



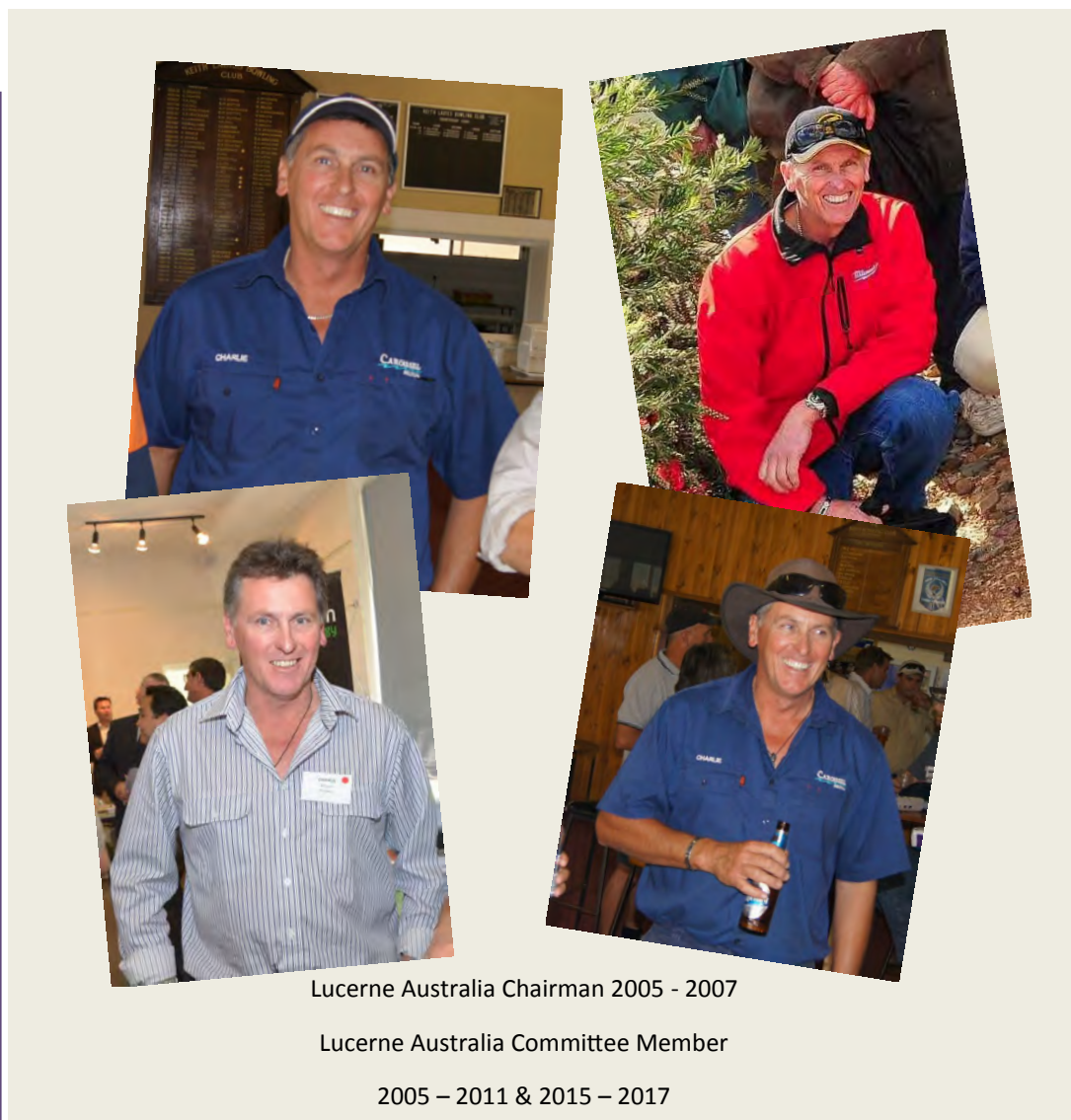
THE LUCERNE LEADER



Vale Charlie Hilton 27.12.1963 - 31.01.2018

**ISSUE 48
March 2018**

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GOOD PEOPLE TO KNOW



Tribute to Charlie Hilton

By Shane Oster

There was only one Charlie Hilton! The Lucerne industry has lost a great ambassador with the passing of Charlie.

Despite the tragedy of his loss I still can't help but smile when I think of Charlie. I still have visions of him arriving to a meeting with the Minister of Agriculture in board shorts, tee shirt and thongs!! There was no changing Charlie!

My involvement with him started in 2004 when Carousel and Brecon had funded the importation of 1 million leafcutter bees. They knew from the outset that it was always going to be bigger than them and immediately set about getting the industry on board. Charlie always had the vision of a unified lucerne body and it was around the table in the Brecon office talking about leafcutters that the idea of "Lucerne Australia" started to take shape. Funding was needed to trial the success of leafcutter bees in Australia (again), and an industry body was needed to support the project.

The concept of Lucerne Australia (LA) quickly gained momentum and it was hard not to be energised about it when talking about it with Charlie. In October 2005 Lucerne Australia was formed with Charlie as the inaugural chair. He then went on to serve 6 years in his first term before withdrawing due to ill health. His passion was infectious and saw us rambling on about hair brained ideas, often till 1am in the morning! In the early days our meetings didn't have a lot of structure or direction but were fuelled by passion and drive. This certainly drove a lot of LA's early wins.

Many have viewed Lucerne Australia as Charlie's "baby", but I really don't think that he would be comfortable with that. Charlie dedicated volumes of time towards its success but never viewed it with a sense of ownership. Charlie's passion for LA was unmatched and enviable. I always respected his ability to look past things which might have impacted upon his own circumstances negatively if they were for the greater good of the industry.

Charlie was a man who had to "understand". He was like a man on a search for the Holy Grail, but when he found it he would immediately start looking for the next one! As we all know lucerne is a frustrating beast. You can be a lifelong seed grower but still not fully understand what happens and why. Growing seed is a bit like gravity, we know what it does, what to expect but often don't understand why things happen. We just learn to accept the way things are. This was never enough for Charlie, he had to know why.... about everything!!!

Whether it was plant nutrition, seed wasp, fishing spots, the secret to a happy life, Charlie had to understand, and to his credit I think he did! Charlie's understanding of plant nutrition

was unparalleled in the industry, as proven with the results of the LA fertiliser trial. We have lost a vast wealth of knowledge with Charlie's passing.

Towards the end of LA's third year Charlie started on his campaign for me to nominate as chair the following year. I hadn't served in roles like that before and wasn't comfortable with the idea. With Charlie's assurance that he would remain in a supporting role I took on the position as chair. Charlie was passionate about involving young people in groups like LA and I think he saw me as a bit of a pet project. Most LA meetings were followed by a half hour conversation with Charlie on the phone. Charlie was my biggest critic but my biggest supporter. I've never had someone aid in my personal development as much as what Charlie did for me.

For me, Charlie's crowning glory was the USA trip. The idea of this started around the table at Brecon before LA was even formed. To me it was the culmination of a decades work. Over that time I think that Charlie has been gradually laying the foundations and paving the way for the trip that he always wanted the industry to go on. The deep relationships that he had formed over the previous decade were clearly displayed by the red carpet treatment that we received everywhere we went.

Charlie was a great ambassador and a great friend. We will miss him dearly.



Charlie is his signature bright shirt and thongs on the US tour - 2016



Tribute to Charlie Hilton

By Brendon Smart

Many words could be used to describe Charlie. Amongst them fun loving, cheeky, happy, devoted, innovative, committed and probably "larrikin" is on the list – in the kindest way.

Quick to play a prank and equally able to accept one in return he was at his best when he was either causing a laugh or conspiring to create one.

Farming was always where he would be and after an Ag exchange in the USA he continued at Carousel working alongside his father – a great mentor.

Livestock was his early interest, which moved to the challenges of producing Lucerne seed under both irrigation and dry land conditions.

After receiving a Nuffield Scholarship in 2004 he traveled extensively overseas but spent a lot of time in the USA.

He developed a close relationship with Arden Anderson, the global guru on soil and plant structures via biological management during this time and was pivotal in Charlie's very successful move to foliar applied natural fertilizers. Charlie invested heavily in his beliefs that proved to be well founded as the results went well beyond even his expectations.

Another legacy from his Nuffield Scholarship was the formation of Lucerne Australia. He believed the industry needed a broad based body to represent itself and following its formation

served as Chairman and Director for many years. It will forever stand as a monument to his vision.

Always a great family man Karen and Charlie devoted much to their 4 children and whilst the creation of his ski lake might be called a folly by some, to Charlie it was just something he could do that would and did, foster fabulous family and friend fun – well done mate!

A fantastic chapter was added to Charlie and his family's life after he located his birth mother living America. Their attraction to each other was instant and magnetic and the ensuing 15 or so years was cause for many trips across the Pacific by both families where an incredible bond formed. His American family was able to spend a short time with Charlie before his passing and were present at his funeral.

At 54 it is just too young to pass on, however, I know few people who have jammed as much into their lives as Charlie Hilton did.

The great beneficiaries and focus of this energy was of course his family with friends and colleagues a very close second.

Our industry has lost a great stalwart

Our community has lost a great contributor

His family has lost a fabulous husband and father

We have lost friend and colleague who made a difference

We have all lost his humor

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Joining WFI as an Area Manager appealed to Wendy because she enjoys helping people. With experience in a broad range of industries, Wendy has valuable insights to share with her clients. As a person who understands that there is good in everyone, the genuine laughter of other people brings a smile to Wendy's face. In her spare time, Wendy volunteers with the Naracoorte Football Club, enjoys visiting the seaside, eating out, reading and spending time with her family.

Contact Wendy to discuss your insurance requirements.

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NARACOORTE BRANCH WFI, 17 Ormerod Street, NARACOORTE, 5271





Blockchain – could it revolutionise the food & agri supply chain?

There is a lot of talk about ‘blockchain’, yet little is known about what it actually is, and how this digitised technology could be implemented in the agri sector.

Wes Lefroy, Rabobank’s agricultural analyst, has been closely following the potential of this new digitised approach to managing supply chains, and how it could revolutionise the food & agri supply chain, as we know it.

Authoring an article, [Blockchain: Changing Interaction in the F&A Supply Chain from Paddock to Plate](#), Mr Lefroy looks at the shift towards a digitised supply chain and why it holds great promise for farmers through to the consumer.

“Conceptually, Blockchain makes a lot of sense but the potential of it in the agri sector is not something that has been widely considered,” Mr Lefroy says.

“Yet the shift towards this technology is progressing quickly and it might be here quicker than we think, with a number of companies already trialling the technology.”

There has been particularly strong interest in the grains and oilseeds sector, he says with Australian agtech company AgriDigital partnering with CBH Group to pilot the technology within CBH’s oats arm and a separate proof of concept transaction by Rabobank in partnership with AgriDigital, examples of businesses starting to test the applications of blockchain technology locally. GrainCorp, Cargill, and Louis Dreyfus are also investigating the technology with various initiatives.

Blockwhat?

At the present time, Mr Lefroy says the grains and oilseeds supply chain requires each party to transfer financial and specification data records along the supply chain, together with the transfer of the physical commodity. “Blockchain, as a digital platform however, will facilitate the transfer of physical commodities right along the supply chain, whereby all transactions are recorded on a shared ledger,” he says.

“This shared ledger, essentially a record book, records all the financial transactions, as well as any data or information, that is associated with transferring the physical commodity along the supply chain – from farmer to consumer.

“The blockchain system would allow growers to see market information about the time/location of purchase, and demand and consumer preferences on the shared ledger. This provides growers with information about consumption and improves their ability to match production with demand.

“Additionally, supermarkets, and to an extent, consumers can have a greater level of understanding of the product inputs, particularly at the farm level, with input data and production location easily verifiable.”

Mr Lefroy says, “for it to work”, input suppliers, farmers, port authorities, banks, logistical providers and processors all need to participate in a common interface and enter their digital information in the same blockchain. All those involved in the transaction would have their own copy of the ledger, he says, and each time a transaction is made, a new record (or block) is created and added to the blockchain.

What does it mean for farmers?

Mr Lefroy says “blockchain offers huge possibilities”, given consumers are increasingly demanding high-quality and safe products – as well as visibility of the supply chain.

The two major benefits blockchain delivers are transparency and provenance, but Mr Lefroy says the secure nature of blockchain also removes counterparty risk – or the “will I get paid?” element from the transaction.

“With blockchain facilitating traceability, it is set to drastically simplify the process of verifying product origin, quality attributes, and production practices,” he says.

Mr Lefroy says for blockchain to “take off”, it requires involvement from all the stakeholders along the supply chain.

“This is particularly pertinent for farmers, as the provenance story is diluted, without high-quality information about production inputs and origin,” he says.

To tune into Wes Lefroy’s latest Podcast on Blockchain visit <https://research.rabobank.com/far/en/sectors/regional-food-agri/podcast-tuesday-tech-talk-block-what.html>



A recent short term lift in global dairy prices has created a sharp contrast with ongoing warnings of lower prices in the months ahead. Robust demand from key importers and a slow New Zealand season have supported the market, but are considered unlikely to outweigh the impact of year on year production growth through the northern hemisphere spring peak. Australia's dairy industry is not immune to these fundamental supply and demand pressures, but will also be subject to competitive tension between milk processors with additional capacity to fill from a supply base that has contracted 8% over the past two years.

In a sign of modest recovery, Australia's milk production is up nearly 3% for the first half of the 2017/18 season, reflecting a more favourable spring than 2016 in most regions, and incrementally higher milk prices. This production growth is driven by southern, export-focused regions. Domestic-focused regions have seen profitability and (in some areas) seasonal challenges weigh on output. It's likely that year-on-year growth rates will moderate during the second half of the season, with Dairy Australia's full season forecast remaining for growth in the range of 2 to 3%.

Amongst the key global dairy exporters, milk production has shown diverging trends. In Europe, milk volumes have surged. Growth in European milk production has been one of the key drivers in the deterioration of market sentiment since the northern hemisphere autumn. Year-on-year growth for the latest reported month (November) is at 6%, with the year-to-date total closing in on 2% for 2017, and likely to add another 1% (of 150 billion litres) in 2018. US milk production continues to grow, up 1% in December, ending 2017 with an increase of 1.4% for the year (for a total of nearly 98 billion litres). The rate of growth peaked at 2.1% in August and has since slowed relatively consistently.

After wet and cold conditions muted the recovery from last

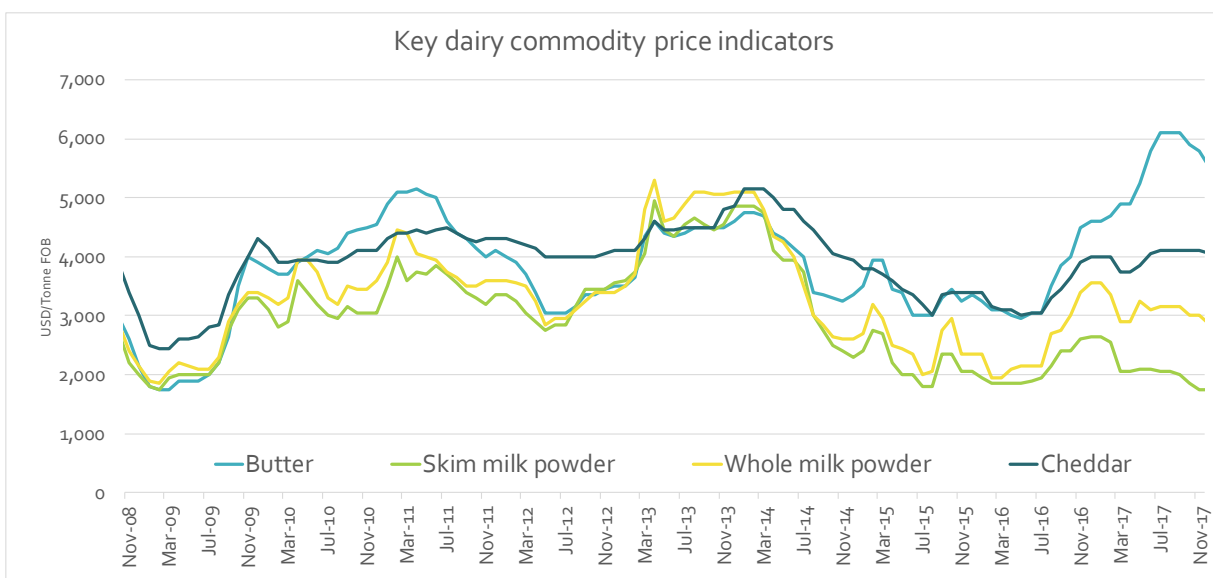
year's slow spring, extremely dry conditions have further hit New Zealand's milk production through the summer months. December 2017 milk intakes were around 2.5% lower than the same month in 2016, representing a change from the trend which had seen year on year growth peak at just over 4% in November.

Some of the major dairy importing markets have helped absorb the overall increase in global milk production, with China and Japan seeing double digit annual percentage increases. Dairy trade volumes to Southeast Asia have remained largely flat, as have those to Mexico. Dairy trade with the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region from the major exporters remains depressed, with particularly large falls in butter and wholemilk powder purchases likely reflecting the impact of significantly higher dairy fat values in especially price sensitive markets.

Back home, the Australian domestic market remains largely stable, with volume growth continuing in most major dairy categories. Sales value growth remains robust, with the exception of cheese where retail prices remain under pressure.

Key developments in the corporate sector include the sale of Murray Goulburn's assets to Saputo (pending ACCC and FIRB approval), and the sale of WA-based Brownes to a consortium of Chinese investors. In addition, Fonterra, Australian Consolidated Milk (ACM), and Freedom Foods have announced investments in new and upgraded processing capacity.

Such investments are encouraging signs of industry confidence, however key to ongoing success will be the ability of processors to support and grow a profitable milk supply base to capture the full potential these facilities offer. Amidst the contrasting short and medium term market signals, any inducement to produce more milk will need to account for the significant risks remaining in the global market.



Heritage Seeds Report

By Craig Myall, International Business Manager, Ph: 0407 620 580

Our calendar year closed with industry wide Lucerne exports totaling 6,349mt, the lowest amount exported since 2012 and a far cry from the lofty heights of the last few years when 8500-11000mt departed our shores. This would suggest that a few companies have been caught up in the crossfire of overstocks as a result, but pleasingly I can report that Heritage Seeds is not one of these.

The question I get asked most is where the industry is heading in the short to medium term. No doubt as Lucerne demand continues to be subdued in our historically largest market Saudi Arabia, we are in for a fall from the last few years of high pricing at grower and company sales levels alike. That doesn't mean our industry needs to "bottom out", but we are only as strong as the weakest seller!

A potential positive for our Australian production is that hay prices are expected to increase in the US this year, and as a result seed production may be reduced. This will only assist sales of Australian origin seed however we are months away from the US harvest and things can change "either way" in a very short time.

Early intake of deliveries would suggest that the 2018 harvest is quite varied. Dryland yields have been as low as 40kg and up to 300kg thus far, whilst initial irrigated yields suggest that the early locked up crops may not be as good as the later ones, time will tell.

We are always on the lookout for new planting opportunities, whilst if you wish to discuss your public varieties options for sales, please contact your Heritage Seeds representatives on the numbers listed below.

Best of luck to all growers with the current harvest!

Nathan Smith	Lucerne Production Manager	0408 655 220
Daryl Turner	National Production Manager	0418 191 060
Tom Botterill	Procurement Manager	0439 384 375
Craig Myall	International Business Manager	0407 620 580

LambEx 2018

Australian woolgrowers and the Australian sheep and lamb industry are invited to attend LambEx 2018, being held at the Perth Conference and Exhibition Centre from Sunday, August 5 to Tuesday, August 7.

LambEx 2018 celebrates all that is great about Australia's sheep and lamb industries and will feature outstanding speakers and networking opportunities with all sectors of the lamb value chain.

It is shaping up to be the biggest whole-of-industry lamb conference in the country, and is held every two years, rotating across major lamb-producing States.

More than 5500 square metres of displays and more than 800 delegates are expected to attend.

The LambEx conference will be an opportunity to for all industry people, including those looking to get back into the sheep industry, to gain knowledge about global and national sheep markets.

The conference will combine producers, researchers, educators, extension officers, service providers, processors, retailers, wholesalers, food service and exports in a single location.

LambEx 2018 Early Bird Registrations will open in March.

Details: Visit www.lambex.com.au or contact Event Organiser, Rebecca Jeisman, AgCommunicators on rebecca.jeisman@agcommunicators.com.au or 08 8332 3277.



Kongal Seeds Report

By Simon Bornt, Owner, Ph: 0473 442 910

The lucerne seed season is upon us, with dryland harvest commencing and irrigated not far behind. Early indications are for an above average crop. Cleaning has commenced accordingly, and the coming months look to be extremely busy. My family and I are very happy to be back in South Australia for the third season running.

Since taking ownership of Kongal Seeds in 2015, we have worked with our fantastic staff to build on the strong foundations established by the previous owners. Through this process I have been privileged in getting to know our wonderful customers and fellow industry members.

Being our first article in the newsletter, I thought it would be helpful to provide an update on our recent efforts:

- Significant work has been put into increasing storage capacity. This includes: the addition of 6 new silos; the cementing and enclosing of an existing warehouse. This will alleviate any storage constraints going into what looks to be an above average lucerne harvest.
- With the introduction of the “Lucerne Seed Industry Biosecurity Code of Practice for Golden Dodder” we have

installed a state of the art, German made, Gompper Magnetic Seed Separator. The “Mag” is up and running, achieving positive results in the removal of dodder. The Gompper is a superior piece of equipment, utilizing an adjustable set of electronically charged magnets in the removal of dodder. I encourage anyone with dodder issues in cleaned lucerne to contact us.

- Additional velvet rollers are in route, with expected installation in the coming off season.

Looking into the future I see a lot of potential in the Australian lucerne seed industry. It is our plan to continue investing in equipment and infrastructure, with the intent of broadening our scope and capacity of services. As an independently-owned family business, this is in keeping with our ethos of providing a quality service for our customers.

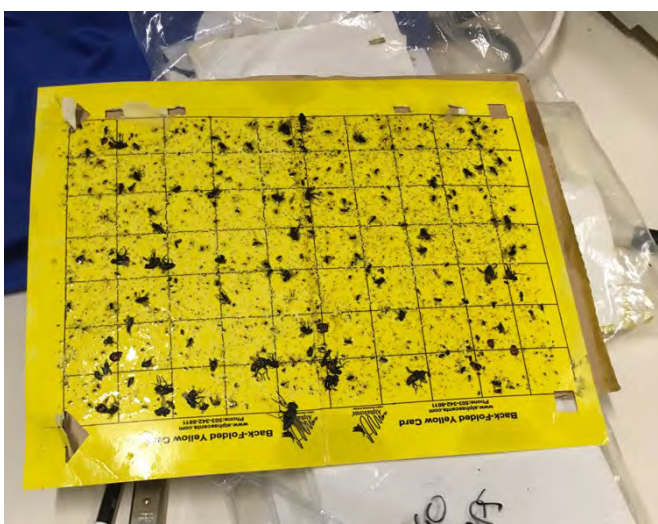
I look forward to a good season and continued growth in our industry relationships.

Any enquiries please contact us at (08) 8758 7206 or accounts@kongalseeds.com.au

Lucerne Seed Wasp (LSW) Project Update

By Dr Ainsley Seago - NSW DPI

Work is continuing on the sticky traps being managed by Alpha Group. Each trap is treated with citrus oil solvent to dissolve the glue, then all microhymenopteran insects are removed. I'm still in the midst of sorting and IDing these; it's important to retain both the LSWs (which will give us baseline data about wasp numbers through the season) as well as the other parasitoid wasps. This will indicate which natural enemies of LSW are most abundant in the Keith area (we currently have no data on relative abundance of these species).



Seed Genetics Market Report

We have seen a relatively solid start to this year's lucerne harvest as numerous deliveries started rolling in over the weighbridges of seed cleaners. A handful of seed lots have already been cleaned, and samples have been submitted to the laboratories for testing. At this point it's a bit premature to confirm the nature of this year's harvest. However, I have heard some reports that growers are disappointed with certain paddock's seed yields.

As seen in chart the overall weakening in lucerne seed export volumes is the lowest it's been since 2013. The average reduction measured over the five-year period is ~2,500-3,000MT depending on the phase of the crop cycle in each market. Saudi Arabia's contribution is roughly 55% and the balance is from numerous other market destinations. Accordingly, overall demand in 2017 was softer for non-dormant Australian seed (data sourced from the Australian Bureau of Agricultural and Resource Economics and Sciences).

Therefore unfortunately, not a lot has changed since my last report. The ambiguity surrounding how the Saudi Arabian Agricultural Ministry is intending to bring about the phase-out of forage production and implement the water saving measures, has impacted short-term demand. By and large, Saudi customers are being exceptionally cautious in committing to any volumes of seed at this time. Therefore, the demand for future lucerne shipments into Saudi Arabia over the next few months continues to be extraordinarily fluid. For our other major markets, it's a bit too premature to predict the demand. Argentina is reported to be experiencing the worst drought in 30 years, since rains have virtually ceased since November. As autumn approaches, the hope is that the rains will return, so that farmers can sow their lucerne crops.

I have heard a wide range of price points for common varieties from the trade, since of the absence of customary demand. Therefore, I would like to conclude and quote words from previous reports: **"Demand will not spike by reducing prices in the market"**.

Please feel free to contact me on 0419 983 984 should you wish to talk to me directly.

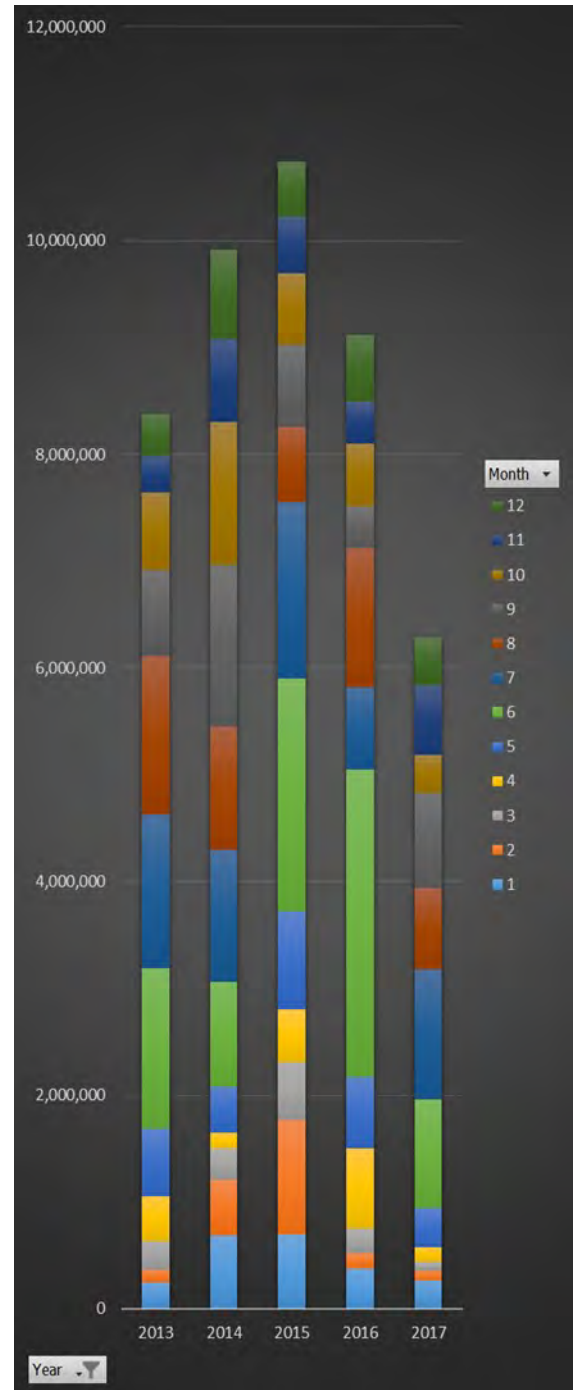


Chart: Total quantity (KG) of Lucerne seed exported by calendar year 2013-2017 from Australia (1 Jan- 31 Dec)



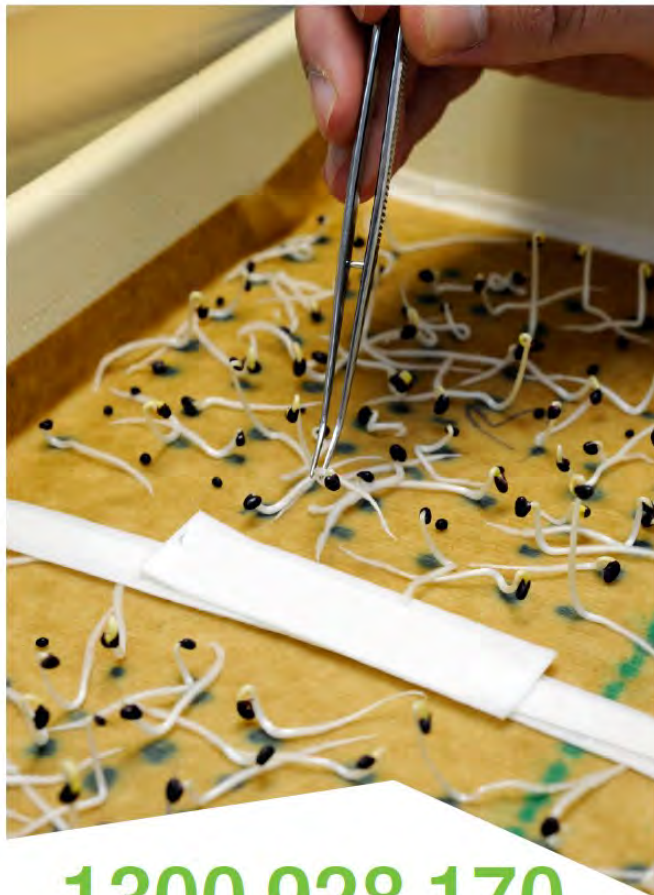
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Certified Lucerne Seed Data

From Australian Seeds Authority

AREAS REGISTERED IN AUSTRALIA FOR CERTIFICATION UNDER OECD,

AOSCA AND AUSTRALIAN SEED CERTIFICATION SCHEMES – 2013 TO 2017

2017 report compiled by Australian Seeds Authority Ltd from data provided by the seed certification agencies DDLS Seed Testing and Certification (WA), DTS Seeds Assurance and Seed Services Australia.

Please note that not all registered areas proceed to harvest and final certification due to seasonal conditions.

Species & Variety	Common Name	Final Area 26 Feb 2014 (ha)	Final Area 28 Feb 2015 (ha)	Final Area 26 Feb 2016 (ha)	Final Area 1 Mar 2017 (ha)	Final Area 28 Feb 2018 (ha)
Medicago sativa	Lucerne					
Aurora		200	252	242	264	386
CUF 101		27	26	0	0	0
Hunterfield		75	65	47	31	31
Hunter River		163	110	120	110	110
Sequel		176	111	133	163	148
Siriver		2613	2318	2794	3171	3138
Trifecta		7	7	0	0	0
Proprietary Varieties		19,742	16,359	17,291	21,449	21,887
	(TOTAL LUCERNE)	(23,003)	(19,248)	(20,627)	(25,188)	(25,700)

CERTIFIED SEED PRODUCED UNDER OECD, AOSCA AND AUSTRALIAN SEED CERTIFICATION

SCHEMES IN AUSTRALIA IN THE 12 MONTHS TO 30 SEPTEMBER 2017

Species & Variety	2012/13	2013/14	2014/15	2015/16	2016/17
Medicago sativa (Lucerne)	Tonnes	Tonnes	Tonnes	Tonnes	Tonnes
Aurora	108	87	78	95	117
CUF 101	26	34	10	4	
Hunterfield	62	43	21	31	10
Hunter River	178	104	48	67	27
Sequel	148	86	65	59	99
Siriver	1659	1318	1242	1491	1279
Trifecta	16	8	6		
Proprietary Varieties	7966	6972	5714	5086	5828

Lucerne harvest is now well and truly underway! We are seeing both dryland and early irrigated crops being harvested with seed yields for our domestic certified varieties, the best ever. Some early dryland yields of our GT (grazing tolerant) varieties have brought in up to 700kg/ha!

Unfortunately some hot and windy days in mid-January caught out a few crops during flowering which severely damaged their yield potential.

Seed wasp has been prevalent this season throughout all lucerne growing areas (mid-north & south-east SA, and southern NSW). Some control measures have been taken to minimise the impact of the wasp where numbers are significantly high.

Some later irrigated crops are showing quite some promise – we hope the weather falls in the favour of these crops and we look forward to seeing more great yields from the south-east irrigation district.

PGG Wrightson Seeds held our annual Growers Breakfast on February 8th, with pleasing attendance. Growers received a comprehensive update from all aspects of the PGG Wrightson Seeds business, and were able to engage with our team and openly address any questions they had.

The breakfast also included a walk around our Keith cleaning shed, and a tour of our lucerne seed yield trial, located at Coombe.

Our lucerne seed yield trial is looking excellent, leading up to its second harvest. We expect that yield data this season will be a good representation of the 25 varieties planted and look forward to sharing this data with those interested. We have a number of new 'pre-commercial' varieties planted in the trial, some of which are showing great promise.

Domestic demand for our Haymaster, Stamina GT and Titan range, has seen solid improvement over recent years, and PGW Seeds is anticipating strong demand again throughout the eastern seaboard and southern WA. Much of this is dependent upon the timing of the opening rains... as always...

Demand for public varieties for domestic sales has been steady. Early fields have seen average to above yields and, at this stage, the industry feels there will be enough supply for the current market. This supply-demand equation has bought values back from recent years. However, with buoyant livestock industries and timely opening rains, there will be considerable tonnages move north from our Keith cleaning shed.

Our International Trading Manager, Daniel Steadman, is currently travelling overseas meeting with key stakeholders for the middle-eastern market. Trade into the region has been quiet until recently. Saudi has continued to issue import permits for lucerne seed and feedback is that there is no real clarity of how strictly enforced their new water restrictions will be, so it still remains unclear what the future holds in this market.

Key Contacts for PGG Wrightson Seeds

Contracting and Agronomic Support:

Jess Nottle – Seed Production Agronomist – 0438 302 148

Wayne Heading – Seed Production Agronomist – 0447 551 458

Commons Purchasing:

Anthony Quilter – Commons Procurement Coordinator – 0427 572 125

Seed Cleaning:

Greg Excell – Keith Site Manager – 0408 838 684



LUCERNE EXPORT STATISTICS from AUSTRALIA -January 2012 to Dec 2017

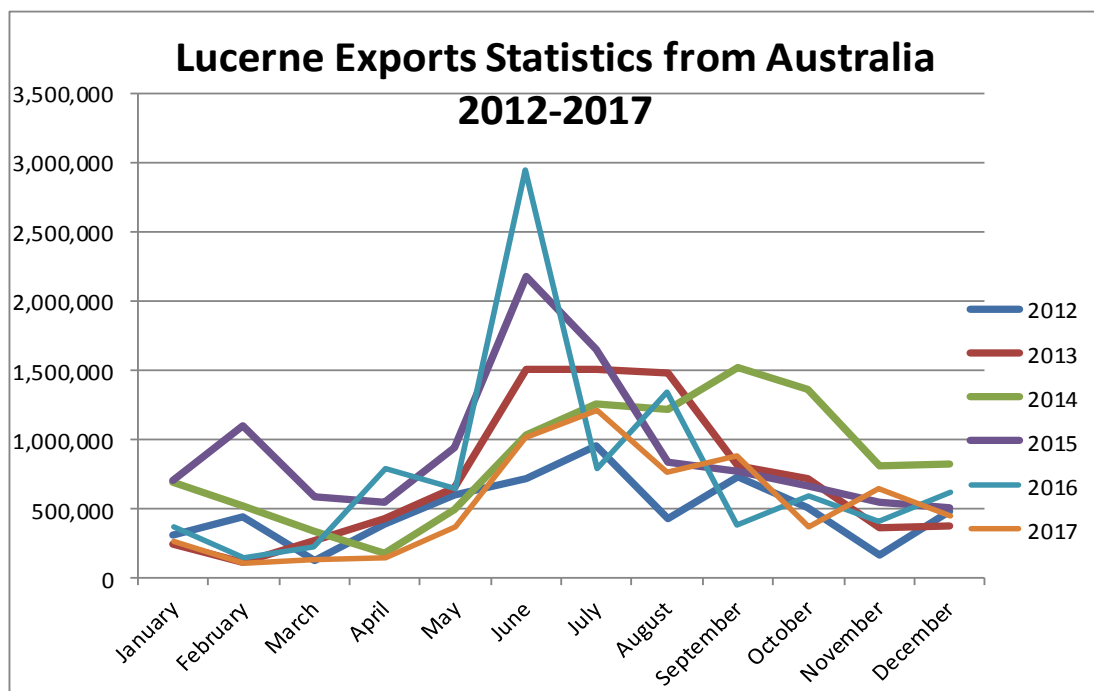
Courtesy of Teague Australia



Quantities below are in kg

Month	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	Year to date Difference 2016 & 2017
January	310,144	245,741	687,172	698,895	374,150	266,596	-107,554
February	445,793	118,025	518,553	1,099,252	148,919	108,988	-147,485
March	130,625	269,091	334,033	582,929	227,050	127,000	-247,535
April	385,262	424,057	171,816	549,340	784,031	143,025	-888,541
May	594,069	647,509	495,472	940,000	644,704	363,023	-1,169,943
June	721,122	1,509,605	1,029,000	2,176,805	2,942,685	1,018,477	-3,094,151
July	951,685	1,510,278	1,260,782	1,649,080	786,450	1,214,352	-2,666,249
August	430,924	1,482,357	1,217,121	834,178	1,339,684	767,256	-3,238,677
September	726,310	811,667	1,516,965	770,857	388,207	882,195	-2,744,689
October	509,447	719,882	1,356,922	667,503	588,199	364,673	-2,968,215
November	169,450	363,877	810,704	543,246	409,700	649,318	-2,728,597
December	483,832	379,122	829,293	511,127	623,560	443,729	-2,908,428
Total	5,858,663	8,481,211	10,227,833	11,023,212	9,257,339	6,348,911	

This summary was produced using data supplied by the Australian Bureau of Statistics.



We thank Teague Australia, an associate member of Lucerne Australia, for supplying these figures.

Naracoorte Seeds - Market Report

By Joshua Rasheed, Public Lucerne Seed Trader Ph : 0427 790 655

As I am writing this report dryland lucerne seed growers are well into harvest and some of the first irrigated paddocks have just started. Reports are that yields are OK and now it won't be long before marketers are starting to export seed around the world.

Enquiry for December / January remained slow for new season public seed, but we saw that change through February with some of our traditional markets starting to get active and lock seed away. I am hopeful this will continue going forward, especially now that we are into harvest, but I don't expect it will be to the level of enquiry we have seen over the past 3 years.

If we look at the calendar year export figures for 2017 they are the lowest we have seen since 2012, but then again we did not have the volume of seed to sell like we did in the previous three years.

We all know that the lucerne seed price is going to be back from previous year's highs, but one effect this will have is it will give opportunities for many other countries to come into the market where previous years the price would have been too high.

It may be a more difficult year to sell lucerne seed than previous years, but opportunities to sell seed will present to growers during the year. As a grower you need to be doing your market research so that when these opportunities arise you have the knowledge to make a well informed market decision.

As always Naracoorte Seeds are active purchasers of public lucerne seed, so please feel free to give me a call to discuss on 0427 790 655.



Agronomy Report

by Scott Hutchings – Senior Agronomist, Cox Rural, 0428 551 188

The dryland seed harvest is now towards completion with few paddocks left to harvest. Yields have been mixed with earlier crops once again yielding better than those opportunity crops shut up later. Many dryland crops seemed to recover from the November frost due to high available moisture at the time and yield respectably. The dryland crops were cut a little short on yield potential with the dry and hot conditions experienced in January. During the period of the dryland crops, pest levels were relatively low early in the season with high numbers of beneficials present in early crops. Wingless grass hopper numbers did increase later in the season.

Early yields in the range of 150-200kg have been common with yields dropping off with crops on less favourable soil types, later lock ups and harder to set varieties.

The irrigated crop harvest has only just started. Irrigated crops started quietly with high numbers of beneficials (ladybird beetles, lacewings etc) but hot weather in late January saw some higher numbers of native budworm and in particular very high numbers of crop mirids. These are generally harder to control, and combined with quicker reinfestation periods, these mirids can cause issues with flower abortion and can still cause damage in early pod development if numbers are high enough.

Hot conditions in late January also saw some reports of insecticide failures due to spraying when temperatures were too

high. Usually with night spraying this is OK, but when growers are starting just after dark on 38 degree plus days, temperatures are still too high. As a rule of thumb caution should be taken if spraying when the current temperature is above 28 degrees. This period also saw the first numbers of seed wasp present in later dryland seed crops and there have been mixed reports of numbers varying by area but they may loom as an issue for damage in later crops.

Dry conditions across southern Australia combined with higher stock numbers on the back of wool, lambs and recent cattle prices are starting to see hay demand increase which will help growers with plenty of hay on hand. Low short term rainfall forecasts are likely to see this demand increase over the next few months.



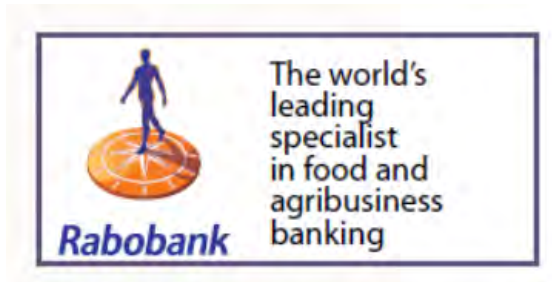
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DO YOU KNOW THE EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Got a question for Lucerne Australia? Contact the Executive Officer or any our Executive Committee Members who will be happy to help.



Bruce Connor, Chairman

Bruce was born on the family dairy farm at Mt Compass. He relocated to a property at Tintinara in the late 1970's to grow out replacement heifers. He and his family now farms beef cattle, cropping, dryland and pivot irrigated lucerne for hay and seed. Contact: 0428 835 310.

Josh Rasheed, Deputy Chairman

In 2011 Josh moved from the family Real Estate business in Meningie to become the Contract Cropping Manager and Pasture Advisor for Naracoorte Seeds. He continued in this role until 2016 where he took over the National & International Lucerne Seed Trading while still continuing his roll of Pasture Advisory. Also in 2016 Josh and his wife Emma bought into the business with Jamie & Peta Tidy. Contact: 0427 790 655.



Guy Cunningham, Grower Member

Guy farms with his wife Sarah and family near Willalooka. The business comprises a 300 cow stud beef cattle herd, dryland winter cropping and lucerne production, mainly aimed at seed with some hay sold off farm. Contact: 0429 875 422.

Rodney Lush, Grower Member

Rodney farms with his wife Sally at Coombe, producing lucerne seed, lamb and wool since 1991. The farm production system is based around centre pivot and flood irrigated lucerne and rain fed perennial pastures. He also provides farm business advice and support to clients in the Mallee, South East and Western Victoria as a consultant with Proadvice. Contact 0419 862 510.



Scott Campbell, Grower Member

Scott and his wife Sophie Campbell own and manage 4100 hectares at Keith. They are highly focused on dryland and irrigated lucerne production and also run 3500 ewes for prime lamb production and a winter cropping program His family have been involved in the lucerne seed industry for more than 40 years. Contact: 0417 887 562.

Sarah Martin, Associate Member

Sarah is a Senior Rural Manager at Rabobank, responsible for a portfolio of rural clients. She holds a Bachelor of Science (Agriculture) from the University of Adelaide. She resides on a mixed farming operation (lucerne, sheep, cattle and horses) with her family west of Keith. Contact: 0429 101 840.



Simon Allen, Grower Member

Simon is involved for 10 years in a family farming operation based at Keith, which produces irrigated lucerne seed and hay, cereal grain and hay, pulses, oilseeds and a commercial merino flock. Simon attended college, studying rural business management and has previously sat on the executive committee of Lucerne Australia and its variety trials committee. Contact: 0408 893 786

Scott Hutchings, Associate Member

Scott is a senior agronomist with Cox Rural Keith and has worked in the upper south east for 21 years covering pulses, oilseeds and cereals and lucerne for seed, hay and pasture. Scott holds a bachelor of Agricultural Science from Roseworthy Agricultural College. Scott and his wife Cath also run a small prime lamb production and opportunity dryland seed production enterprise. Contact: 0428 551 188.



Jenny Aitken, Executive Officer

Jenny was raised on a grain and contract harvesting enterprise and has a good understanding of rural issues. After spending most of her working life in radio, she also worked for a Senator in Queensland and has a passion for promoting agriculture to the wider community. Contact: 0439 538 332.