our region quite well after having worked at Barloo Merino Stud (Gnowangerup) when he was studying at Marcus Oldam College. We had a squiz at both his dryland and irrigated barley crops and it was interesting that un-irrigated barley yields were generally quite comparable to our region. We had a quick look at a pretty extravagant PGR experiment on a hybrid canola seed crop and then hit the road – we had to get to the brewery in time.

Boags was waiting for us, where the history of the brewery and the beers were eagerly consumed. A nice full circle – after having spent a bit of time in barley crops during the day!



Overall, the highlights that really impressed us, apart from the cracking weather, the multiple trips to the award-winning Longford Bakery, high speed scooter chases, and impromptu birthday celebrations, were the incredible diversity in the farming systems, and the opportunities that irrigation allows.

Thanks so much to the growers that attended, you were awesome and asked great questions. We hope you got a bit out of it. Thanks also to Trish Garnett (SCF Project Administrator) for doing all the behind-the-scenes legwork to get us there – you’re a star! And finally, thanks to GRDC, without your support the study tour would not have been possible.

Drought Hub Update

Stirlings to Coast Farmers, as a 'Drought Hub Node', provides guidance to the Nationally coordinated 'Future Drought Fund' on drought & climate resilience issues for the Albany Region.

WHAT'S NEW

The SW WA Drought Hub presents 'Dry season resources' podcasts!

Season one of the Hub's Dry Season Resources podcast is here. Released in two parts, key experts explore financial risk, soil management, and key agronomy tips for a dry season in episodes 1 - 3.

Throughout the season you'll hear from growers and industry experts on managing dry season responses, ranging from early planning to tactical decision-making throughout the year and setting up for the following season. Topics cover business decisions, soil management, water use efficiency, nitrogen considerations, a look into life in the northern agricultural region, and livestock operations in a dry season.

WHAT'S THE DROUGHT HUB ALL ABOUT?

The Hub is dedicated to sharing information that supports growers in preparing for and responding to a dry season. This podcast is just one of the extension tools in the works to provide value to growers facing dry season challenges. Find links to the podcasts and other drought preparedness resources at <https://hub.gga.org.au/resources/dry-season-resources/>.

SCF FARMERS - GET YOUR CLIMATE NERD ON!!

Climate tool made for farmers

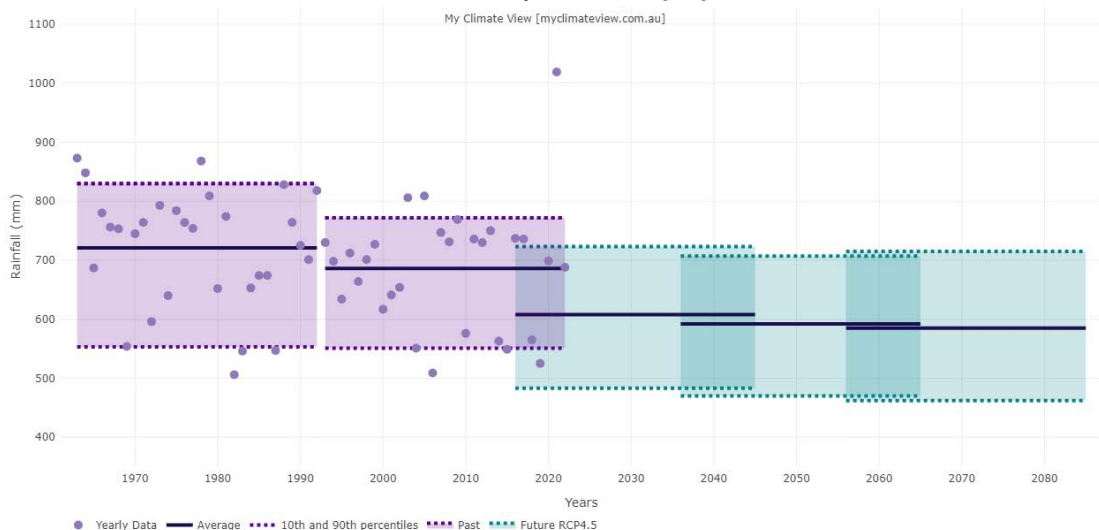
The Climate Services for Agriculture (CSA) program has a new name and website for its farmer-focused climate information tool. My Climate View is a free online climate information tool helping farmers understand what the future climate might mean for their location, down to a 5km² resolution, to inform decision-making and build climate resilience. It presents agriculturally relevant historical and future climate information in one place so farmers can explore climate trends for specific commodities at a local scale.

Along with the new name and website, other updates to the My Climate View tool include significant improvements to how farmers can access and view their local and commodity-specific climate information, and insight into how climate information is calculated.

As an example of what the website can do, Image 1 shows a graph of the past and present rainfall data for the Albany postcode. The dots represent the yearly data, the solid lines represent the average, and the dotted lines represent the 10th and 90th percentiles. The shaded green blocks are the long-term climate predictions under the RCP4.5 emissions scenario (semi-conservative).

BARLEY - GROWING SEASON RAINFALL

LOCATION: 6330, ISSUED: 11/24/2023



This chart shows the past and future range in growing season rainfall at your location. The growing season is defined as between 1 April and 31 October.

Image 1: An example of the data that can be accessed from the My Climate View for the Albany postcode. This graph shows past and future growing season rainfall (1 April to 31 October).



What's an RCP4.5 Scenario?

We didn't know much about these emissions scenarios either, so we did a bit of (quality) googling and found a good explanation on the CSIRO website:

RCPs are prescribed pathways for greenhouse gas and aerosol concentrations, together with land use change, that are consistent with a set of broad climate outcomes used by the climate modelling community (CSIRO, 2020).

RCP4.5 - CO₂ concentrations are slightly above those of RCP6.0 until after mid-century, but emissions peak earlier (around 2040), and the CO₂ concentration reaches 540 ppm by 2100.

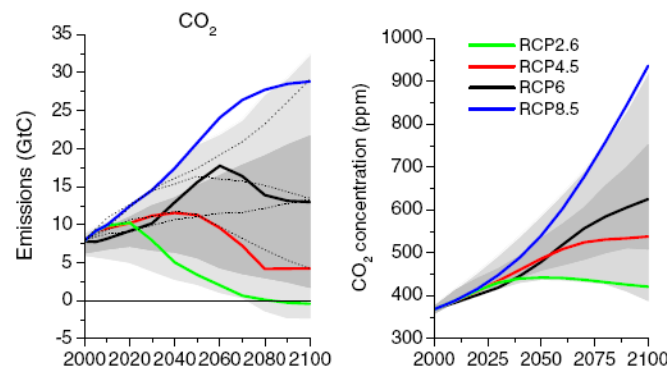


Image 2: Emissions of CO₂ across the RCPs (left), and the trends in concentrations of carbon dioxide (right).

Medium term outlooks

If you're keen on getting a bit of a feel for the medium-term rainfall outlook the My Climate View can help out again. We used the Albany postcode to generate the below forecast for the next 3 months (Image 3). It shows that there is a high prediction of receiving at least 42mm in this period with a moderate level of accuracy. Good news for summer sown legumes, bad news for having to spray summer weeds!

If you're keen on having a look yourselves, you can find the new website at <https://myclimateview.com.au/>

CSA is a collaboration between CSIRO and the Bureau of Meteorology and part of the Future Drought Fund's investment in better climate information for Australia's agriculture sector.

RAINFALL : CHANCE OF RECEIVING AT LEAST

LOCATION: 6330, ISSUED: 11/16/2023, DATE 12/23 - 02/24

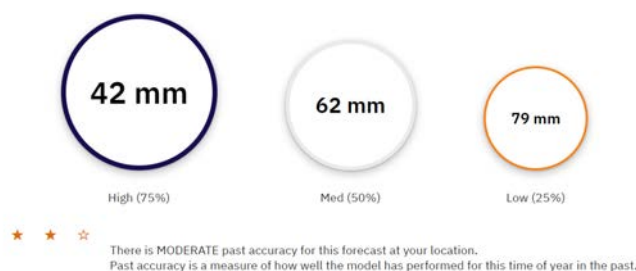


Image 3: Forecast rainfall for the Albany postcode – December 2023 to February 2024.



Interested in Hyperlocal forecasts? SCF has created 'Climate Great Southern'

Last year SCF completed a Future Drought Fund supported project that supported the development of the 'Climate Great Southern' website – a hub for local climate information and drought management resources, including:

- Local week-ahead weather forecasts (from machine learning weather stations installed in the region).
- Pasture groundcover predictions based on farming system and the local weather data.

The ongoing aim of Climate Great Southern is to provide a centralised weather dashboard & climatic resource information service to enable farmers to make better business decisions and improve their farm's resilience to a changing climate.

The climate and pasture data on the website is driven by information coming from weather stations, rain-gauges and soil moisture probes located on SCF member properties.

By increasing the amount of local weather and soil moisture data collected over time, the site aims to:

- Improve the accuracy of weather forecasting at a hyperlocal level.
- Better measure stored soil moisture levels to determine how risky it would be to grow a summer crop or cut/increase fertiliser applications late in the season.
- Better understand the effects of current climate conditions on pasture growth, enabling the ability to better manage stocking rates & pasture regrowth.

As an example of the information that can be accessed, Image 4 shows a screenshot of the weather forecast for the South Stirlings (Drawbin Rd) location. With machine learning, these forecasts should be continually increasing their accuracy over time.

You can find the site at <https://climategreatsouthern.com.au/>. Check it out today and let us know what you think!

To keep up to date with all that is happening with the Southwest WA Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub and anything climate resilience related, check out their



Weather Forecast

Last Update: Unknown

South Stirlings (Drawbin) ▾

Forecast data provided by DTN

	Chance of Rain	Rainfall	Temperature	Warnings
Today	0%	0mm	14-24°C	1127
Sat	61%	0.9mm	14-21°C	1155
Sun	0%	0mm	14-21°C	1192
Mon	80%	3mm	14-22°C	1113
Tue	80%	3mm	16-28°C	
Wed	0%	0mm	14-25°C	
Thu	0%	0mm	14-23°C	

Image 4: Weather forecast taken from the Climate great Southern website for the for South Stirlings area (24 November 2023).

web page and subscribe to their newsletter here - <https://hub.gga.org.au/>

If you are interested in knowing more and being involved in project development for improving climate resilience in our local area, give Kathi McDonald (Albany Regional Node) a call on 0408 418 531 or email kathi.mcdonald@scfarmers.org.au and check out the Albany Node webpage for further locally relevant information - <https://www.scfarmers.org.au/swwadroughthub-albany>.

Student Scholarship Program 2023

For three years SCF ran the Student Connect, Future Farmers program supported with funds from the National Landcare Program. With the completion of this project in 2020, SCF has been keen to continue supporting youth in agriculture and to promote the exciting career opportunities offered by our industry. To this effect, we've continued to support students from the WA Collage of Agriculture, Denmark and the Mount Barker Community College, by offering an essay scholarship award.

This year students studying agriculture at the two collages were asked to write a 500 – 1000 word essay answering the question "What sort of strategies should farmers implement to "drought proof" and increase climate resilience on their farms?"

"What sort of strategies should farmers implement to "drought proof" and increase climate resilience on their farms?"

Isaac Dobbe

Farmers can be hugely impacted by drought and are very susceptible to the change in weather patterns. Many farmers livelihood relies on the rainfall they receive, whether for crops or livestock. The management of water resources is extremely important, as a farmer will never know when the next rainfall may come. In the following, I will outline the different sorts of strategies that farmers could implement to 'drought-proof' their farms and to increase climate resilience on their farms.

A lot of water is lost through evaporation. The sun bakes down on exposed water sources or soil, and the moisture can rapidly dry up and be sent back into the atmosphere. Evaporation from pastures and cropping ground may be hard to avoid, but minimising evaporation is one of the most efficient strategies for saving soil moisture by lowering the surface's temperature. Maintaining stubbles and spreading harvest trash from the crops evenly over the ground, or using a stripper front which only takes off the tops of the crop, gives the soil a barrier of protection from the harsh summer sun. The moisture underneath will last much longer and can carry over to the next season. When the opening rains arrive, the soil that has high ground cover will harvest water more efficiently and reduce losses with surface run off.

Those farming livestock also have a great need for water in the soil. Leaving good groundcover over summer to cover the soil and minimise evaporation goes a long way in preserving the

SCF would like to congratulate all the participating students. The essays received were of high quality and this made choosing the scholarship recipients very hard!

SCF Chair, Sandy Forbes, recently attended the WA College of Agriculture graduation ceremony and presented the scholarship on behalf of the SCF Board to Isaac Dobbe. Congratulations to Isaac! She also presented Mount Barker Community Colleges award to Callum Bunker. Congratulations also to Callum! We hope you enjoy reading their winning essays.



moisture in the soil. By growing pastures tall in late spring and grazing with short duration and high density, the pastures will be partly eaten and partly trampled for ground cover.

Increasing soil organic matter is a great way to increase the water holding ability of the soil. Just a 1% increase in soil organic matter allows each hectare of land to hold an extra 170,000L of water (Graeme Sait October 30 2012 <https://blog.nutri-tech.com.au/organic-matter-really-matters/>). In a pasture-livestock system, the use of deep-rooted perennials helps increase organic matter because organic matter occurs with the presence of roots.

What are some other ways water is lost on farms? Holding water in dams is a great way to store large volumes; however, using many small dams to water livestock results in a great loss through evaporation. It's an un-guaranteed water source because of the unpredictability of a rainfall season. The large surface area of the dams means that water is quickly lost through evaporation. A better way for watering of livestock is by using pipelines and troughs. It may be expensive to set up at first, but it can really save the livestock in a dry year when the small dams evaporate. Pumping from a bore or large key dam into the troughs can prove to be a very efficient way of supplying year-round water to livestock, even during low rainfall years with minimal run off. Pipelines can have numerous risers and connections coming to the surface to provide many different watering points, reducing



the distance required for livestock to travel to a water source and therefore minimising the amount of water sources, for example, smaller paddock dams.

Animals also need feed to survive, and in a dry year feed may become scarce. The annuals may germinate early from a false break and die off. A good solution to this can be planting perennials. The deeper root system of an established perennial plant can access water and nutrients much deeper in the soil. Perennial plants also will provide feed earlier in the season when the opening rains come and will grow feed if there is any summer rainfall. These plants will be able to cope with a dry year much better than the annuals.

Traditionally, many farmers cultivate their paddocks each year, which turns over the soil exposing it to the elements. Wind and water erosion can do serious damage to the topsoil. The soil also dries out faster and less water is stored. The use of minimum-tillage or no-tillage seeding has been a huge game changer for growing crops in Western Australia, largely due to water use efficiency through improved soil structure. Improved soil structure in the form of better soil aggregates help water infiltration. The current 2023 season that has dried off quick and in the past would have resulted in low yields, but with the new practices and technology, overall yields are still expected to be similar to, or above average, largely due to better water use efficiency of the crops.

Sandy soils make up a great proportion of our WA soils. They can be productive but sometimes the addition of clay and wetting agents has made a huge difference in the success of these soils to yield good crops or produce pasture. Wetting agents are a good solution to non-wetting soils and will increase water infiltration and crop growth. New technology such as desalination plants are looking to be key water suppliers in the future, and it is exciting to see the advances in this drought proofing technology.

In conclusion, it is very important that farmer's drought-proof and increase climate resilience on their farms by implementing various strategies as I've outlined above. As a future representative of the agricultural industry, I would like to see more farmers implement better drought proofing strategies I have outlined above so that our future in the farming industry can continue to be successful and effective in the often-unknown climate.





Callum Bunker

Droughts pose many challenges for farmers, affecting crop yields, livestock health, and overall farm productivity. As climate change increases the intensity of droughts will continue to change making it important for farmers to come up with new drought proof strategies to stay climate resistant and look after their farms. There are many strategies farmers can implement to drought proof and protect their farms and reduce their risks in dry years. Some of these include increasing water catchment and storage, using this stored water for irrigation on crops and pasture, producing enough hay to be stored for livestock and also using grazing management strategies to get the most out of our pastures.

Ground water and surface water storage is the most important and easiest strategy farmers can implement. To catch this water and make it last farmers implement bigger deeper dams often called reserve dams, in order to store enough water to last 2-3 years. They also put big drains on these dams for better water catchment. Another strategy used to collect underground water is the use of bores and soaks. Bore water is a constant water source that can be used for washing equipment and irrigation. This water source may be used for drinking and showering however bore water can be dirty or contaminated often depending on natural processes of human activities. Therefore farmers often use this water for irrigation and vegetation watering. Another strategy is the use of soaks where underground water is found and utilised by digging a hole in that location providing a constant water source.

With all this underground and surface water supplies farmers can use it to their advantage through irrigation. Farmers can drought proof their properties by installing water efficient systems such as micro and drip irrigation. By doing this it allowed more plants to come through which begins to provide shade, more ground cover and wind protection reducing water loss in the process as well as providing mulch to enrich the soil. By have ground cover and mulch it reduces the evaporation and helps to keep water in the soil allowing it to go down into the underground water reserves. Farmers can also irrigate their crops ensuring they have a crop to harvest and produce hay and also their pastures so they have feed for their stock.

Another strategy farmers can adopt is to have hay stored on

hand. By growing these fodder crops in good years or by irrigating them they can make sure they have a good enough crop to mow and bale for hay and produce extra to store for future dry years for their livestock. As well as producing hay for feed for the stock farmers can use livestock grazing management techniques to make the most out of their pastures in dry years. This is the process of managing the frequency and intensity of which livestock graze pastures. Farmers can put their stock into smaller paddocks and feed them, this is known as confinement feeding and this allows their other pasture paddocks to rest, recover and regrow for later on when it's needed. Farmers can move their stock in and out of pastures regularly before they are eaten out allowing them to recover in between.

As we can see there are many strategies which farmers can adopt to drought proof their farms and increase their climate resilience. By collecting the water from the sky, ground or underground and using this water to their advantage will help to boost a farms overall productivity, even during a drought. Ground water, surface water, dams, irrigation, hay production and grazing management are all crucial points to consider before or during a drought. By adopting these strategies within your property and its specific conditions farmers can look after their farm without the worries of withering crops or thirsty animals and can withstand challenges of droughts and climate change.



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<https://www.google.com/>

NAVIGATING ANOTHER DROUGHT

FINDING STRENGTH IN CONNECTION



By Dr Ben Rockett and Mark Vayro,
with Stirlings to Coast Farmers' Gold Sponsor, specialist agricultural insurer Achmea Australia.

Farmer Mark Vayro is facing one of the many difficult decisions brought about by drought: whether to sell off his herd at a fraction of its value or pay high prices to buy in feed. Whichever option he chooses, he loses; for now.

He knows he's navigating challenges that are temporary: things will get better. Until then, he's focused on navigating through another drought and keeping his family and his family farm going.

A farmer at heart, Mark also works for specialist agricultural insurer Achmea Australia and sees many farmers facing similar challenges. Mark knows the current reality is difficult, and it will likely get more difficult for a while, but he also knows that a positive mindset and social connection are vital tools to help work through the tough times.

Connection is a remedy for and a protective factor against feeling overwhelmed by stress.

Psychologist Dr. Ben Rockett specialises in trauma recovery and advocates the advantages of fostering social connections during adversity.

By actively supporting your community, you simultaneously nurture your own mental well-being.

Together, Mark and Ben share some insights on how you may identify stress within yourself and others.

Because if you can recognise the signs, you may more easily be able to support yourself and others.

Stress within yourself and others might show up as:

- Irritability or aggression
- Feeling a loss of control
- Sleep interruption
- Fatigue or exhaustion
- Sadness and tears
- Unusual memory or concentration difficulties.

What you can do to support yourself:

- Be aware of how you're feeling – check in with yourself.
- Be active (not just work active) and see if others can join you for regular walks or exercise.
- Exercise moderation in alcohol consumption.
- Prioritise your sleep – insufficient sleep will further raise the cortisol (stress hormone) levels in your system.
- Take time each day to be still and focus on your breathing – just a few slow and deep breaths may be enough to positively influence your focus.
- Watch your favourite comedy – laughter brings wonderful benefits to your mental and physical health.

What you can do to support others:

- Be aware of who you haven't heard from in a while – reach out and connect with them.
- Prioritise social connection – go see them, call them, get them over for a cuppa.
- Help someone else in your community – it can lift your focus from your own situation and provide a range of psychological benefits, including a stronger sense of belonging.

By fostering a strong sense of connection through community support and solidarity, farmers, along with their families and communities, can find the strength needed to face the day-to-day challenges and look forward to better times ahead.



About Ben Rockett

Dr Ben Rockett, PhD is a psychologist whose practice is focused on trauma recovery. As a dedicated children's mental health advocate, Ben is deeply involved in voluntary community mental health enterprises that support children, schools, and families across NSW.

He is also the Engagement Manager with Achmea Australia, performing an organisational psychology role helping Achmea Australia's employees reach their full potential.

About Mark Vayro

As a third-generation landowner, Mark Vayro runs a cell grazing beef cattle and fodder production system in the Lockyer Valley. Mark is also a Business Development Manager with Achmea Australia to deliver on the insurer's purpose to keep farmers farming.

As a passionate rural mental health advocate, Mark is a big believer in giving back to the community that supports him and is actively involved in volunteering including as a rural fire fighter and other community organisations.

About Achmea Australia

Achmea Australia is part of the Achmea Group, one of the largest insurance companies in the Netherlands. The Achmea Group has over 10 million clients worldwide and is fully dedicated to farm insurance in Australia.



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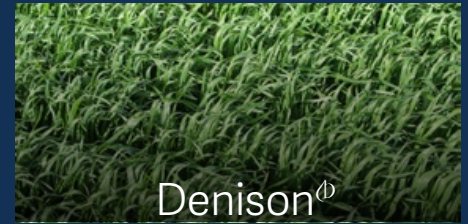
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Global food commodity prices are set for respite in 2024 after three years of record highs caused by war, adverse weather and rising energy and input costs, according to Rabobank's annual Agri Commodity Markets Outlook report.

The specialist food and agribusiness bank predicts global prices of key food staples sugar, coffee, corn and soybeans will fall as production has some time to adjust to higher prices, bringing down costs for buyers and in some cases for consumers too.

Despite relief on prices and availability, the bank still predicts demand to remain weak as consumers continue to deal with economic challenges, including high inflation and interest rates. Rabobank expects weak global economic growth in 2024 to limit the growth in agricultural commodity demand.

Uncertainty will also persist in other key agri-commodity markets. Wheat, which the developing world is particularly dependent on, will be subject to weather-related disruptions and potential restrictions on Black Sea exports, despite large volumes being produced and in storage in the region.

Carlos Mera, head of agri commodities at Rabobank, said: "Describing the last three years of global agricultural commodity prices as volatile is an understatement. Producers are still grappling with the after effects of war, adverse weather, high farm input inflation and weak consumer demand, but eyeing 2024 as the return to a semblance of normality."

For wheat, Rabobank expects another deficit in the global market, the fifth in a row. There will be little relief from the southern hemisphere crops in the coming months, with both Argentina underperforming and Australia falling well behind the past three years' very good crops.

RaboResearch Australia & New Zealand general manager Stefan Vogel said Australian wheat receives some price support from drier weather conditions locally – keeping prices on the country's east coast above the US CBOT price, the global benchmark. "In Western Australia, basis levels have also improved compared with last year, but WA prices need to be competitive against the likes of Russia given so much of WA's grain is destined for export markets," he said.

Russia's 2024 harvest will likely stay high at levels above 87 million metric tons, but any expectation today is subject to weather uncertainty and export restrictions, according to the report. Meanwhile, in Ukraine the war will also continue to affect production and exports and will lead to a shrinking exportable surplus.



The report says the South American market is anticipated to return to a healthier production position and bolsters supplies.

Brazilian farmers are expecting to see a record soybean production crop in 2024 as La Niña weather gives way to El Niño. The bank expects a bumper 163 million metric ton crop haul. Argentina, the biggest exporter of soy products, is also expected to recover after last year's harvest failure, boosting global stockpiles, although it will be subject to an uncertain FX policy.

Stefan Vogel said beyond the competition from more soybeans, Australian canola producers will have to look closely at three other major price drivers in 2024.

"Global supplies of canola are likely to recover due to strong Ukrainian plantings and the dry spell in Canada, the world's largest canola exporter, will likely end. El Nino might push palm oil supplies short of expectations and support prices. And lastly, demand for vegetable oils will continue to grow exponentially in 2024 with the US biofuel sector consuming even more" he said.

For over a decade, Rabobank's Outlook report has evaluated the prospects for a basket of agricultural commodities that are crucial to the global economy based on 'base case', 'high case' and 'low case' scenarios. It tracks the prospects for 10 key agri commodities in the following year. It is widely read and followed in the world's agri commodity markets.

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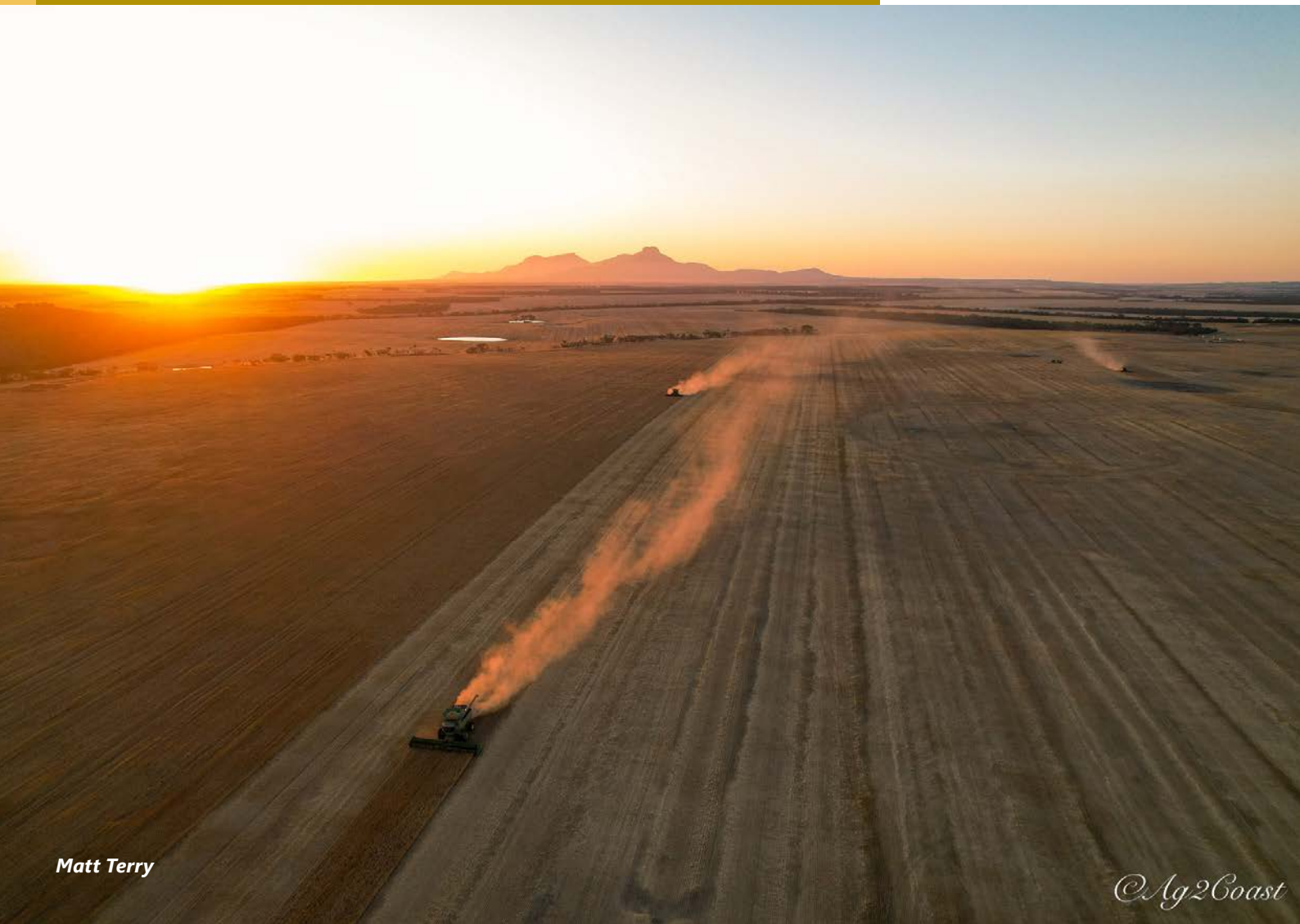
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Community Calendar

23 FEBRUARY 2024 -
CBH AGM, Member Forum & Cocktail Party

23 MARCH 2024 -
Dancing in the Dirt Gala Ball
to find out more head to dancinginthedirt.org