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GGA NewsWire - February 2015

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Dear <<First Name>> <<Last Name>>

Across the GGA Desk

Someone in your office missing out on this great newsletter? Then get them to [subscribe](#) to the *GGA NewsWire* - Grower groups. Researchers. Industry. All the news. One email.

Welcome to the first *NewsWire* of 2015!

2015 promises to be an exciting year at the Grower Group Alliance, with new staff members joining the team, regional meetings with media training in February, an executive officer tour in June, Annual Forum in August, new group resources and much much more!

February kicks off the silly season, with the GRDC/DAFWA Agribusiness Crop Updates, followed by all the grower group regional events in March to update you on 2014 trial results and help you plan for the upcoming season (which we have our fingers crossed for a good one!).

At the GGA we are also looking at better ways to communicate opportunities to our grower groups, and how to better engage the private sector in our network. As always, the GGA is just a phone call away; for any support on collaboration, developing projects, planning, group operations and more. Your needs drive our activities, so keep us informed!

GGA News

GGA Regional Meetings

It's that time of year again - the 2015 GGA Regional Meetings!

The premier activity for local grower groups to get to know their neighbours and share experiences and ideas, the GGA Regional Meetings will take place during February and March.

This round of meetings will also include media training workshops that will focus on how groups can benefit from a changing media landscape as well some of the more traditional skills like interview techniques and how to write an effective press release.

Aside from the workshop the Regional Meetings are an excellent opportunity for groups to reflect on 2014 and set goals for the upcoming 2015 season.

The meeting dates and locations are as follows:

- Katanning, (DAFWA Conference Room), Friday 13th February
- Merredin, (DAFWA Board Room), Monday 16th February
- Dongara, (Irwin Rec Centre), Thursday 19th February
- Lake King, (Pavilion Supper Room), Monday 23rd March

For more information or to confirm your attendance contact Tom Lamond, T: 6180 5759, E: tlamond@gga.org.au.

Mark McKeon Hits the Road for the GGA

Mark McKeon will be touring the state in GGA's 'Biannual Speaker' series sponsored by Partners in Grain (PinG), speaking at seven regional events, about the importance of developing and maintaining a good work-life balance.

Mark runs his own business that provides conference, training and coaching services to organisations across the globe, all whilst only working 30 hours a week and taking 10 weeks of holiday a year. Mark's keynote presentation was one of the highlights at the 2014 GGA Annual Forum.

Mark will be presenting at the following locations:

- Tuesday 10th March: West Midlands Group's Crop Updates in Badgingarra
- Wednesday 11th March: Mingenew Irwin Group in Mingenew
- Thursday 12th March: NEFF & Mullewa Dryland Farming Group Crop Updates in Mullewa
- Friday 13th of March: Bendigo Bank, Geraldton
- Monday 16th of March: AWE Group, Merredin
- Tuesday 17th of March: Holt Rock Group: Hyden
- Thursday 19th of March: Stirlings to Coast Farmers Crop Updates, Albany
- Friday 20th of March: SEPWA Harvest Review, Esperance

If you are interested in attending one of these event or want to know more, contact your local grower group or Tom Lamond, T: 6180 5759, E: tlamond@gga.org.au.

Lamond Joins the GGA

Tom Lamond, a recent Murdoch graduate, is stepping in to the Project Officer role at the GGA. Having worked on both the policy and research sides of the industry Tom has a good understanding of the unique challenges that are facing growers in WA and the pivotal role that grower groups play in connecting growers with new ideas and technologies.

Tom's main focus will be maintaining GGA's various communications such as; the website, monthly mail-outs, the fortnightly calendar and social media, as well as providing communications and extension support to groups.

For more information [click here](#) or contact Tom Lamond, T:6180 5759, E: tlamond@gga.org.au,

Groups successfully secure funding!

COGGO:

The Council of Grain Growers Organisation (COGGO) grants, aimed addressing research gaps in

the Western Australian grains industry, provide funding to projects that may not be eligible for GRDC or other traditional sources of funding. Congratulations to the groups that were successful in the last round of funding;

- The Fitzgerald Biosphere Group - *Frost management options to increase wheat grain quality and yield and how these strategies impact on soil erosion along the south coast of WA, with funding of \$41,400*
- The West Midlands Group - *Using farmer strips and electronic sensors to diagnose crop growth limitations, with funding of \$49,220*
- South East Premium Wheat Growers Association (SEPWA) - *Farm scale Wi-Fi - the future of data for WA grain farmers, with funding of \$37,23, and*
- North East Farming Futures Group - *On farm pH adjustment trials in Zone 2, with funding of \$50,000.*

[Click here](#) for more information about other COGGO projects or contact Chris Wilkins, T: 0427 940 925, E: cwilkins@synergyco.com.au.

National Landcare:

National Landcare Grants support the development of sustainable land management practice that aim to deliver long term benefits to the community and the environment.

- **West Midlands Group** - 'Engaging Our Community to Improve Soil Health in the West Midlands' project. We will host two Seasonal Updates; 2015 and 2016 focusing on variable rate technology and controlled traffic farming. The project will also work with Precision Ag Australia, farmers, agronomists and DAFWA to conduct biomass imagery mapping and take soil samples to produce a case study.
- **Nyabing FIG** - 'Soil Acidity Project - Liquid Calcium Compared to Limesand'. This project will address the critical issue of soil acidity. The aim is to demonstrate a short term solution of applying liquid calcium which may alleviate growers seeking to cultivate their paddocks as compared to the longer term efficiency of broadcast lime. Further monitoring, after the initial establishment in 2014, will identify the subsequent benefits of treatments applied.
- **North Stirlings Pallinup Natural Resources Group** - 'Improving Soil Health of Sandy Duplex Soils'. This project will implement best practice management of sandy duplex soils to improve soil health, thus maintaining biodiversity through improved plant growth, ground cover and hydrological function.
- **Mingenew Irwin Group** - 'Anameka Saltbush Trial'. This project will protect ecosystem services through sustainable management of local landscape. It will increase the number of farmers adopting the practice and increase community participation in natural resource management.

For more information about National Landcare Grants [click here](#).

Online Farm Trials Database

On Tuesday 27 January the GGA hosted Rob Milne, Cam Nicholson and Xenon Ellis from Federation University's Centre for eResearch and Digital Innovation to give an overview of the GRDC funded Online Farm Trials (OFT) project.

Groups were invited along, with representatives from the Facey and West Midlands Groups in attendance.

The project, whilst still in its pilot phase, aims to provide grower groups with an online resource where they can store and analyse current and historical trial data. The website also allows grower groups to upload trial data in a spread sheet format that will then be automatically analysed and presented in a way that growers and advisers can use to gain a quick overview of a wide range of trial results.

One other powerful feature of the system is that it provides a highly searchable library of trial results from across the country. Groups can also stipulate who can access their data through utilising a members only style of access system.

For more information visit the [OFT website](#), or contact Rob Milne T: 03 5327 9488
E: r.milne@federation.edu.au

Strengthening the performance of farming system groups

A recent grower group study by researchers at the University of Western Australia, published in the *International Journal of Sustainable Development and Ecology*, has found that locally based grower groups are highly effective at engaging members and more readily serve their members specific information needs.

The study includes case studies on Mingenew-Irwin Group, WANTFA and SEPWA, and looks at the Communities of Practice framework to understand their role and effectiveness in addressing information needs of growers.

To access the full study [click here](#).

General News

Grow your knowledge of soils this summer

Farmers planning the management of soil organic matter over summer for the 2015 growing season are encouraged to refer to a practical guide published by the DAFWA.

'Managing Soil Organic Matter: A Practical Guide', funded by GRDC and a DAFF Action on the Ground project, was developed to support the profitability and sustainability of the State's broadacre cropping and pasture-based farms.

Growers can use information provided in the guide to better manage particular paddocks and understand how soil carbon influences nutrient cycling and soil properties.

For information [click here](#), or contact Liam Ryan, T: 9690 2081, E: liam.ryan@agric.wa.gov.au.

NVT Online

Grain growers making decisions about what crop varieties to grow in 2015 can obtain new, independent information by visiting the National Variety Trials (NVT) website.

NVT is a national program, supported by the GRDC, which conducts comparative crop variety testing using standardised methods for trial management and data generation, collection and dissemination

For more information [click here](#). Follow NVT on Twitter at [@NVT_Online](#).

GRDC 2013-14 Growers Report

GRDC's 2013-2014 Growers Report is now available, with one of the highlights of the report being how GRDC is responding high priority issues through the Regional Cropping Solutions Network Program (RCSN). Some of the areas prioritised through this process have been; weed management, frost and the development of decision support tools for growers.

The full report can be viewed [here](#).

Changes to the Oats2 Segregation

As part of CBH's Oats rationalisation process undertaken in 2013 a number of oat varieties will no longer be accepted in to the CBH system.

The Grains Industry Association of WA (GIWA) is urging grower to make sure they check Oats 2 segregation specification when planning for the 2015 season. For more information [click here](#).

Start Planning Now for Next Years Pastures

One of the key messages to come out of the third phase of GRDC's Grain and Graze project is to start planning pastures early, to ensure that growers have enough winter feed to maximise lamb weights, and capitalise on current lamb prices. Pasture planning should be

considered in a similar light to a crop, to get the most out of the rotation.

For more information [click here](#), or contact Danielle England, T: 9881 5431, E: danielle@aginnovate.com.au.

Nominations for the 100+ Plus Club are Now Open

DAFWA is seeking growers who have recorded an on farm lamb marking average of over 100% for the 2014 season to nominate for the 100+ club.

The club was founded with the vision of increasing WA's sheep heard, bringing numbers back to a more sustainable level and to provide growers with a networking and training opportunities.

To nominate for the 100+ Club [click here](#), or for more information contact Katherine Davies T: 9690 2169, E: katherine.davies@agric.wa.gov.au.

New DAFWA Executive Team Announced

As part of its ongoing restructure the DAFWA have announced its new team of Executive Directors. For the full executive appointment and the Media Statement [click here](#).

Smartphone Apps for Smart Farmers - Updated!

South Australia's Ag Ex Alliance has launched the second version of their Smartphone Apps for Smart Farmers resource. [Click here](#) to view.

Soil and Landscape Grid of Australia

The Soil and Landscape Grid of Australia builds on a vast range of field samples, observations and mapping data gathered from land surveys and assessments over the past five decades.

This online tool enables growers to access a wide range of geographically relevant soil data drawn from a wide range of current and historical data and provides another way for growers to better understand the specific soil attributes of their farm.

[Click here](#) to access the tool.

Workshop Opportunities

Regional Crop Updates

DATE	EVENT	LOCATION	CONTACT
17 Feb	Liebe Group Trials Review Day	Dalwallinu	Sarah Tholstrup, 9661 0570 sarah@liebegroup.org.au
24 - 25 Feb	GRDC & DAFWA Agribusiness Crop Updates	Perth	Shai Dunbar, 6262 2128 sdunbar@giwa.org.au
3 Mar	WANTFA Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Cunderdin	Lauren Celenza, 0419 908 793 lauren.celenza@wantfa.com.au
4 Mar	Liebe Group Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Dalwallinu	Sarah Tholstrup, 9661 0570 sarah@liebegroup.org.au
	Far East Agricultural Research Group (FEAR) Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Moorine Rock	Brad Auld, 0400138346 auld14@westnet.com.au
5 Mar	Facey Group Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Wickepin	Brownwyn Dew, 9888 1223

	Mingenew-Irwin Group Crop Updates	Minengew	Sheila Charlesworth, 9928 1645 sheila@mig.org.au
	North Mallee Farm Improvement Group Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Salmon Gums	Andrew Longmire, stonyfell@bigpond.com
10 Mar	West Midlands Group Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Badgingarra	Anne Wilkins, 9651 4008 anne@wmgroup.org.au
11 Mar	Southern DIRT Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Kojonup	Pip Crook, 9831 1074 eo@southerndirt.com.au
12 Mar	North East Farming Futures Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Mullewa	Jenny Thomas, 0467 640 722 innovation@neffgroup.com.au
	Corrigin Farm Improvement Group Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Corrigin	Alison Lacey, 9881 0232 alison.lacey@agric.wa.gov.au
17 Mar	RAIN Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Ravensthorpe	Elisa Spengler, 9383 1018 rainoffice@westnet.com.au
18 Mar	Fitzgerald Biosphere Group Crop Updates	Jerramungup	Karryn Dorrell, 9835 1127 karryn@fbg.org.au
19 Mar	Stirlings to Coast Farmers Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Green Range	Heather Adams, 9854 1051 heatheradams.ohcg@bigpond.com
20 Mar	SEPWA Harvest Review	Esperance	Niki Curtis, 9083 1125 eo@sepwa.org.au
25 Mar	Lakes Grower Group Crop Updates: Supported by GRDC & DAFWA	Lake King	Elisa Spengler, 9383 1018 rainoffice@westnet.com.au

Response's Needed

The GGA is currently working with researchers from the SAGI group (Statistics for the Australian Grains Industry) who are seeking to better understand grower groups in WA, with a particular focus on how groups conduct their research and demonstration trial programs. More specifically they are seeking data around the number of projects/research trials groups conduct in a replicated plot trial format compared to the number of trials that are conducted on a farmer scale format (using farmer machinery).

The information we are seeking is figures around the number and nature of trials conducted by WA grower groups. The individual group information can be kept confidential if required, with the GGA just providing a sum and average to the SAGI group from our network. The questions we are asking are below;

1. How many trials did your group conduct in 2014 (including both individual and partnered projects)?
2. How many farmer scale trials did

Scaddan Soils Masterclass

Esperance Port Zone GRDC Regional Cropping Network (RCSN) in collaboration with SEPWA and DAFWA's Soil Compaction Project are hosting a Soils Master Class in Scaddan Thursday 12 February.

There will be an opportunity to engage with five soil experts in a series of Q&A sessions and see their theories in action at various in paddock sites, as well as have one on one consultations with the experts about establishing a controlled traffic system that works for you.

For more information and to register [click here](#), or contact Julianne Hill, T: 0447 261 607 E: regionalcroppingsolutions@gmail.com

Partners in Grain (PinG) Being a Better Boss Workshops

PinG is offering a series of interactive workshops throughout the wheatbelt in February on the specific industrial relations obligations of farm business's.

These workshops are presented by an

- your conduct in 2014?
3. How many are replicated plot trials did your conduct in 2014? Are these done by a contactor (DAFWA, Kaylx, Eurofins etc)?
 4. What trial format is most effective for engaging members?
 5. What was the estimated investment value of your groups trial program in 2014?

Email your responses to Rebecca Wallis,
T: 6180 5759, E: rwallis@gga.org.au.

Industrial Relations professional who has a wide range of experience in the legalities of employing farm labor.

The workshops cover areas such as; The Western Australian & National award system, record keeping, hiring from overseas and minimum employment standards.

To book a workshop [click here](#) or contact, Erin Green, T:0429 108 936, E: wa@partneringrain.org.au.

Funding Opportunities

[-Department of Local Government and Communities - Grants For Women](#)

Grants of up to \$5000 are available to community organisations to develop projects that encourage women's economic independence or help develop leadership skills. Applications close on Thursday 12 March.

[-GRDC Industry Development Awards](#)

GRDC is currently revamping its Industry Development Awards Program. GRDC will be inviting applications when the revamp is complete, which will include; selection criteria, closing dates, reporting and payment details. More information available on the [GRDC Website](#).

Grower Group Spotlight

SEPWA To Develop Regional Communications Systems

SEPWA is set to take digital farming to the next level, with COGGO awarding a \$37,000 grant to fund their 'Farm Scale WiFi Project'.

The project aims to address the issue of intermittent and some times no existent mobile and data coverage on many farms in regional Western Australia.

According to SEPWA project officer Nigel Metz, rural and remote farm business will struggle to operate at their full potential if they don't have access to quick and reliable data connections.

"Having a good data connection is not only critical for running advanced farm management applications but also for the basic day-to-day tasks of running a business such as paying bills and submitting quarterly BAS statements" said Metz.

The project whilst in its initial stages will be focusing on investigating the different infrastructure options that are available and then developing a system that will work best in rural Western Australia.

Metz says that "At this stage we are investigating how to integrate the existing fiber optic networks in regional centers with a wireless based system to give the coverage and speed growers require."

According to Metz "the biggest challenge so far has been attracting people with the right expertise to regional areas to help with the more technical aspects of the project."

It is SEPWA's hope that they will be able to integrate their system with the State Governments

Royalties for Regions funded Regional Mobile Communications Project (RMCP) which subsidises the construction of communications towers in identified blackspots.

The project will also investigate an entirely new business model around how communications infrastructure is delivered, by encouraging individual growers to invest in aspects of localised infrastructure if they wish to have blanket on farm coverage.

Metz believes that if successful, a project such as this has the potential to revolutionise agriculture throughout the state, by allowing grower to access powerful web-based applications where and when they need it.

For more information contact Nigel Metz, T: 9083 1115, E: nigel@sepwa.org.au.

Calendar of Events

To view the full GGA Calendar of Events click [here](#), or subscribe to the fortnightly email click [here](#).

To view the full Grower Group Alliance Calendar of Events, please go to the [GGA Website](#)

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Bentley DC, WA, 6983
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