



SEQ RAC Minutes: September 5th 2013 at BPRS Kingaroy.

Attendees: Peter Enkelmann(chair), Colin Clarke, John Kingston, Julian Cross, Pat Harden, Neil Jorgensen, Ian Crosthwaite, Mark Hickman-DAFF nominee, Joe Eyre, John Cutler.

Apologies: Damien Andersen, Greg Birch, David Ford, Peter Howlett, Andrew McDonald, Greg Dunne, Troy Jensen- NCEA-USQ.

Agenda: RCN's Rachaputi would give his presentation later in the morning, before members reports.

Minutes of last meeting: David Ford did not attend and be an apology. He did not attend.

Confirmation of last meeting amended minutes: **accepted by all**

Discussion on minutes: Mark Hickman reported addition staff had been appointed to assist with plant diagnostic services. Matt Davis in Toowoomba now is the contact for SEQ.

GRF/RAC Issues:

Grains Institute Proposal: John Cutler gave a brief summary of progress to date. Mark Hickman would give some further comments in his report. Comment from the meeting was that the concept should continue to be pursued.

GRDC review of RAC's: After a brief introduction there was discussion that SEQ has different needs with a wide coverage area, a wider range of crops and generally smaller farms. The challenge is how best to run and RAC for SEQ. There would be more discussion later.

GUEST SPEAKER

Pulse agronomy - RCN Rachaputi (QAAFI)

RCN leads this extensive project which took 12 months of negotiations to get up. It includes Chickpeas, Faba Beans, Mung Beans, Soybeans, and peanuts. Goal is to increase the proportion of pulse crops in rotations.

Concerns are:

- Declining soil organic matter – reliance on N fertiliser
- Nutrient issues relating to sustainability
- Low use of pulse crop in rotations

Benefits:

- Reduce N fertiliser use
- Could invest more in P & K
- Reduction in soil borne disease
- Positive net N fixation

GRDC has been very prescriptive, these are not variety trials but looking at the interactions of Cultivar x Environment x Management.

RCN stressed the importance of access to international information saying that the project was "rich" in resources and knowledge base.

There is information that chickpeas in narrow rows have higher canopy temperatures resulting in earlier flowering.



Ian Crosthwaite asked about Guar. RCN replied that it doesn't fit with GRDC but there may be scope to get funds from ACIAR or RIRDC.

RCN had asked for funds to include Pigeon Pea. Pulse Australia has put a business case to GRDC. There are new lines available with maturity as quick as 115 days and the possibility of heliothis resistance. Last summer when mung beans were damaged by rain Pigeon Peas were ok. With the prediction that prices may stay high for 5 -10 years a 'proof of concept' to assess potential is needed.

Mark Hickman commented that RCN's project aimed at putting science behind the 'rules of thumb'.

Members Reports

Pat Harden:

- NQ peanuts. 45-50 growers on Atherton. Area could be restricted because of competition between sugar mills. Area reduced last year by water shortage, 1500ha. Corn area lower as local demand reduces with the dairy industry.
- ISIS usually 750ha, 1000ha this year with better weather. Cost of water from Sunwater a real issue if it stays dry. 7000ML available for peanuts. Some canegrowers are growing field peas.
- Burnett – poor crop last year
- Brisbane Valley and Texas area also growing peanuts
- Grower Solution Group in Bundy focusing on nutrition in soy and peanut. K very low but getting no response.
- Ian Crosthwaite questioned the GSG nutritional trials and their level of complexity
- A joint, peanuts soy and GSG meeting was very successful with a good grower response.
- An issue not covered at the moment is spray management with new resistant varieties.

Neil Jorgensen:

- Crops average. Now dry with double cropping areas failing.

John Kingston:

- 540ha soybean last year, yields 3-4t/ha but quality down. Wet weather not much of a worry.

Julian Cross:

- Peanut yields up, quality down
- Similar with corn. Late planting because of lack of rain.
- Wheat now suffering
- Controlled traffic very successful

Colin Clark:

- Dry start for legumes. Most watered up to get established.
- Water costs also a hassle here
- Testing for total and available K. Feedlot manure may provide more K
- **No one looking at soil biology** With manure, soil OM levels 6% ,soil is more alive
- Chemical fertilised soils dead

Peter Enkelmann:

- Still re-levelling ground after flood. Aiming for normal summer crop rotation. Levee banks being made higher around district.



- Cost of power and water an issue, travelling irrigators being used less, hand shift labour too costly.
- Depressed dairy industry, local feed markets reduced, cost of transport now higher. Some farms will be shut down, no resources to recover. Time of reassessment. Advice on flood plain management limited. No Gov't soil conservation resources. QRAA criteria very tight for recovery support. Some viable farmers denied because of equity.

Joe Eyre: (QAAFI plant physiologist)

- Research on inter-cropping showed an increase in gross margin up to 1.8 times in non-water limiting environments. Applications to GRDC for support have not been successful. QAAFI projects seek feedback on areas for future R&D and are looking at:
 - The basic physiology of C3(wheat,barley,oats) and C4(sorghum, maize) crops
 - Cover crop project with CFI –using cover crops to control weeds
 - Maize plant arrangement
 - Whole farm level N cycling
 - Planting time risk for summer crops
 - Physiology of grain crops in no-till - root systems, where nutrients come from.

Discussion:

The practicality of intercropping in current farming systems was questioned. Harvesting, crop quality etc.

Concern was expressed that projects get refused by GRDC without any feedback.

Ian Crosthwaite: (Grower Solutions Group)

- Started July 2012 with nutrition as highest priority
- N in corn: used a range of pre-plant treatments including after peanuts and side-dressing later. No response in wet year – high levels of N prior.
- Trace elements Ca and Bo in peanuts: survey of 30 sites. No current guide as to what levels should be.
- Net blotch in peanuts : Demonstration of value of fungicides. Conclusion – doesn't matter what you use, start early and use regularly. There is good information on new chemicals.
- Project covers 3 areas: South Burnett, ISIS Bundaberg, Nth Coast NSW
- 80 growers attended pre-season meeting but response in terms of issue identification was disappointing.

Mark commented that the CQ GSG road show sought R&D issues, those with 1-3 time frame to be taken up by GSG, those with 3-5 year time frame go to the steering committee which includes GRDC.

Mark Hickman: (DAFF)

- New Mungbean variety, Jade, released. Good seed supplies (Ian C)
- Staff: Steve Walker to be replaced in QAAFI: Mal Ryley to be replaced but will be offered a post retirement fellowship to mentor junior staff: new pulse agronomist for Goondiwindi: new regional development officers for Emerald, Goondiwindi, and Kingaroy(crop protection) : Matt Davis (Toowoomba) will be the contact person for the new plant pest diagnostic service. (DAFF fact sheet accompanies these minutes).
Comment: concern expressed that JBPRS staff levels not being maintained with pending staff retirements. Mark responded that some GRDC funded positions could move back to base funding in 5-7 years with state budget improvement.
- Minister to visit JBPRS on 18th Sept. Rex Williams is preparing program for a grower technology and information day.



- Government Agriculture Strategy:
Govt sees DAFF as an enabler of services not a deliverer of services.
Contestability for funds – outsourcing, partnerships with Universities etc.
Eg. Plant pathology services could be outsourced

RAC Issues

There was further discussion on the future .

Comment - how do growers get their issue to where they want then to go? NGA solutions put their own spin on things. There is still a place for RAC's.

GRDC wanted rep at the meeting to explain their position.

Emergent issues should be discussed at the March meeting. It was asked that the coordinator be able to present on projects underway which relate to the RACm

Meeting Closed at 3.30pm