

\$30m to help take the risk out of risky on-farm decisions

A new \$30m Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) national investment led by CSIRO is working to improve the risk and reward outcomes for all Australian grain growers by supporting their capacity to make on-farm decisions.

Partnered with more than 25 grower-based groups from across the country, the five-year (2023-28) [RiskWi\\$e](#) program is one of the largest grower-led initiatives undertaken by GRDC.

Western Australia's Action Research Group Lead, the Grower Group Alliance (GGA), is working closely with eight grower groups spanning the Northern Wheatbelt to the South Coast.

GGA Chief Executive Officer Rikki Foss said RiskWi\$e was an important program for the organisation and the network.

"GGA's involvement in a program of this scale is a massive win for the network and strongly aligns with the GGA vision to be a producer-led system of agricultural innovation, adoption and collaboration," she said.

GGA Project Manager Daniel Kidd said the program will use a Participatory Action Research (PAR) approach to identify the on-farm decisions that growers consider carry the greatest risk and then investigate what information they need to make more informed decisions.

"PAR is a process of collective, self-reflective research approach which involves the active participation of growers - plus any others who have a stake in the program, including funders, researchers and program managers," he said.

"The PAR process is about the continual involvement of growers in the design and review process, which ultimately improves adoption outcomes."

Nationally, RiskWi\$e is focusing on five risky decision areas including; nitrogen decisions, sowing decisions, enterprise agronomic decisions, enterprise financial decisions, and managing natural resource capital.

In Western Australia, grower groups will initially explore the risk and rewards associated with nitrogen (N) management and sowing time decisions.

GRDC Senior Regional Manager – West, Peter Bird, said that the project would equip WA growers to make informed decisions on risk and reward outcomes for nitrogen management decisions on their farms.

"The project will take a whole-of-system approach across time to help growers assess nitrogen decision strategies encompassing fertiliser and legume use," Mr Bird said.

In the North, West Midlands Group (WMG) and Mingenew Irwin Group (MIG) are examining the drivers of variability in crop response to nitrogen in sandy soils.

In the Central Wheatbelt Facey Group and Corrigin Farm Improvement Group (CFIG) are looking at whether grain legumes are an economically viable crop rotation and alternative source of nitrogen.

Liebe Group and the WA No Tillage Farmers Association (WANTFA) are running crop rotation experiments with different decile N strategies to see how this influences yield and risk with WANTFA also evaluating the use of grain protein sensors for variable rate N inputs.

In the south, Stirlings to Coast Farmers (SCF) and the South East Premium Wheat Growers Association (SEPWA) are also running crop rotation trials with differing decile N strategies to improve nitrogen use efficiency and on-farm decision making for their growers who are becoming increasingly aware of consumer sentiment toward sustainable agricultural practices in the high rainfall zone.

The geographical spread of RiskWi\$e in WA gives GGA and the grower groups the opportunity to explore the variation in risk across different environments and climates.

“We are encouraging the agricultural community to get involved in the PAR process to help review and discuss risk with on-farm decisions each season,” Ms Foss said.

Local growers, and advisors who wish to know more or want to get involved can contact the GGA or one of the eight grower groups involved in the program.

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Contact

Kallista Bolton Communications and Stakeholder Manager – GGA

kbotlon@ggg.org.au

0421 623 406

[Video: Grower Group Alliance RiskWi\\$e](#)