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Media Release

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Putting 140 years of growing grain legumes on the map

A cohort of Grain Legume growers located from Yuna to Esperance is now sharing insights and challenges through GGA's (Grower Group Alliance's) new ['Legume Leaders' initiative](#) as part of the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) investment into ['Closing the Economic Yield Gap of Grain Legumes in WA'](#).

The initiative is part of a larger holistic project combining extension tools, trials, and technical and economic analysis to support growers to access the benefits of legumes in crop rotations and position growers to intersect the market as demand emerges.

This extension tool aids the collaborative efforts of GGA and GRDC with the government, agribusiness, researchers, grower groups, and growers in addressing the low adoption of grain legumes in WA farming systems.

To date, growers, Jason and Nicole Batten (Yuna), Stuart McAlpine (Buntine), Ed Naisbitt (Lake Grace), Peter Daw (Ravensthorpe), and Greg Curnow (Cascade) share a collective 140 years of grain legume growing experience between them.

GGA's Project Manager, Daniel Kidd said the Legume Leaders had shown that grain legumes can be a profitable, and in some instances necessary, part of the rotation.

"Being able to demonstrate tried and tested practices among other growers is key to adoption," Mr Kidd said.

"Through trial and error, these legume leaders have developed their grain legume agronomy over many years and are a valuable knowledge resource for new growers."

Mr Kidd also said capturing knowledge across grain legume species was another key aspect of the Legume Leader resource.

"The 140 years of collective experience is valuable not just from a legacy perspective, but also due to geographical spread, and the cumulative knowledge these growers share across the grain legume species grown in WA," he said.

Jason and Nicole Batten in Yuna have 30 years of experience working with either vetch or lupins in their crop rotation.

Farm partner and Yuna Farm Improvement Group Executive Officer Nicole Batten said the group continued to support grain legume research despite the challenges.

"Though they can be challenging, legumes play a vital role in farming systems here in the north," she said.

Ed Naisbitt in Lake Grace and Stuart McAlpine in Buntine tend to agree, evident in their shared 80 years of experience growing lupins in the Eastern and Northern Wheatbelt, respectively.

Lakes Information & Farming Technology (LIFT) group's Executive Officer Justine Tyson said harnessing this growing legacy knowledge was invaluable for the local community.

"LIFT's Legume Leader, Ed Naisbitt has a wealth of knowledge when it comes to growing lupins in the Lakes region of Western Australia," she said.



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“Ed’s years of experience is indispensable to the continual development of growing productive legumes.

“And he is just one among the cohort of Legume Leaders

“The Legume Leaders initiative is an example of the collaborative approach this project is promoting toward more widespread adoption of grain legume production.”

In the south Greg Curnow at Cascade and Peter Daw in Ravensthorpe have a collective 30 years of experience, growing faba beans and field peas respectively.

Peter Daw, who also wears the hat of Ravensthorpe Agricultural Initiative Network (RAIN) Chair, said the rotational benefits of legumes were an important part of his farming system.

“Nitrogen-fixation is an obvious benefit from a grain legume crop, but we also benefit from very effective grass weed control options, and a break from cereal diseases,” he said.

“These factors all contribute to the beneficial impact on successive cereal crops.

“They are hard work but worth the effort!”

GRDC Grower Relations Manager – west, Jo Wheeler, said that the broader project’s aim was to determine which grain legumes have the best economic fit in each sub-region, under specific conditions and situations for growers.

“Through peer-to-peer learning and sub-regional collaboration, growers have an opportunity to identify and adopt the best legume for their region. Consistent adoption may also lead to economic benefits including better access to markets,” Ms Wheeler said.

GGA is harnessing this collection of experience as a project extension tool to assist other growers who are looking to adopt grain legumes in their rotation.

GGA and its grower group partners are currently recruiting more Legume Leaders.

Experienced grain legume growers from across WA who are willing to share their insights are encouraged to complete a [GGA Legume Leader Bio Form](#) and get involved with the project which runs until 2025.

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