

# LIEBE GROUP NEWS

March 2021

Volume 24

Issue 2



## What's Inside



*Local grower experiences highlighted at Crop Updates*



*Seeing into Soils: Soil moisture probe project*



*Myers Briggs Type Indicator Workshop*



*Seasonal casual employees: What you need to know!*



*The Liebe Group mission is to facilitate grower prioritised research, development and extension to support our members to be profitable and sustainable.*

## From the Cover

Over 80 growers and industry representatives attended the Liebe Groups annual Crop Updates and Trials Review Day.

### DIAMOND PARTNERS



**Rabobank**



## MEMBER NEWS

Growers review trial results from 2020 season	4
Local grower experiences highlighted at Crop Updates	5
Seeing into soils: Soil moisture probe project	7
Introducing the 2021 committees!	8

## EVENTS

Save the Date: Women's Field Day	9
Understanding you farm family dynamics: Myers Briggs Workshop	10

## PARTNER UPDATES

WA farmers invited to fine tune their financial management skills	11
The double knocks: How do we manage it and what new Group G spikes can we add?	13
Seasonal casual employees: What you need to know!	15
Around the traps - North, Central and Southern wheatbelt	17

## NEWS

Read up on golden rules for growing canola	19
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# FROM THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER

KATRINA VENTICINQUE

**WELCOME** to the March Newsletter. With some fantastic rain received over the past few weeks the start of seeding is rapidly approaching!

The conditions didn't deter members from attending the Crop Updates and Trials Review Day on the 10<sup>th</sup> March, with a vibrant crowd of over 80 who helped kick off the 2021 season. The morning session provided members the opportunity to discuss trial results from last year, with the afternoon presentation touching on many relevant and timely topics such as new chemicals and technology. Feedback from the day has been overwhelmingly positive and we hope to continue to deliver all activities to the same standard throughout the upcoming year. See page 5 for the event write up.

The group also held the Annual General Meeting in the morning of the Crop Updates, with Blayn Carlshausen continuing on as president and Brad McIlroy stepping into the Vice-President role. I would like to thank all of the continuing and new committee and sub-committee members, who are central to the ongoing vibrancy of the group.

Liebe Group has been successful in receiving funding through the Australian Governments National Landcare Program Smart Farms Small Grants Round 5. This project will see an integrated soil moisture probe and weather station network set up across 14 farms in the Liebe region. With support from industry specialists and experienced Agtech providers, analysis of the real-time data will provide growers with the opportunity to evaluate and understand the implications of management decisions to gain confidence in future practices. I would like to express thanks to our members who have put their hands up to participate in this project. Check out page 7 for more information.

The Main Trial Site has seen several trials pegged in preparation for seeding. Judy has been out and about soil sampling at all of the demonstration sites that will be part of our trials program. The research catalogue that Liebe is conducting includes lupin establishment, precision seeding efficiencies, profitability of double break pulse rotations, herbicide resistance, precision ag, soil pathogens, wind erosion prevention, optimising pastures, diamondback moths and much more!

We are also looking into the opportunity to develop a comprehensive succession planning program to assist our membership. If you have any feedback in regards to specific aspects that would be of benefit to your farming family, please get in touch with myself or Rebecca Wallis.

Don't forget that the Liebe team are here to help if you have any trial or research ideas you might be thinking about looking into. Get in touch with us to have a quick chat!

All the best for the upcoming seeding and the Liebe team look forward to the season ahead.



## GOLD PARTNERS



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McIntosh & Son

FMC

## GROWERS REVIEW TRIAL RESULTS FROM 2020 SEASON

A series of concurrent sessions to review the results of trials throughout the Liebe Group region was held in Dalwallinu on the morning of the 10<sup>th</sup> March. The annual Trials Review Day provides local farmers, who are members of the Liebe Group, the opportunity to discuss relevant grains R&D results with industry experts and researchers.

The morning featured 15 sessions including National Variety Trials for both cereals and canola, various Liebe Group project sites on legumes, amelioration strategies and farming system demonstrations, as well as several trials focusing on new chemistries on the market.

Expert industry representatives from Adama, Syngenta, FMC, Nutrien, CSBP, Elders, Living Farm, Nutrien Ag, West Midlands Group, WANTFA and DPIRD highlighted how these research activities performed and the implications of the results for local farming enterprises.

Liebe Group Executive Officer Katrina Venticinque said that “fantastic attendance saw all tables at capacity with interactive discussions and conversation floating through the room. Making time to review these trial results alongside researchers and fellow growers is an important step in finishing off the past research season.”



Stephen Pettenon from FMC discussing results from their 2020 trial at the morning's Trials Review Day.



Nathan Craig, West Midlands Group, discussing results of the Double Break trial.



Owen Langley, Syngenta, sharing results of their Reflex herbicide trial.

LOCAL GROWER  
EXPERIENCES  
HIGHLIGHTED AT CROP  
UPDATES

THE Liebe Group hosted their start of season Crop Updates event on Wednesday the 10<sup>th</sup> of March with over 80 attendees participating in the afternoon presentations.

This years' presentations focused on key topics that are of relevance to growers throughout the low to medium rainfall zones of the northern Wheatbelt.

Facilitated by the Liebe Group's Project Officer Chris O'Callaghan, four farmers participated in a panel discussion around their experiences in the Gen Y Paddock Challenge. This project is supported by the Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment, through funding from Australian Government's National Landcare Program Smart Farms Small Grants.



Gen Y Paddock Challenge grower panel, facilitated by Chris O'Callaghan.

Panel participant Casey Shaw from Buntine said that

**“the Crop Updates are a valuable day to cover off on some considerations for the upcoming season. Being a presenter is always rewarding, particularly in a panel environment. Hopefully we were able to share some valuable insights from our trials as part of this project.”**

“I particularly enjoyed the information presented on the new chemistries coming out this year and their fit in our farming systems” said Mr Shaw.



Liebe Group Executive Officer Katrina Venticinque showcasing the projects currently being worked on by the Liebe Group team at the Crop Updates.



## MEMBERS NEWS

David Scholz, Branch Manager at the local Elders Scholz Rural gave insight into the new Mode of Action's (MOA's) available that will provide great benefit for resistance management. The line-up of new chemistries for the 2021 season, following on from several others that were released last year, offer growers greater flexibility for re-seeding, new options for pulse crops, improved and extended weed control and various other benefits to farming businesses in the region.



Bilberry CEO Guillaume Jourdain, (left), and Mullewa grower Andrew Messina presenting experiences with Green on Green spraying.

Following on from the topic of weed management, Bilberry founder and CEO Guillaume Jourdain took the stage with Mullewa grain grower Andrew Messina who is actively utilising green on green spraying technology on his farm. Together they painted a picture of the opportunities that new advances in this technology is bringing to the industry.

The day concluded with a sundowner that was kindly sponsored by AGT, providing attendees the chance to network as well as enjoy some drinks and food.

The Liebe Group thank event partner GRDC for their support of this year's event, valued Diamond partners Rabobank, RSM, CBH Group and CSBP, member volunteers who assisted in the running of the day, as well as the research and industry partners who presented on the day.



GRDC Grower Network Coordinator Julianne Hill providing an update on the activities and focus of the network.



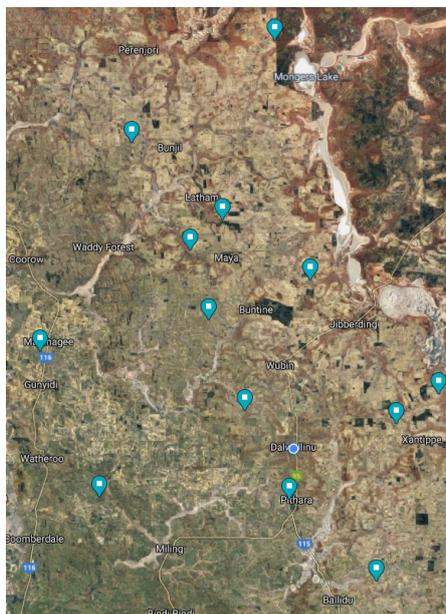
Mike Dodd, Buntine, Andrew Messina, Mullewa, Tim Sippe, Bayer and Tristan Clarke, Elders enjoying the sundowner at the end of the day.

# SEEING INTO SOILS: SOIL MOISTURE PROBE PROJECT

**FARMERS** in the northern wheatbelt are managing increasing climatic risks and are seeking new tools that can improve in-season crop management and planning decisions. Soil moisture probe technology has been utilised extensively in viticulture and horticulture since the mid-1990s, however it has only been within the last ten years that broadacre agriculture has begun to adopt these practices (Wilksch, L. 2016). Alongside recent advances in connectivity and various other capabilities, the implementation of ‘networks’ of moisture probes and weather stations can provide significant insight into the management of natural resources.

The Liebe Group has received funding through the Australian Government’s National Landcare Program Smart Farms Small Grants Program to implement an integrated network of soil moisture probes and weather stations. This project will act as a ‘pilot’ to test the technology in our region and provide an extension platform to engage growers, increase awareness and build knowledge about how this technology could add value to farm businesses.

Fourteen Liebe Group members have signed up to be participate in this project that will see stations set up across the region (See map). Installation will be occurring in the coming weeks with hopes to have the network functional by the end of May.



By evaluating real-time data, farmers can understand the implications of management decisions and gain confidence for future decisions. It can help evaluate resource management practices such as implementing strategic fallow on heavy country, deep ripping, amelioration of non-wetting soils and applying lime. By expanding the understanding and adoption of these technologies within the region, growers will be able to better manage their water-use efficiency for improved productivity, profitability and long-term environmental sustainability.

Soil moisture probe and weather station sites.

Significant data can be captured through these systems including plant and soil available moisture and depth, where plant roots are active, and how much water is available for a crop. Understanding these factors will assist growers to improve their knowledge of crop water use efficiency (WUE) including how different soil types and different crops use available moisture, and the analysis of decisions made at a grower-level.



## INTRODUCING THE 2021 COMMITTEES!



THE 2021 Annual General Meeting was held on Wednesday 10<sup>th</sup> March with the following office bearers elected.

**President:** Blayn Carlshausen

**Vice President:** Brad McIlroy

**Secretary:** Katrina Venticinque (employed Executive Officer)

**Treasurer:** Sophie Carlshausen (employed Finance Manager)

The Liebe Group welcomes all members who have joined the Management Committee and sub-committees (Women's, R&D, Finance and Employment Advisory). We also extend our thanks to those who have stepped down this year for their hard work and dedication to the group over their tenure.

The table below outlines the Liebe Group committee members for 2021.

### Management Committee

Blayn Carlshausen (President)	Michael Dodd
Brad McIlroy (Vice President)	Gavin Carter
Ross Fitzsimons	Wendy Sawyer
Alex Keamy	Rebecca Wallis
Boyd Carter	Katrina Venticinque (Staff)

### Finance Committee

Michael Dodd (Chair)	Wendy Sawyer
Blayn Carlshausen	Georgina Day
Sophie Carlshausen	Katrina Venticinque (Staff)
Ross Fitzsimons	

### Research & Development Committee

Dylan Hirsch (Chair)	Steve Sawyer
Boyd Carter	Rowan McCreery
Rob Nankivell	Daniel Birch
Todd Carter	Carris Waite
Matthew Hyde	Casey Shaw
Helen Lethlean	Ty Henning
Angus McAlpine	Tristan Clarke
Peter Borstel	Lois Kowald
Judith Storer (Staff)	Katrina Venticinque (Staff)

### Women's Committee

Jennifer Birch (Chair)	Narelle Dodd
Georgina Day	Cathy Northover
Tracy McAlpine	Kirsty Carter
Kirra Thompson	Kelly Carter
Rebecca McGregor	Leanne Sawyer
Jane Hyde	Danielle McNamee
Katrina Venticinque (Staff)	Danielle Hipwell (Staff)
Lisa-May Shaw (Staff)	

### Employment Advisory Committee

Blayn Carlshausen	Alex Keamy
Brad McIlroy	Ross Fitzsimons
Wendy Sawyer	Katrina Venticinque (Staff)



Save the Date

*Liebe Group*  
*Women's*  
*Field Day*

Tuesday 15<sup>th</sup> June 2021  
Dalwallinu Recreation Centre

*Mark your calendars for the annual Liebe Group Womens Field Day.  
Further information to follow.*



LIEBE GROUP PRESENTS

# UNDERSTANDING YOUR FARM FAMILY DYNAMICS

MYERS BRIGGS WORKSHOP



UTILISING THE MYERS BRIGGS TYPE INDICATOR TO  
GAIN INSIGHT INTO PERSONALITY TYPES, DECISION  
MAKING AND COMMUNICATION!

The Myers Briggs Type Indicator is the most widely  
used personality assessment in the world!

AgConsulting Co Director Jeanette Long will  
guide participants through various activities to  
understand the impacts of differences in team  
environments and effective communication in  
farming families.

THURSDAY 1<sup>ST</sup> -  
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## WA FARMERS INVITED TO FINE TUNE THEIR FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT SKILLS

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Lisa Curtis  
Assistant Marketing Manager  
Rabobank



**Rabobank**

**PRACTICAL** workshops designed to help provide the financial skills essential to manage a farming operation are being made available to Western Australian primary producers.

Following the success of last year's virtual Financial Skills Workshops – which prior to COVID-19 were held face-to-face – the course will again be conducted online in 2021.

Spearheaded by food and agribusiness banking specialist Rabobank's RaboClientCouncil – a group of the bank's farming clients who volunteer their time implementing programs that contribute to the sustainability of rural communities – the initiative is being offered free of charge to farmers in the state.

The interactive workshops – consisting of two sessions of two hours – will focus on practical financial skills, including the difference between taxation and management accounting, interpreting financial statements and understanding banking requirements.

The incoming chair of Rabobank Western Australia RaboClientCouncil Erin Green, of "Carrawingee Farms" in the Yuna district, said the response to last year's virtual format had been overwhelming, with the workshops having booked out quickly.

"While it's unfortunate we couldn't run the previously-planned face-to-face workshops, due to COVID-19 restrictions, the online option was equally as successful, with people appreciating the opportunity to learn new skills without leaving home," she said.

Ms Green said she hoped producers walked away from the workshops – which are designed specifically for aspiring and current farm owners and managers – feeling positive and inspired to strengthen their businesses.

"This workshop gives farmers an insightful overview of how to run the farm from a business point of view," she said. "As we all know, these days, the business of farming has moved well beyond the paddock gate and it's imperative to understand the financial basics."

Practical and interactive, the workshops give farmers the opportunity to learn from their peers, with discussions around developing a strong farming business, and direct access to banking staff enabling insight into how businesses are assessed.

"The workshops teach participants how to analyse their financials in order to provide a deeper understanding of their business's strengths, weaknesses and overall financial status to ultimately enable more robust decision making for their future," Ms Green said.

## PARTNER UPDATES

Rabobank Western Australia regional manager Steve Kelly said the program content helped put farmers in the driver's seat – assisting them to understand the financial performance of their business, particularly when communicating with their bank and other financial stakeholders.

“This kind of information is real and valuable, and having a greater understanding of your business when approaching your financier really helps when applying for any additional finance requirements or to fund a new venture,” he said

Further contributing to its practical appeal, the workshop content has been tailored to farming businesses in the region through realistic case studies.

“Through these case studies, the sessions will look at what makes up a balance sheet, profit and loss statement and cash flow,” Mr Kelly said, “and then interpreting the financial ratios to make calculated business decisions.

“This then feeds into sessions on how banks assess a loan and the importance of developing a business plan as well as managing the business through adversity and positioning it when the season improves.”

Director of Hudson Facilitation Tony Hudson will present the workshops, along with a number of agribusiness banking professionals.

Funded by RaboClientCouncils, the workshops are open to clients and non-clients of Rabobank and there is no cost for farmers to attend. To register visit <https://www.rabobank.com.au/about-rabobank/client-councils/>

WA workshop details are as follows:

Workshop 06

Thursday, 15 April & Friday, 16 April 2021

9am to 11.30am

For more information on Rabobank's Client Council initiatives, please contact Rabobank Dalwallinu/Moora branch manager Georgina Day on 08 9661 0900.



Rabobank Western Australia regional manager Steve Kelly.

THE DOUBLE KNOCK -  
HOW DO WE MANAGE  
IT & WHAT NEW GROUP  
G SPIKES CAN WE  
ADD?

Tristan Clarke  
Agronomist  
Elders Scholz Rural



**ALTHOUGH** we seldom get the chance to talk about double knock options these days it is shaping up that we may get the opportunity this year, so let's go through a bit of a refresher of how we will go about this. Everyone knows the inherent benefits to a double knock for weed control and managing resistance however sometimes poor execution can result in sub lethal doses that could have the opposite to intended effect.

Starting with the basics, lets go through the timing of applications. Your first spray should always be the Glyphosate option with robust rates used. Even if planning to go back with Paraquat, do not be tempted to go in with lower rates because of the second planned application. Timing of this spray is important as we want to be able to get back within 2-10 days with the second knock to get the optimal effect.

Allowing the plant a couple of days to take up the glyphosate and get it to the growing point where it will get to work is critical before coming back with Paraquat that will brown out the plants and effectively stop any more translocation of the Glyphosate. Using robust rates of Paraquat or Sprayseed is also important and will aid in getting the desired effect on the target weeds.



Example of paraquat struggling to control larger ryegrass plants.

So, what are the options when you want to target those harder-to-kill broadleaf weeds? You have probably heard this plenty enough this year, but Group G's are back in vogue and are proving to be a very useful tool.

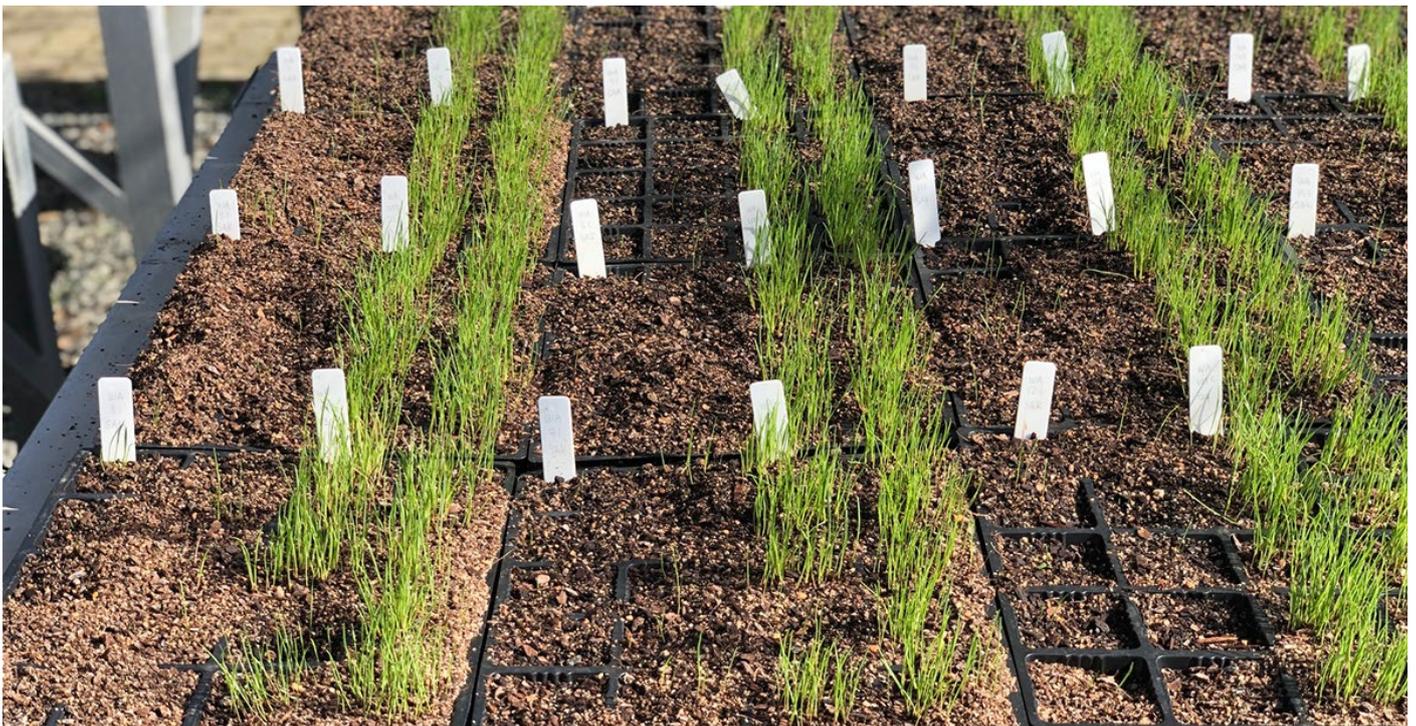
Group G spikes, you may have used them, and I can nearly guarantee you have heard of them by now. The market is currently being flooded with these at the moment so it's important to understand a few key concepts of the new products. Adding a Group G spike into the knockdown mix however is relatively cheap, allows more flexibility to boost your knockdown and we are seeing some group G's now exhibit good activity on grasses too!

## PARTNER UPDATES

So, what's the negatives I hear you say? Well given the activity of most group G's we have some plant back considerations as the main concern. Sharpen has been an outstanding spike when added to a good robust brew and has excellent brownout ability on most broadleaf weeds, however plant backs to canola of 42 days puts it out of the question for a knockdown going into canola. Voraxor, the powerful new mix of Saflufenacil (Sharpen) and Trifludimoxazin, has a 270 day plant back to canola and as such offers good knockdown & residual pre-cereals but should be used with caution if follow crop is uncertain.

Terrad'or (Tiafenacil) the new spike from Nufarm is a good option for growers with label claims of ryegrass control, use rates of between 15-40g/ha has demonstrated excellent brownout of many broadleaf weeds and is a good spike option in the double knock. Terrad'or is also compatible with almost all pre-emergent herbicides and has a very short plant back of only 2 weeks to canola when used above 21g/ha or 1 week when used below 21g/ha. I really believe this will open the door for many growers, especially when using some of the newer pre-emergent herbicides that can be applied up to 7 days pre-seeding. Watch this space this year as we will test these new brews out.

A few last notes for growers around plant backs this year, a friendly reminder that Ester has a 28 day plant back to lupins and as such should be considered if anyone is thinking of some early lupins, Metsulfuron also has a ten day plant back to wheat, and a six week plant back to Barley, this may be worth noting and keeping a good eye on as we approach seeding.



Herbicide resistance testing. Photo: AHRI

## SEASONAL CASUAL EMPLOYEES: WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW!

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**Danielle McNamee**  
Managing Director  
ProcessWorx

**EMPLOYING** around 42,000 local workers, agriculture is one of the biggest industries in Western Australia. Casual employees are essential to the success of farming businesses as more workers are required during key times of the year. However, employment legislation can be difficult to understand and comply with. With seeding approaching it is a good time to consider what is required when hiring seasonal casuals.

### What are casual employees?

A casual employee usually works a non-regular pattern of hours, e.g. seeding or harvest, and is paid for each hour they work including overtime and penalties. Their pay includes a casual loading in lieu of receiving paid leave entitlements.

### How much should I pay casual employees?

Casual employees' pay rates and entitlements are determined by the relevant Award. Awards are business specific and contain position classifications with corresponding pay guides. The Award also details relevant entitlements such as overtime rates, penalty rates and allowances. For broadacre farming, your business could potentially fall under the WA Farm Employees Award (State Legislation) or the Pastoral Award (National Legislation). Knowing which legislation your farm falls under is vital because the pay rates, allowances and conditions for employees are very different.

Farmers often find that Awards can be inflexible and paying individual entitlements, allowances and overtime can make payroll complicated. Due to the amount of overtime casual farm employees can work during the busy periods paying employees at a flat rate for all hours worked makes it much simpler.

It is a common misconception that if you pay casual employees a flat hourly rate above the Award, they don't have to be paid applicable overtime and penalty rates. This is not true. The hourly rate must take into account the overtime and penalty rates that would apply in the award and result in the employee being Better Off Overall.

Under the Pastoral Award, you should use an Individual Flexibility Agreement (IFA) with an Employment Contract to show what entitlements are included in the higher hourly rate. The higher hourly rate must result in the employee being Better Off Overall. This is determined using the Better Off Overall Test (BOOT).

Awards may also dictate the minimum number of hours of work an employee must be paid for on each occasion they attend work, regardless of if the hours are worked or not.

## PARTNER UPDATES

### What does with and without 'Keep' mean?

Keep is a term in the Pastoral Award which refers to an employee who is given good and sufficient living accommodation, rations of sufficient quantity and well-cooked meals served by a Cook. Employees under the Pastoral Award can be paid either 'with keep' or 'without keep' rates. If employees are paid 'with keep' it is expected they are given sufficient quantity meals, cooked by a cook or cook's offsider, as well as accommodation.

### What paperwork is required when employing casuals?

When employing casuals you need to ensure:

- The employee has the right to work in Australia.
- They are issued with a Casual Employment Contract.
- They are given a copy of the Fair Work Information Statement.
- They have an Individual Flexibility Agreement (IFA) if the employee is covered by the Pastoral Award and is being paid an hourly rate high enough to pass the BOOT.
- The employee completes an Employee Details Form to record contact information, next of kin and bank details.
- The employee completes a Superannuation Choice Form and Tax File Number Declaration Form.
- The employee must be provided with a detailed payslip within one day of being paid, including information on the entitlements paid, overtime hours if worked and superannuation.

### Do casual employees get breaks?

As a minimum standard, all employees should receive at least one 30-minute unpaid meal break for every five hours of work. Under the Pastoral award, all work performed on the instruction of the employer during a recognised meal break will be paid at 200% of the ordinary hourly rate. Payment will continue at this rate until the employee is released for a meal break for at least 30 minutes.

### What is a long term casual?

A casual that has worked for a period of at least 12 months on a regular and systematic basis, can be considered a long term casual. For example, a casual farmhand working all year round for 12 months or more.

### What is a casual conversion?

Under the Pastoral Award, a long term casual can request to be converted to a permanent full time or part-time employee. This would involve their employment changing from casual to permanent full time or permanent part-time. It is your responsibility as an employer to raise this option with your long term casuals. As an employer, you can refuse an employee's request to convert if there are reasonable business grounds e.g. operational requirements. Likewise, employees can continue working as a casual if they don't wish to convert. If a casual employee does convert to permanent full time or part-time this should be reflected in their employment contract.

No farm is too small to need Human Resources, it doesn't matter if you have one casual farmhand or 100 employees, it is important you comply with the law. Human Resources is now a way of doing business, rather than a function of the business. At ProcessWorx we have extensive experience working with broadacre farms and are able to tailor our services to your needs.

AROUND THE TRAPS -  
NORTH, CENTRAL  
AND SOUTHERN  
WHEATBELT

Greg Easton  
Management Consultant  
Farmanco  
&  
Rob Sands  
Management Consultant  
Farmanco



**BOTH** northern and southern clients experienced a similar rainfall pattern with above average rainfall in February, followed by below average rainfall until August. This is shown in the Northern and Southern Rainfall charts. (See Figure 1 and 2)

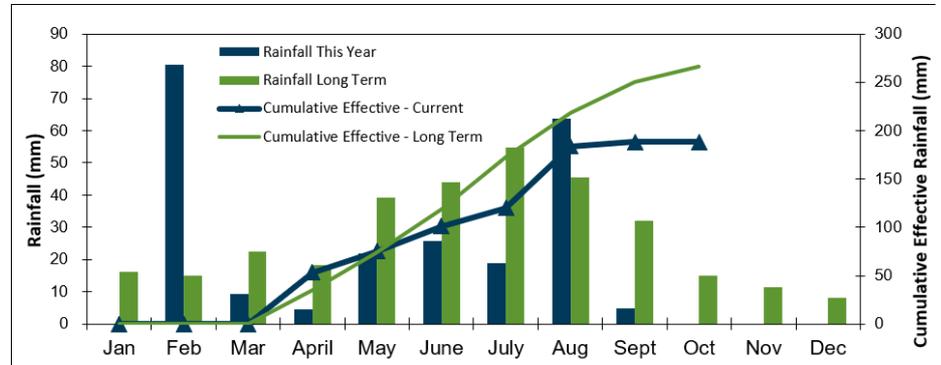


Figure 1: Farmanco Northern Client Rainfall – Dalwallinu, WA

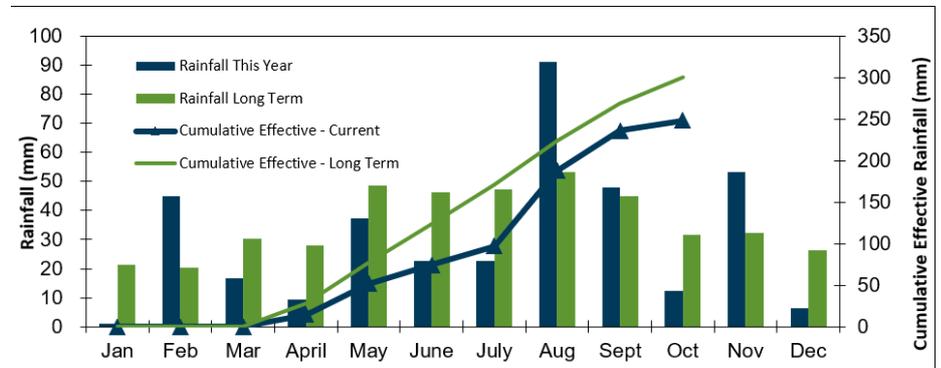


Figure 2: Farmanco Southern Client Rainfall – Ongerup, WA

Those who received above 60mm of summer rainfall and controlled summer weeds would have carried some moisture into the season. The season was difficult with many small rainfall events in the early part of the growing season.

For much of the year, each rainfall event was below 10mm and meant that we were constantly looking for rain to provide more than a two-week buffer, the refrain was “give me a 25mm rainfall event to take the pressure off”.

By July, in the southern regions, stock numbers were reduced, with little summer or winter rainfall meaning dams were nearly empty and although crops looked okay, potential was diminishing with the dry.

August provided most of the state with the large rainfall event that we had been looking for. The rainfall combined with a cooler spring enabled crops to finish well especially in the north where there was very little September rainfall. The result was still below average growing season rainfall for many.

Crop yield for the most part has sat just above average for many, though water use efficiency results are well above average and businesses have tended to generate increased equity from trading with grain prices, often above long-term average.

There has been good canola and lupin yields reported by many and with high prices, these enterprises have often generated profits and for some businesses, all enterprises have been profitable in 2020 and it is amazing how profitable farm businesses are when nearly all the arable area is profitable.

## PARTNER UPDATES

Sheep enterprises for the third year in a row have had higher feed costs with the dreaded false break, with clover germinating in February and dying off before the winter rains arrived. The fall in wool prices also impacted on profitability, but higher sheep prices have buffered the results to a degree.

North or south, land and lease prices have been a topic of discussion with several lease and land purchases occurring in the lead up to harvest. Good properties are changing hands at very high prices and to generate a reasonable return the purchaser needs to be performing above the average business. Like property purchases, leases are also being transacted at very high prices.

It is still important to do your research, lease and land purchases have transacted at high prices, but often when the information is checked, the rumoured price and sometimes the published price is higher than reality.

Maybe some of the exuberance around higher land prices is due to lower interest rates. Interest rates have continued to fall during 2020. Profitable businesses with strong balance sheets are attracting very low interest rates.

There are localised areas where businesses did not receive significant summer rainfall or catchup rainfall in August and many in those specific areas will face a second or even third loss.

Increased equity both from farm operating profits and the land value increases has put many businesses in a very strong position as we start the journey into 2021.

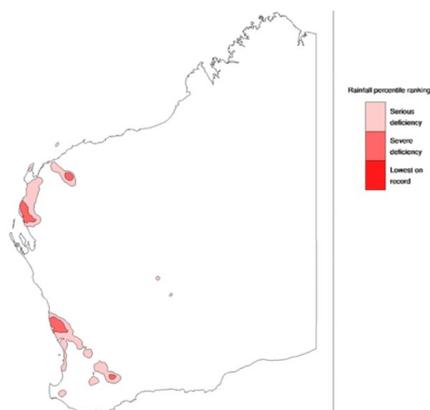
The cropping program at this stage is remaining similar to 2020, with a little more caution around the barley enterprise. Lupin and canola area is remaining the same after many generated profits in 2020. There has been some discussion around oats, both as hay and grain as a replacement for barley.

Plant and machinery upgrades are being discussed especially with the current tax treatment of machinery purchases.

The chart below explains why some clients have had a great year and others have had a poor one. Many clients in the very high rainfall areas in the southwest corner of the wheatbelt have had their best year ever. There are several clients that despite well below average rainfall have produced well above average yields. It would be very remiss of us not to acknowledge the unfortunate fact that a significant number of clients have found themselves in the red stripe shown in rainfall deficiency map in Figure 3.

Many clients in that red stripe had a growing season rainfall total which is less than 50% of the long-term average. For the Medium Rainfall Zone, that translated to 80mm to 110mm and in the High Rainfall Zone, 130mm to 150mm. In these same zones, clients had stored soil moisture levels that ranged from 0mm to 40mm. 20 years ago clients with rainfall at such low levels would have struggled to get their seed back. The advances in dry seeding, soil amelioration, controlled traffic systems, variable rate fertiliser, and a cool finish has seen clients in this zone achieve remarkable yields for such so little rain, particularly where the crops emerged in May and the first week of June.

In this zone Canola has been the worst performer with the very low rainfall events in May and June not providing sufficient moisture to get the canola to germinate, particularly on the medium to heavy soil types.



**Figure 3:** Twelve-month rainfall deficiency for Western Australia (30/1/20-31/12/20) (Source- BOM)

For the remaining crop types, it was on a knife edge whether the soil moisture and small rainfall events were enough to get the crops emerged through this period. The combination of soil type, stubble cover and weed control all decided which side of the knife edge the crop ended up with. Early emerged crops were yielding around 1.0t/ha more than the later emerged crops.

The wicking effect on country that had been deep ripped and had summer rain was enough to get the cereals and lupins up and away early with some spectacular WUE results.

Although many clients in the “Red Stripe” are disappointed, knowing farms within 20km were delivering twice as much grain which can leave you feeling very despondent, you should be proud of the results you have achieved on so little rain and just hope that in the next couple of years that the red stripe becomes a blue stripe of above average rain.

## READ UP ON GOLDEN RULES FOR GROWING CANOLA

Natalie Lee  
Communications Manager  
GRDC

GRDC Media Release  
4th March 2021



**GRAIN** growers in Western Australia's low rainfall zone (LRZ) have access to a new resource to assist them to maximise the potential of canola – an important break crop – in their unique environment.

The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) has released the publication Golden rules for canola in the low-rainfall zone.



'Marwarra' farm manager Tony Murfit, of Merredin, is one of the growers featured in the new GRDC publication Golden rules for canola in the low-rainfall zone. Photo: Jon Kerr, GRDC

GRDC grower relations manager – west, Jo Wheeler, said the resource consolidated research on successfully growing canola in these areas and also contained grower case studies.

“Key agronomic issues addressed in the 30-page booklet include crop establishment, plant nutrition, harvesting, and weed, disease and insect management,” Ms Wheeler said.

“The section on crop establishment covers factors such as paddock selection, variety choice, time of sowing, sowing rate, seed size, seeding depth, row spacing and seed placement.

“Decisions on time of sowing – and whether it is best to sow canola early and dry, or early and after rain – are complex, as establishment depends on environmental conditions.

**“While early sowing has its merits in the LRZ, years of successive dry starts have contributed to large areas requiring resowing due to poor canola establishment.”**

Ms Wheeler said the canola growers featured in the case studies were from eastern areas of WA's Geraldton and Kwinana port zones.

“The case studies detail their insights and approaches to soil amelioration, time of sowing, herbicide packages, seed size, late-season pests and more,” she said.

“A common message from these growers is the need to have a break crop, such as canola, in the rotation as a tool to help grow clean cereal crops.

“Many consider canola their best option in terms of a weed clean-up tool with the potential to also generate a profit.”

Ms Wheeler said that, given recent challenging seasons, a key focus for the growers when interviewed in 2020 was to have flexibility in their cropping programs, so they could adjust them depending on the seasonal conditions.

Golden rules for canola in the low-rainfall zone is designed to be a practical resource. It can be downloaded on the GRDC website and is available as a hard copy through the GRDC’s Perth office. For more information and to receive a copy, telephone 08 9230 4600.

One of the canola growers profiled in the publication, Tony Murfit, of Merredin, is featured in a GRDC video available on the GRDC YouTube channel and in a podcast available on the GRDC website.

Useful information on herbicide options registered for different canola herbicide tolerance systems is available in the Chemical weed control in canola bulletin, produced by the Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development, with co-investment from the GRDC.

Information is also available in the GRDC Paddock Practices article Tips and tools to get the best out of early-sown canola crops, available on the GRDC website.

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# CALENDAR OF EVENTS

## LIEBE GROUP EVENTS 2021

Women's Field Day	Tuesday 15th June	Dalwallinu Recreation Centre
Myers Briggs Personality Type Workshop	Thursday 1st - Friday 2nd July	Liebe Group Office
Post Seeding Field Walk	Wednesday 21st July	Hyde Property, Dalwallinu
Spring Field Day	Thursday 9th September	Hyde Property, Dalwallinu



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