

Trial probes nuances in post-pasture cultivation

By RUTH SOMMERVILLE

WORKING up after a pasture phase takes time and costs money but does it result in more effective crop establishment or could it be removed from the cropping program and remain as, or more, profitable?

An Upper North Farming Systems trial is researching this question by exploring post-pasture phase cultivation and its role in effective establishment of the first-season crop.

It is still common practice in parts of SA to cultivate after a pasture phase because of compaction by grazing. Paddocks are cultivated to ensure even soil-seed contact and to allow the machine to pass through without residue bundles causing blockages.

Funded by the GRDC Stubble Initiative and the National Landcare Program 25th Anniversary Grants, the project aims to demonstrate the effects of cultivation on plant establishment and assess modern seeding systems that result in effective germination without cultivation.

Six demonstration sites are spread across the organisation's membership area and have been sown on farmers' properties using their normal sowing unit. Each paddock has come out of a one or two-year



pasture phase and has had a proportion of the paddock worked and another with retained pasture residues.

Each farmer has then sown the paddock in two different ways across the two zones, looking at the role other factors play in crop establishment between the two soil treatments.

Variables examined include seeding rate and the speed and direction of sowing in three crops – wheat, barley and faba beans. These sites build on the past two years of seeding demonstrations undertaken by UNFS as part of the GRDC Stubble Initiative, including the 2013 seeding demonstration field day featuring 14 commercial seeders in the same paddock on the same day.

UNFS chairman Joe Koch is one of the farmers involved in this year's demonstration sites. Post-pasture phase cultivation has been a long-running area of contention on a block he share-farms.

"We are using the demo site to settle a wager," he said.

"I see working up as a cost to my business in time, fuel, hours

on my tractor and to the health of the soil. Share-farming partner Garry Arbon sees working up as an insurance policy. The sheep leave our paddocks too compacted, working up ensures an easy seeding and reliable plant germination."

Joe is hopeful that after this year they will have a better idea of who is on the right path.

The UNFS Spring Crop Walk will be held on Thursday, September 10, and focus on the post-pasture demo sites and the role machinery set-up and pre-sowing stubble management play in ensuring desired plant establishment.

Starting at 1pm at Booleroo Centre, the afternoon will begin with a technical display of different tynes and press wheels, including discussions on modifications of seeding equipment that can affect plant establishment. Throughout the afternoon, the group will visit a number of the demo sites and investigate the outcomes of worked versus unworked land.

All growers and advisors are encouraged to attend to see whether working after a pasture phase is necessary to ensure effective plant establishment and an easy seeding.

• **Details:** Ruth Sommerville 0401 042 223, unfs@outlook.com or visit the UNFS facebook page www.facebook.com/UpperNorthFarmingSystems.

Around the regions

MSF

MALLEE Sustainable Farming is pleased to announce its online Legumes Library which has plenty of information on growing legumes in the Mallee. This library, at msfp.org.au/resources/growing-legumes-library, has been developed as part of MSF's *Growing Legumes* project, supported by Western Local Land Service, NSW. The project has on-farm crop walks that bring together farmers, agribusiness consultants and key researchers to discuss issues in growing legumes and consider ways in which MSF can facilitate learning, decision making and practice-change.

• **Details:** 03 5021 9100, admin@msfp.org.au, @MSF_Mildura, www.facebook.com/MalleeSustainableFarming, and www.linkedin.com/company/mallee-sustainable-farming

EPARF

THE Eyre Peninsula Agriculture Research Foundation is hosting its annual member day at SARDI Minnipa Agricultural Centre on Wednesday, July 22, starting 1pm. The focus is on innovation and technology, with a great line-up of topics and speakers including: engineering for sustainable agriculture – James Barr, UniSA; weed sensing and mapping – Sam Trengrove, Trengrove Consulting; long range weather forecasting – Graeme Anderson DEPI VIC; go protein sensors – Ashley Wakefield, YP grower; water leak units and soil moisture probes – Shane Oster, Alpha Group Consulting; livestock innovations – Michelle Cousins, Cousins Merino Services; eXtension – Gavin Beever, ORM; and APPs for farmers and unmanned aerial vehicles – Leighton Pearce, Growing Solutions. This event is free for members and will be followed by a networking dinner at 6pm.

• **Details:** RSVP Dot Brace 08 8680 6202

Ag Bureau of SA

THE bureau continues to be involved with PIRSA's Transport Project, PPSA's National Disaster Resilience program and Healthy Farmers Committee. Branches have been active in organising events such as the Angaston Merino Hogget Competition, lime spreading in response to acid soils mapping at Millicent, any trial reports to publish on website at Coomandook and demo spray technology workshops with Laura and Nelshaby. Board member Peter Rose will host the annual general meeting at Karoonda on August 19. Thanks to sponsorship from EPNRM and EPARF, two farmers attended the Innovation Generation Conference in Canberra earlier this month. And don't forget, applications for the Spirit of Excellence in Agriculture Awards are open.

• **Details:** www.agbureau.com.au

MFMG

THE MacKillop Farm Management Group will hold a winter crop walk on Tuesday, July 28 starting at Bool Lagoon. Topics include soil and soil water, including soil pit discussions with Rural Solutions SA's Mel Fraser, Integrated Irrigation's Tim Powell and CSIRO's Mark Thomas, and irrigated dual-purpose wheat and canola trials and discussions on management. The day will start at 8.30am at Bruce

McLean's workshop, at the end of Bourne road, and conclude at 1pm with lunch. Farm visits will focus on irrigated crops at Commurra from 2.30pm to 5pm, and finish off with a barbecue at Ivan Hocking's.

• **Details:** www.mackillopgroup.com.au

Hart Field Site Group

THE 2015 trial program is well underway at Hart. Now that the seeder has been put away, all attention turns to the winter walk – the first post-seeding opportunity to see how trials are progressing. Research and extension manager Sarah Noack has planned a variety of sessions and guest speakers. Topics include weather predictions and forecasts for 2015, canola agronomy, snail management, pre-emergent herbicides, and pulse diseases. The walk is on July 21 at the Hart site from 9am to 12pm. The event is free and no RSVP is required. Morning tea is provided.

• **Details:** Hart secretary, Sandy Kimber 0427 423 154 or admin@hartfieldsite.org.au.

LEADA

THE New Horizons trial continues this year at Brimpton Lake, providing an opportunity to assess the value of treatments in the second year. Rural Solutions SA's, David Davenport, is managing the project and has undertaken a visual assessment of the site. There was little variance in plant emergence across the treatments but growth was better on plots treated with organic matter. LEADA has also supported a broader demonstration in conjunction with the Moroney family, who are landowners. Early visual assessment has indicated a better response from incorporation of organic matter – 5 tonnes a hectare – than delving. LEADA has set the date for its annual spring field walk on September 3 but details are being developed.

SANTFA

SANTFA will hold its annual general meeting at 5pm on Thursday, August 6 at the Loxton Hotel. Interested members need to RSVP for catering purposes.

• **Details:** Leighton Pearce 0427 688 028 or leighton@santfa.com.au

UNFS

REGISTRATION for the annual Upper North Farming Systems member's expo on August 6 at Booleroo Centre Town Hall starts at 9am. Highlights include talks by SARDI's Kenton Porker on barley varieties; Hart Field Site Group's Sarah Noack on harvest height and the following year's crop; and AgriPartner Consulting's Hamish Dickson on livestock nutrition and grazing stubbles. The presentations will wrap up at 4pm, with networking until 5pm. Membership fees will be payable on the day if not completed. The cost: individuals \$50, dual membership \$75 and business membership \$125. If you are interested in becoming a sponsor, contact the organisation for a copy of the sponsorship prospectus.

• **Details:** Ruth Sommerville 0401 042 223, unfs@outlook.com or [facebook.com/UpperNorthFarmingSystems](http://www.facebook.com/UpperNorthFarmingSystems)

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ROOT CHECK: Upper North Farming Systems chairman Joe Koch (right) and share-farming partner Garry Arbon compare roots in the post-pasture sowing demo on Garry's paddock north-east of Booleroo Centre, SA. **Photo:** Ruth Sommerville.

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