



**AG EXCELLENCE
ALLIANCE INC**

ANNUAL REPORT

MARCH 30TH 2012

CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

There is no doubt farming systems groups have made a significant contribution to the advancement of agricultural technology and sociology in this state, as well as positive environmental impacts. The output of groups often goes way beyond the region in which the work is conducted, having impact across the state and nation. I suspect until the value of individual projects is counted, we ourselves, don't even realise the impact we are having in our regions and beyond as we complete one project and move on to the next.

Farming systems groups have not been around for very long. Combined with private sector advisory services, they have developed to fill the space once solely occupied by of state departments of agriculture.

Some in the community find this transition challenging. I see it as just part of the change process. The scene as it is today will be different again tomorrow. As many groups have been in existence for less than 10 years, it is no wonder we don't recognize the incredible impact farming systems groups are having on R, D and E across the country.

I know most groups in the state deserve some extra support to carry out the vital roles they have been doing with very few resources for so long. We are working to help support these activities.

Our 2011 forum was a big success. Many groups reported that the session run by Darren Williams on managing teams was particularly beneficial. We were very pleased to see the 2011 Grower Group award presented to Northern Sustainable Soils.

One of the highlights of last year was our successful Caring for Our Country application, which resulted in the birth of the Social Media Project. This project is a great way to link with all of the groups, and uses innovative technology to further extend the results of the great work being done by all the groups. The committee enjoyed the Social Media workshop held in January, and is excited about the future of this project.

Ag Excellence's coordination of East South Australia's Grain and Graze 2 project allows us to provide funding to seven farming system groups. A very productive reporting day was held last month, allowing groups to share information on the successes and challenges so far, and to consolidate ideas for the rest of 2012 and 2013.

The Productivity Places Program has commenced this year, supported by Ag Excellence's Regional Landcare Facilitator in the Northern & Yorke Region, Michael Richards. This program involves a partnership with TAFE as the Registered Training Organisation. TAFE will deliver Advanced Diploma in Agriculture to seven students and Certificate IV in Agriculture to a further twelve trainees.

Regional facilitated workshops were held throughout the state in 2011. The workshops identified common themes for each region, and this information has already been used to identify projects which have been funded in the regions.

In July, Ag Ex held a workshop in Adelaide on adoption theory and processes. Speakers included Rick Llewellyn and Geoff Kuehne from CSIRO in Adelaide and Jeff Coutts from Coutts J&R in Toowoomba. Participants increased their understanding of farmer decision making, overcoming barriers to adoption, and had some hands-on experience with CSIRO's ADOPT tool.

GRDC's Regional Cropping Solutions positions are now settled and the committees are operational. Ag Ex was pleased to make a contribution to this process through our discussions with GRDC.

Ag Excellence has welcomed some new faces in 2011, both within our committee and our staff. Our committee was enhanced by Claire Stephenson's NRM knowledge and communication skills, Greg Cock's strategic planning experience and his understanding of Government procedures and Dene Cuthbertson's knowledge of governance practices, project development and design, Funding applications, and financial management.

Committee member, Mark Stanley has taken on the running of the Social Media Project, and also a new role as Ag Excellence's Executive Officer. Mark's experience of project design & management, together with his strong networks NRM & production will be extremely beneficial to Ag Excellence.

Heather Baldock left the employ of Ag Ex in 2011, staying on to finalise the Next Gen project. Heather's support of her replacement, Mandy Pearce, was invaluable, as was her overall contribution to the smooth running of Ag Ex during her employment.

Mandy Pearce took on the role of Project Manager in June, bringing with her skills in IT, Social Media and financial recording & reporting. Mandy also took over Ceris Crosby's role as Project Coordinator of the Grain & Graze 2 project. Ceris left this role in October 2011, after being instrumental in setting up the project in it's early stages.

Ag Excellence is committed to moving forward, and ensuring that we don't lose sight of our mission, vision and goals. To this end, a lot of work has gone on in the past year to redefine our strategic plan and implement good governance practices. This will ensure we're better places to support the farming system group community.

I welcome any suggestions you might have with regard to Ag Excellence Alliance activities, roles and responsibilities and possible future direction it should take.

I also welcome any interested participants to nominate to be part of great team of dedicated committee members who are making a significant contribution to farming systems groups across the state.



Bill Long, Chairperson

Ag Excellence Alliance Inc

HISTORY

Ag Excellence Alliance Inc (Ag Ex) was formed in 2005 in response to a need to provide support and engender collaboration amongst the established and emerging broad acre farming systems groups across the state. The emergence of these groups was, in part, a response to the withdrawal of funding for extension services by the state government and also through the drive and desire by local farming communities to take charge of their RD&E agendas. In it's early stages, Ag Ex also identified areas across the state where there were gaps in group representation. This led to the formation of Northern Sustainable Soils in the Northern Yorke Peninsula and the Lower Eyre Agricultural Development Association on the lower Eyre Peninsula. From it's beginnings as a single project-driven group funded through the National Landcare Program, Ag Ex has now expanded its influence and operations, managing a range of projects from a diversity of funders that contribute to the sustainability of farm businesses across the state through close collaboration with, and support for farming systems groups.

Past Chairs:

Jeanette Long

Mick Faulkner

STAKEHOLDERS

Farming System Groups

- Advisory Board of Agriculture
- Agriculture Kangaroo Island
- Eyre Peninsula Agricultural Research Foundation
- Hart Field Site Group
- Lower Eyre Agricultural Development Association
- Lucerne Australia
- Mallee Sustainable Farming Systems
- MacKillop Farm Management Group
- Mid-North High Rainfall Zone
- Northern Sustainable Soils
- Partners in Grain
- SA No-Till Farmers Association
- SPAA Precision Agriculture Australia
- Upper North Farming Systems
- Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Group

Funders & Sponsors:

- Caring for our Country
- Department of Agriculture, Fisheries & Forestry
- Department of Environment & Natural Resources
- Department of Further Education, Employment, Science and Technology
- GRDC
- Mellor Olsson
- Northern & Yorke NRM CFOC

STAKEHOLDERS (CONT...)

Natural Resource Management Boards

- Adelaide Mount Lofty Ranges NRM Board
- Eyre Peninsula NRM Board
- Kangaroo Island NRM Board
- Northern & Yorke NRM Board
- SA Murray-Darling Basin NRM Board
- South East NRM Board

VISION & MISSION STATEMENTS

Vision:

SA's broad acre farmers, through grower groups, have the resources, networks, knowledge and skills to assist in achieving sustainable, resilient and prosperous agricultural industries and communities.

Mission:

Ag Ex supports SA's broad acre agriculture communities by leading innovation and practice change through grower groups, in collaboration with advisors, natural resources management organisations, agribusiness, research and development organisations, Government and education institutions.