

**Minutes**  
**Western Downs Maranoa RAC Meeting**  
**Held at the Condamine Hotel, Condamine**  
**On Tuesday 25<sup>th</sup> July 2006**  
**Commencing at 9.30am**

**1. Opening of meeting**

In the absence of the Chairmen to open the meeting, V. French took the chair and declared the meeting opened.

**2. Attendance**

Members: N. Boland, C. Nason, J. Crocker, A. Coleborn, W. Barkle, D. Hemming, V. French, P. Banks, A. Borrell, J. Kingston.  
Nominees: R. Williams (DPI&F deputy), M. Dieters (UQ), L. McIntyre (CSIRO), D. Freebairn (GRDC) D. Scanlan (GRF)  
Acting Coordinator: J. Obst  
Guests: Dr P. Collins DPI&F, P. Mailler.

**3. Apologies**

Apologies were received from G Platz and D Poulsen

**Accepted**

**4. Changed RAC Coordination Arrangement**

J Obst advised that the GRF was currently in negotiations with Agforce Grains and GRDC to replace J. Twyford as Northern Region RAC Coordinator for the remaining term ending 30/06/08. J Twyford has previously indicated his desire to retire from the position he has held for 10 years.

**5. Confirmation of Minutes ( Meeting held 14<sup>th</sup> Mar 2006)**

**Moved** V. French      **Seconded** A. Coleborn

**Carried**

**6. Election of Chairman for following 12 months**

It was agreed that N. Boland continue as Chairman until the July 2007 meeting.

**7. Business from the Minutes ( not covered elsewhere on agenda)**

There was no business from the minutes.

**8. Correspondence & Business**

8.1 Inwards

8.2 Outwards: Letter of appreciation to S Tidswell GRDC

There was no business from the correspondence.

**9. Seasonal / Crop Report**

Following are some of the key points from member's reports:

- Winter crop suffering from lack of rain in most western downs areas
- Growers looking for early summer crop planting rains.
- Fleabane is an ongoing weed problem.
- Wheat production increasing in the far south west. Approx 90% planted
- Crown Rot and Stripe Rust remain major concerns for growers
- Growers need a good short season variety suitable for late planting such as Hartog was.
- Growers need to develop rotations for soil borne disease control
- Interest in sorghum and barley in far south west.
- Canola tried in SW but gross margins not attractive
- Kennedy falling no...no worse than Hartog.
- Falling no. appears worse in short season varieties.

- Weathering resistance is one of the most difficult traits to breed for.
- Sunlin appears better for weathering if Black Point can be handled.
- Dry planting has not been very successful
- Growers need prospects of good follow-up rains before applying fertilizers due to increasing costs.
- Chick peas now appear to be less popular than in early 2000's.
- Zero till has given growers a good start but there still have been 'desperation' plantings.
- Seed vigor is a major issue and an important factor with deep plantings.
- Do we know what are the trade offs between late planted wheat and early planted sorghum.
- Often forage production is a better option than grain production.
- Mung beans are an excellent opportunity crop in summer.
- Sorghum hard to spray out when under moisture stress.
- Continuing swing away from grain to grass and forage in regions.
- Prospects of wheat lines that will emerge from 6 inch planting depth.
- Planting is controlled by equipment and this is limiting opportunities for many growers.

**10. PIPn 2006 (recently sent out by Jack Twyford)**

This paper was noted

**11. Report on RAC Chairmen / GRDC N Panel & Board meetings**

The Chairman said that he along with the Chairmen of the other 7 northern region RACs met with the N Panel & Board of GRDC in Brisbane on 7/ 8<sup>th</sup> June 2006. This annual N Panel GRDC meeting provides an excellent opportunity to discuss RAC priorities with the GRDC. Issues discussed included:

- Labor shortage and the need for greater labor saving devices.
- Grower support for developing a domestic bio-fuel industry. (The Coordinator was asked to enquire of GRDC if the ethanol study commissioned by GRDC was a public report).
- Information transfer to growers a major issue.

**12. Crop production profile for WDM Region :**

The Coordinator said that in order for the RAC to prioritise issues with a high level of confidence he felt it necessary to rank the individual crops grown on the Western Downs Maranoa in the order of importance that growers place on them. This ranking could be best determined by taking a regional view across several seasons. The ranking would be incorrect if determined on the current drought season only. Members were invited to complete the form from which an average would then be taken. This ranking of importance would be further discussed at the next meeting and following any amendments would be used as a broad guide to determining priority RDE issues for 2006-07. The following is the average of the individual rankings.

Crop	Winter Crop				Summer Crop						Total	
	Wheat			Barley	Chick Pea	Sorghum	Maize	Sunflower	Mung Bean	Soybean		Millet
	M	D	F									
DPI&F guide				11	4	3	0	1	1	0	0	100%
Current RAC Est	46.5	0.5	13.5	5.5	8	19.5	0.5	0.5	3	0	2.5	100%
Y 2011-2016	60.5											

**For Wheat M = Milling D = Durum F = Feed**

**13. Brief discussion on macro-factors which will / could influence future crop production in WDM region.**

The Coordinator said that research providers and funders were looking for guidance from the RACs as to the future direction of the grain industry. With continuing pressure on the availability of funds for RDE investment in the Northern region it was important to invest for future needs and opportunities rather than solving yesterday's problems. The list of macro factors provided by the Coordinator was noted (attached).

**14. Stored Grain Insect Control (SGIC):**

Dr P Collins Senior Entomologist DPI&F addressed the meeting on the current RDE program for stored grain insect control. Some of the key points mentioned were as follows:

- 3 scientists and 3 extension officers in northern program
- Lessening support for the funding of the Stored Grain Research Lab at CSIRO Canberra.
- An application to locate stored grain research within Plant Bio-Security CRC.
- Phosphine is cheap and easy to use with nil chemical residue.
- There is stored grain insect resistance to phosphine.
- Stored grain hygiene particularly on farm is a major issue
- There is a national working party on SGIC but no grower representative. (GRDC is represented)
- Dr Collins is responsible for resistance management in the northern region.
- GRDC invests \$800K annually in SGIC
- The BHCs have been investing around \$1.2 M annually with CSIRO
- Cool grain takes longer to kill insects using Phosphine.
- Phosphine diffuses slowly from top to bottom of grain bin.
- Expertise in WA for sealing silos.
- Phosphine resistant insects can be controlled in 'sealed silos'.
- Better SGIC results using Phosphine in silos <100 tonnes.
- SGI monitoring best done from bottom of silo. Furthest point from phosphine application.
- SGIs infest in the field, machinery, storage and surrounds.
- Stored grain temperature <15 C will eliminate SGIs
- When SGIs are detected there is already reasonable infestation.
- The Northern Aust grain region is more exposed than south and west Aust due to higher humidity in summer.
- SGRL main focus has been on BHC requirements.
- Extension is a long term program.
- There is not a national program for the replacement of Phosphine.
- Most markets want chemical residue free grain products.

**15. Pathway to Prosperity: Busting Sorghums Yield Barrier: Discussion on Paper by Prof Graeme Hammer:**

Committee members A Coleborn and A Borrell presented their thoughts on this paper. Following general discussion there was consensus that the paper's proposal to focus on a GxMxE approach to improving sorghum production had merit. It was agreed that in the WDM region growers were more interested in increasing minimum yields rather than focusing on maximum yields. All too often crops get a good start only to fail post flowering.

**16. EFS Project- Salinity:**

V. French reported to the meeting on the Eastern Farming Systems Project.

**17. Feed Wheat Breeding:**

Dr Rex Williams addressed the meeting on DPI&F's new feed grain breeding initiatives. The following are some key points presented:

- The barley breeding program has been refocused with an 80% focus on breeding for the feed grain market.
- An additional wheat breeder (Dr Rex Williams) has been appointed to the wheat breeding program at Leslie Research Centre. This program will now have an objective of breeding wheat varieties for the feed grain market.
- All released wheat varieties (milling & feed) must have a minimum level of disease resistance.
- Wheat for ethanol has been written into the job description.
- The feed wheat breeding initiative does not include dual purpose or forage wheats.
- Internationally breeders are achieving on average a 1% per annum yield increase.
- Dr P Banks reported that 5 new wheat lines were being bulked up (1 milling and 4 non milling). One line has a possible 10% yield increase.
- Dr Borrell also reported that Dr Bob Henzell Senior Sorghum Breeder with DPI&F was retiring and Dr David Jordan will take responsibility for the sorghum improvement program located at Hermitage Research Station.
- Dr Borrell said that he would take on a leadership role at HRS with the retirement of Dr Henzell.
- There is still a requirement for 300000 tonnes of milling wheat in Queensland annually.

**18. Reports by RAC Nominees:**

GRDC: D Freebairn;

- Dr Freebairn explained GRDC operations for determining the RDE investment portfolio.
- Projects are scored on potential importance and industry impact.
- The qualities of the applicant and the application are assessed.
- Availability of money available to the Northern Panel for annual investment.
- PIPn is considered to identify new priority issues.
- Queensland scientific capacity is excellent.
- RACs are considered to be part of the intelligence network
- Availability of funds determines the extent to which new initiatives are invested in.

CSIRO: L McIntyre

- Plant Industries Div is largest division in CSIRO
- 70% PI budget is allocated to wheat research.
- PI's charter is in pre-breeding research focusing on traits for adaptation, drought, disease, coleoptile length and quality to fit farming systems.

UQ: M Dieters;

- Working on speed breeding for wheat
- Have achieved "seed to seed" in 10 to 12 weeks.
- This could provide 4 to 5 generations per year or 9 generations in 2 years.

- Controlled Environment Chambers are being installed at the Leslie Research Centre.
- Still need 3 to 4 years of field testing of lines.

GRF: J. Obst

- The meeting was referred to the notes on GRF attached to the agenda

**19.**

### **General Business**

IDA Report: D. Scanlan reported on his recent study tour of Brazil (ethanol) CIMMYT Mexico (wheat breeding) and Texas A&M USA. This study tour was supported by GRDC and GRF. Following are some key points made by Mr. Scanlan.

- If we are to produce ethanol it will be largely from sorghum and wheat and not from sugar cane.
- CIMMYT breeds wheat for some of the harshest climates.
- Possible to increase yields for the tougher environments.
- Texas A&M has a major focus on sorghum.
- US sorghum production continues to diminish.
- Australian sorghum industry getting major spin-off benefits from the Texas A&M sorghum research program (grain and forage).
- Ethanol mill development is expanding rapidly in US.
- There is some thought that Australia should go down the path of biomass for ethanol production however focus should remain on processing grain in Australia and making grain production more viable. Value adding in regional Australia should be a target. Additionally Australia needs to develop an additional domestic market for grain and not put all risk into the animal feed market.
- Overseas study tours for grain growers (RAC members) to CIMMYT and Texas A&M would be rewarding.

**20.**

### **Date and Venue of Next Meeting**

Agreed that the next meeting be on 21<sup>st</sup> February 2007 at the Moonie Services Club.

**21.**

### **Meeting Closure**

Meeting closed at 3.30pm.

## *Some Future Opportunities and Threats*

Not only is the role on the RAC to identify and prioritise current issues affecting profitable and sustainability grain production but they are also encouraged to consider the future and aim to identify emerging issues. With continual downward pressure on available funds for research investment, the challenge is to invest in areas of research that will deliver the greatest future returns. There is little use in solving yesterday's problems.

The following are some of the factors (opportunities and threats) which will / could have a significant effect and substantially change the shape of the northern grains industry. No doubt any one of these change will bring forward a new set of production problems. The challenge is to predict and invest in research to minimize any negative impacts.

1	Climate Change	Hotter & Drier and more CO <sub>2</sub>
2	Future Markets	Feed Grains and biofuels Organics, International competition
3	Community Expectations Environmental Requirements, OHS	BMP & EMP, Food Safety
4	Precision Ag , Mechanisation	Shortage of farm labour, higher N costs
5	Greenhouse	Carbon Sequestration, Trading Carbon Credits
6	GM approach to crop improvement	No moratorium in Queensland
7	Supply / Price Fossil Fuels	Forecast increase in farm fuel costs, bio-fuels, natural gas
8	Biological approach to farming	Managing soil health
9	Research capacity and capability	Downturn in university agri science students