

# LUCERNE *Leader*



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## LUCERNE VARIETY TRIAL UPDATE

*Assess optimum plant stress levels for seed production*



Now into its fifth year, the Lucerne Australia Variety Trial continued to generate great interest at the annual Field Day held on Wednesday 1st March 2023. Sixty growers and industry representatives took the opportunity to inspect the site just prior to harvest.

At the site, Matt Reeves (Kalyx) provided a brief overview on the herbage data collected in Spring 2022 from the seed trial area, and Scott Hutchings and Simon Allen (water management committee) discussed the different watering schedules for this season. After the site visit, Dr Peter Boutsalis (Plant Science Consulting) explained the results

from the AgriFutures Australia funded Herbicide Resistance Survey project and Nicholas Koch (Seed Services) gave an update on certified seed area.

Trial Varieties have been supplied by: Alforex Seeds, Barenbrug, DLF Seeds, Naracoorte Seeds, RAGT, S & W Seed Company and Upper Murray Seeds.

*More details on the trial, link to the moisture probe data and photos are available on the Lucerne Australia Website.*

*Trial Site February 2023 - Drone Photo by Jack Watson*



**Rabobank**

# “GOOD TIMES” TO CONTINUE FOR AUSTRALIAN AGRICULTURE, BUT REPEAT OF “STAND OUT” 2022 UNLIKELY



Rabobank

March 7, 2023

by Stefan Vogel, RaboResearch General Manager Australia & New Zealand

2023 is shaping up as another strong year for Australia's agricultural sector, although a repeat of last year's "exceptional" performance is unlikely, Rabobank says in a newly-released industry outlook.

In its flagship **Australia Agribusiness Outlook 2023**, titled 'Continuing on a successful path', the agribusiness banking specialist says a stand-out 2022 – with high, often record, commodity prices and good to partly-record production volumes – has put the nation's farm sector in a healthy position for the year ahead, allowing for "record high farm incomes across the country, well above the already very good 2021 results".

But it cautions against expectations of a repeat of last year's stellar conditions in the agricultural sector, which were overall "exceptional", despite the impacts of severe flooding in some regions.

"Beef, dairy, grain, oilseeds and canola prices all hit excellent and often record levels in Australia at a time when our farmers produced good to excellent volumes," the report said. "This was a fantastic combination which allowed Australian farmers to cash in because these factors far outpaced the significantly-elevated cost of fertilisers, energy, interest rates and farmland.

"2023 will bring many opportunities, (but) those with overly-inflated expectations of a repeat of 2022 might be disappointed as the world heads into recession."

Agricultural commodity prices – last year driven to record levels as a result of the war in Ukraine, supply chain issues related to Covid and labour shortages as well as global market tightness and volatile input prices – are forecast to track at less elevated levels through 2023, albeit "well above the five-year average", according to Rabobank.

Report lead author, RaboResearch general manager Australia and New Zealand Stefan Vogel said prices for grains and oilseeds and beef had moved notably below highs seen last year, and 2023 was likely to "deliver good, but not record, prices in an environment of elevated costs and global recession".

The Rabobank Rural Commodity Price Index – which tracks local prices of key commodities in Australian-dollar terms – is forecast to continue to ease from record highs reached in Q2 2022 over the course of this year, albeit to still track above the five-year average with a chance of rising again in late 2023.



## Production and returns

The 2023 production outlook for Australian agriculture is once again positive, the report says, although it is not yet clear if it will reach the heady highs of 2022.

"Favourable weather conditions in 2022 – with much of the east coast having received plentiful rainfall, even too much in some cases – have provided good soil moisture levels and also filled supplies for irrigation," Mr Vogel said. "And while the rainfall outlook for 2023 isn't as high, this should also mean less weather disruptions for the sector.

"This sets the scene for another positive year of farm production in 2023, however a repeat of 2022's abundant grain and fodder production is not – at least yet – expected."

As such, Australian farm returns are expected to be good in the year ahead, but some way "off from last year's record", the report says.

## Farm inputs

Cost pressures will continue to weigh on the farm sector, with costs forecast to remain above historic averages, albeit with global fertiliser prices now down 40 to 50 per cent from their peak. "Although locally fertiliser prices have not fully replicated this extent of decline," Mr Vogel noted.



“A return to the highs seen in fertiliser prices last year is unlikely,” he said, “but besides supply and demand, gas and grain prices need to be watched carefully to determine the ultimate direction of fertiliser prices.”

Freight rates for both dry containers and bulk have fallen “massively” back to normal levels as recession fears weigh on the trade outlook, Mr Vogel said. “However, our meat and fruit exports in Australia rely on refrigerated containers and their rates still remain very high, although there are signs they too are easing,” he said.

Freight reliability, though, is still below normal. “Ag businesses need to continue to plan early and remain flexible in 2023 as we will still see delays in delivery of machinery and other farm inputs,” Mr Vogel said.

Labour shortages will persist, he said, “but, as with supply chain disruptions, the industry has learned to live with and work through them.”

Interest rate rises are likely to have some further way to go in the first half of 2023, Rabobank forecasts, with “serious cuts” not to be expected until 2024.

“The Australian dollar is expected to remain around current levels with a slight strengthening later in the year, which will still support our exports,” Mr Vogel said, “but makes our imports a little less expensive compared with the second half of 2022.”

## Global factors

A number of global factors are also working in favour of an optimistic outlook for Australia’s ag sector, Mr Vogel said. These include the slow pace of recovery in global commodity supplies, with shortages in grain and still-slow supply recovery in world beef and dairy production.

“We don’t see right now that 2023 will suddenly be filled with a lot of product in these commodity sectors, but rather a gradual recovery. That’s good news for Australian farmers, although it doesn’t bring us back to the all-time price highs we had last year driven by the Ukraine war,” he said.

China’s surprise U-turn on its zero-Covid policy should also open up its economy and potentially increase consumer demand in this important market, Mr Vogel said, although the short-term economic and trade impacts remain uncertain.

Geopolitical risks also remain, he said, including with China, and Australia will need to continue to work on diversification of export markets.

Global recessionary pressures also hang over the local Australian agricultural sector, the Rabobank outlook says.

“Australia is likely to avoid a recession, but inflation remains a concern locally and globally. Heightened interest rates are tightening the belts of consumers,” it says. And this will impact both consumer demand and trade.

“The impact on consumption is being felt differently in different product categories as consumers trade down on quality and price. Dairy and animal protein will have to navigate this, while the price decline in grains will offset any volume reduction risk,” Mr Vogel said.

## Commodities

For specific commodity sectors, Rabobank’s 2023 Agribusiness Outlook finds:

**Wheat & barley** – a continuation of historically-low global stocks. Locally, the 2023 pricing trajectory will be divided between the west and east coast, with WA to see greater supply.

**Canola** – the world enters 2023 with considerably more canola than last year, globally and locally.

**Beef** – Australian production on the rise, as an increased cattle inventory becomes more productive. Consumer markets will be softer amid slower economic conditions.

**Sheepmeat** – 2023 to see Australian lamb production push further into record territory.

**Wool** – price outlook positive for 2023, driven by increase in fine-micron values.

**Dairy** – dairy farm margins remain positive heading towards the 2023/24 season.

**Cotton** – prices expected to stabilise in 2023. Australian production forecast below record 2022 levels.

**Sugar** – global surplus, due to expected recovery in Brazilian cane production, to weigh on the sweetness of prices.

**Consumer foods** – Australian consumer behaviour will continue to adapt to cost-of-living pressures and falling real wages, and this will remain a key theme through 2023.

**Farm inputs** – overall supply and demand adjusting to a ‘new’ normal, with prices easing from record levels.

To find out more about other Rabobank research, contact the Mount Gambier branch on (08) 8726 2500 or subscribe to **RaboResearch Food & Agribusiness Australia & New Zealand** on your podcast app.

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# INSECTICIDE RESISTANCE IN BLUEGREEN APHID SPREADS INTO NEW REGIONS OF VICTORIA AND SOUTH AUSTRALIA

by Lillia Jenkins, Julia Severi, and Evatt Chirgwin, Cesar Australia



As autumn approaches, growers will encounter a greater risk of bluegreen aphid outbreaks in lucerne and other legume crops.

The emergence and spread of insecticide resistance in bluegreen aphids may make controlling these outbreaks more challenging than in previous years.

In this article, we report on new research that shows insecticide-resistant bluegreen aphids have spread further across southern Australia than previously recognised.



## First-of-its-kind insecticide resistance

The bluegreen aphid (*Acyrtosiphon kondoi*) is a pest of lucerne, pulses, medics, clovers, and pastures. Outbreaks of this tiny pest are most common in spring and autumn, where they damage plants by feeding on foliage and spreading plant viruses.

To control bluegreen aphid, growers routinely rely on carbamates and organophosphates. Until recently, these were the only chemical groups registered for bluegreen aphid management in most crops, contributing to a strong and consistent selection pressure to evolve resistance to these two chemical groups.

Indeed, in 2018, reports emerged from New South Wales and South Australia that insecticide sprays no longer provided satisfactory control.

Following these control failures, our 2021/22 lab studies confirmed that some bluegreen aphid populations in South Australia and NSW had evolved resistance to most chemicals registered and routinely used to control them (carbamates, organophosphate, and synthetic pyrethroids).

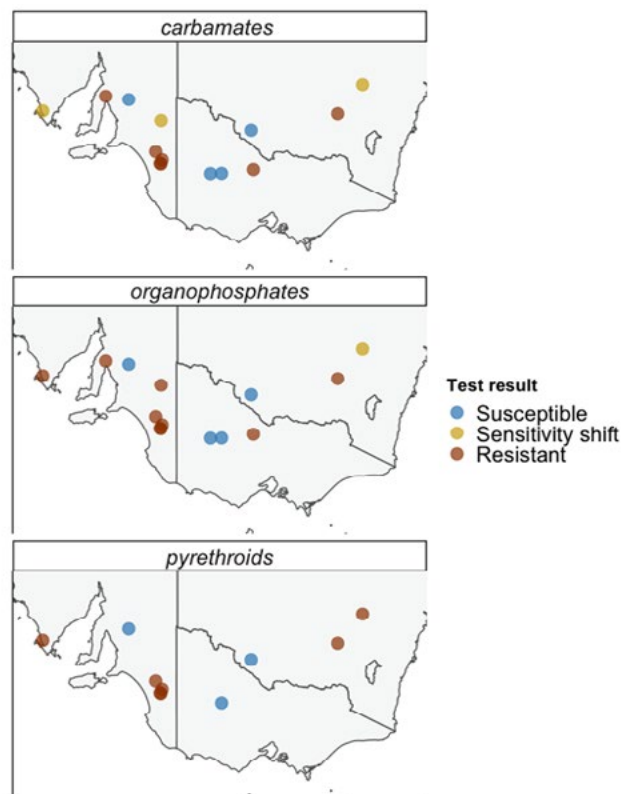
These were the first confirmed cases of insecticide resistance in bluegreen aphid, worldwide.

Key unknowns remain about what this first-of-its-kind evolutionary emergence means for management, including the risk of future control failures, where resistant strains have spread, and the long-term efficacy of other insecticides used in bluegreen aphid control.

## A new project researching insecticide resistance

Cesar Australia and Lucerne Australia have commenced parallel research projects, with investment from AgriFutures Australia and the GRDC, to help pasture seed and pulse growers manage insecticide resistance in bluegreen aphid. To do so, we are gathering information on these resistant populations, including where they have spread and what crop types they are present in.

Beginning in Spring 2022, lead research scientist Dr. Evatt Chirgwin and his team have been collecting bluegreen aphid populations originating from across southern Australia. Many of these populations were obtained with the help of growers and agronomists – who posted bluegreen aphid samples from their paddocks to Cesar Australia’s lab.



Map representing the spread of resistance in bluegreen aphid through South Australia.

These aphids were then used in a series of chemical bioassays to determine resistance levels to the chemical groups where resistance has previously arisen in bluegreen aphids: pirimicarb (carbamate) and chlorpyrifos (organophosphates), and alpha-cypermethrin (synthetic pyrethroids).

## Resistance has spread into new areas

Currently, the team has tested 11 new aphid populations. Of these 11, 7 populations showed significant levels of insecticide resistance to organophosphates and/or carbamates.

Our findings suggest insecticide resistance in bluegreen aphid has spread much further than previously reported. Most notably, resistance was found in Victoria for the first time and has spread further west (the Eyre Peninsula) than previously recorded. New resistant populations were also discovered in NSW.

Worryingly, three resistant populations were discovered in paddocks with no history of control failure, suggesting resistant strains may have moved undetected into some new areas.

## Management advice

Managing insecticide resistance in pests can be difficult, particularly with the risk of damage that comes with infestations of bluegreen aphid. But the increasing evidence of resistance emphasises the importance of giving extra care to long-term thinking in pest management.

Continual use of organophosphates, carbamates and pyrethroids may encourage the development of resistance in bluegreen aphids. Growers are encouraged to reduce their usage of these chemicals.

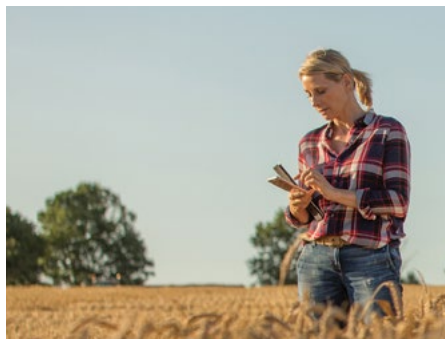
Alternative chemicals are available for some crops. Sulfoxaflor (Transform) is registered for use on bluegreen aphid in pulses, and has recently been registered for lucerne. Flonicamid (MainMan) is under a limited emergency permit to control insecticide resistant bluegreen aphid in the later stages of lucerne seed production. As part of reducing pesticides, growers can utilise the GRDC crop aphids back pocket guide to identify aphids, as management recommendations vary per species.

Natural enemies can also help suppress aphids, and evidence is pointing towards beneficials such as ladybirds, parasitoid wasps, hoverflies, and lacewings assisting in keeping bluegreen aphid numbers in check. To this end, Cesar will be undertaking further research to identify the presence and diversity of natural enemies attacking bluegreen populations, and developing tools that support growers in maintaining beneficials, such as the beneficials chemical toxicology table on the resource page of Cesar Australia's website.

## To deliver the best outcome for growers, we need your help!

There are big plans in the works for our research in 2023, including completing further surveillance bioassays and collecting new populations of bluegreen aphid for resistance testing.

We're asking for assistance from growers and producers across Australia to help us map the spread of insecticide resistance in bluegreen aphid.



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If you're having trouble controlling bluegreen aphid with insecticides, or have a suspicion resistance in bluegreen aphid is lurking in your region, you can send us an aphid sample for free testing. Not only will you receive your results, but your help will allow us to provide regional and seasonal recommendations (e.g., which chemicals are most effective) for bluegreen aphid control and help prevent future resistance.

Simply follow the procedure outlined in the aphid collection guidelines on Cesar Australia's resources page (<https://cesaraustralia.com/resources/sending-aphids-for-resistance-testing/>).

For information on collecting and posting samples, please contact Dr Evatt Chirgwin (email: [echirgwin@cesaraustralia.com](mailto:echirgwin@cesaraustralia.com) or phone: 0487292556).

## Want to know more?

You can find more information on bluegreen aphids, economic thresholds and management recommendations on Cesar Australia's PestNotes webpage

## Acknowledgements

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# BARENBRUG UPDATE



by Daryl Turner, Southern Production Manager

## Domestic

The unseasonal Summer has seen delays to the current lucerne harvest, which will ultimately flow through to impact the availability to our domestic sales teams. We are hoping to get some good yields to supply the local demand for the key SARDI products. The main demand continues to be for Winter active varieties such as SARDI 7 Series 2 and SARDI 10 Series 2 for high quality hay production, while graziers are tending toward grazing tolerant type Lucernes such as SARDI Grazer. There are some growers however that are taking a more cautious approach preferring to retain older pastures for another year rather than in investing in a new lucerne stand. This is mainly due to lower livestock numbers and hence reduced need for improved fodder options. Moving forward we anticipate good demand for Autumn 2023.

## International

Recently we have seen the global seed trade and demand showing signs of slowing since our last update, however the underlying demand for product remains good. Some customers are currently more cautious on purchasing seed compared to the past 2 seasons, returning to a more traditional buying pattern. A good volume of seed shipped from the USA and some delays in shipping from various locations has meant some late arrival of stock in Saudi Arabia (KSA) giving a carry position for many companies. There have been instances of cheap seed entering from the EU to KSA disrupting the market and causing some confusion which has no doubt impacted some of the demand that we would normally see at this time. The situation is being addressed by industry and hopefully when resolved we will start

to see some “normality” back in this region. Other major markets such as South Africa and Argentina are feeling the pinch with the impacts of inflation, depreciating currencies and in the case of Argentina, availability of USD, but again the positive is the demand is there. Ultimately, it’s still very early in the season with buyers jockeying for position, but until we get seed cleaned and in bags, they will have to be patient.

## Seed Production

We are all aware of what a difficult production season it has been with the impacts of the unseasonal late spring/early summer conditions creating challenges such as; getting hay off paddocks in a timely manner and difficulties with triggering plants to start flowering instead of wanting to grow more forage.

The 2023 harvest has kicked off with a number of early crops being delivered to the cleaning sheds in the past week. We have been pleasantly surprised with some of these early delivered crop yields being higher than anticipated, this is hopefully a positive sign for the remainder of the crop to be harvested. Let’s hope the weather conditions can stabilise so we can get a good run at the imminent harvest.

We have a number of varieties still available for new 2023 sowing this year, so please reach out to your production agronomist to secure your preferred variety. We wish everyone all the best for the upcoming harvest.

Justin Elliott – 0408 851 411  
Michael Birks – 0456 437 976

# LUCERNE AUSTRALIA BEST PRACTICE SPRAY EFFICIENCY WORKSHOP

February 16th at ‘Brecon’ with Mary O’Brien

Lucerne Australia held a very well attended Best Practice Spray Efficiency Workshop on February 16th with consultant agronomist, Mary O’Brien.

A big thankyou to workshop hosts, the Campbell family and staff at ‘Brecon’, to Simon Allen for providing a small boom spray for the workshop and to Brandt – Keith branch for showcasing some of the latest spray technology from John Deere.



# LUCERNE AGRONOMY REPORT

by Scott Hutchings, Senior Agronomist, Cox Rural



Lucerne seed harvest in general is about 14-21 days later than last year with delayed lock up timing of dryland and irrigated paddocks due to unseasonably wet and cool weather in November. Conditions throughout the flowering period have fluctuated greatly causing periods of good setting conditions and poor setting conditions. Current conditions with showery weather have not caused crop damage but are delaying harvest and may cause some seed splitting.

Very early locked up dryland crops set poorly but later paddocks set well but in general the dryland harvest has been variable with some individual stand out areas and paddocks.

Once again Australian crop mirids have been a persistent issue in crops with fast reinfestation occurring after spraying. Lucerne Australia is currently looking at new options for control moving forward. Native budworm number varied through the season but are easily controlled by current chemical options. Aphids have been patchy but not particularly bad. Transform is now fully registered in lucerne for seed, hay & grazing with a cutting/ grazing withholding period of 21 days. An emergency use permit is still in place for Mainman insecticide until January 2024. I would

encourage advisors to do some work with this active as it may still be valuable moving forward because of its unique mode of action and "softness" on beneficials and pollinators. We have observed a significant increase in seed wasp numbers in later crops in the last few weeks, while I am expecting limited damage to early irrigation crops I would be expecting moderate to high damage in later crops. This year has seen a number of paddocks locked up significantly later due to conditions at hay making.

Weed pressure has been slightly higher this summer due to spring rain, particularly Sow thistle that has germinated post winter cleaning. Those members who had paddocks tested for herbicide resistance in ryegrass, barley grass and sow thistle are encouraged to talk discuss the results with there advisors and develop control strategies before wintercleaning.

As a general comment I am expecting reasonable volumes of seed off the dryland opportunity crops due to area locked up and solid yields from the Tintinara Coonalpyn areas but my observations are that the irrigated yields will be only average due to variable weather conditions and mirid pressure.

# LIMESTONE COAST SEEDS UPDATE

by Greg Excell, Limestone Coast Seeds



As we enter our second season of lucerne seed processing at Limestone Coast Seeds we are noticing some dramatic differences to last season, primarily because of mother nature and what she has thrown at us over the last few months. The most noticeable difference is with the dryland seed entering our site six weeks later than last year. At present we are receiving both irrigated and dryland lucerne, with some exceptional dryland yields being delivered.

I'm pleased to say that our client base is continuing to expand, and we look forward to providing outstanding service to new and existing clients. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the clients who have provided us with positive feedback about our site and the services we provide.

Dodder test results this season will also feature the Lucerne Seed Wasp (LSW) numbers per gram. The report will also indicate if *Idiomacromerus Perplexus* and *Pteromalus Sequester* are present, as they are the two main parasitoids which lay eggs in the LSW infested seed. This will enable growers to have real time information on wasp levels and hopefully give them a great head start in creating management plans for the next season.

Electricity prices have continued to rise, and the cost of bags has increased due to ocean freight, manufacturing and fuel costs. Fortunately, we have been able to offset some of these expenses by installing a 99kw solar system, thanks to the help of our local electrician, NBH Electrical. We have also purchased electric forklifts to help reduce our running costs in that area.

Moisture levels could pose a few challenges to growers due to the season being later than usual. Please be reminded that we have a grain dryer on site to cater for this.

I wish everyone a great harvest.



# FODDER AND THE FLOODS

by Isabel Dando, Industry Analyst, Dairy Australia



The flood events of last year brought a great deal of both uncertainty and anticipation to the fodder market, as highlighted in Dairy Australia's March *Situation and Outlook* report. Prices rose significantly in January for most hay types and in most regions, bringing an end to the two-year run of stable pricing. This period also saw higher than usual demand for purchased feed, as many farmers were unable to produce homegrown feed to a standard or quantity they were expecting. Now with supply shortages well established, prices have begun to stabilise, and each region has their own impacts to grapple with.

Various regions across Queensland (QLD) have faced heavy rainfall and repeated flooding throughout the season. Wet conditions significantly delayed sowing programs and reduced the expected hay volumes planted, creating expectations of shortages prior to the tail end of the year. Whilst this summer, local demand is slow, recent heavy rainfall (particularly in southern QLD) is tipped to bring more into the market.

Across the dairying regions of New South Wales (NSW), limited hay and silage production is still occurring when weather allows, however, concerns remain around quality. At the same time, improved water availability has helped keep pastures growing under irrigation over the summer months, suppressing demand for fodder. For the Bega Valley, this is alongside good on-farm stocks of silage.

This is a similar story across Victoria, where relatively favourable conditions are supporting pasture growth under irrigation, alongside finishing hay and silage production. Demand for purchased feed has been somewhat mitigated in recent weeks by summer forage crops now coming off, reasonable on-farm hay stores and supportive weather for both lucerne and cereal hay cutting and baling. Despite this, across Victoria, average cereal hay prices are 72% above February of last year.

In southeast and central South Australia (SA), though cereal hay is being made post grain harvest, both regions have faced the most markable price increases, sitting 73% and 70% above February last year, respectively. Additionally, some hay crops on irrigation are also being baled as silage, filling any shorter-term fodder gaps.

In comparison to other areas along the east coast, northwest Tasmania has felt minimal impacts of wet weather within local fodder markets. Many farmers in the region have been able to produce homegrown feed as expected, reducing reliance on purchased feed markets. This is in addition to good rainfall continuing to support pasture growth over the last few months. It's a similar story in southwest Western Australia (WA), who have also had an average hay production season on-top of a bumper grain harvest. In these regions, cereal hay prices are 11% and 8% above last year in northwest Tasmania and southwest WA respectively.

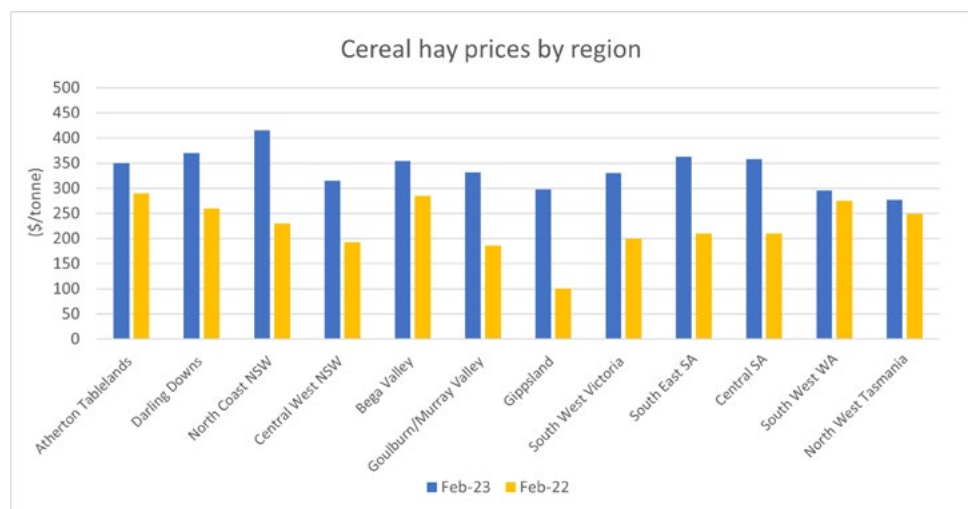
Slow but steady hay production and good pasture growth have helped to mitigate demand for purchased fodder in recent weeks, but it is no surprise that prices are sitting at significantly higher levels than before the flood events and resultant supply pressure. Many farmers have used the summer months to assess short to medium term requirements against expected conditions over autumn and into winter. This is all contributing to steadying demand and more stable prices.

In light of the altered fodder outlook caused by the flood events that occurred late last year across eastern Australia, Dairy Australia commissioned the Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA) to produce a *Fodder Insights Report (Spring-Summer 2022)* to provide a detailed analysis of the current situation and the outlook for the coming months.

Cereal hay prices by region (February 2023 vs February 2022)

	(Prices are \$/tonne)	
	Feb-23	Feb-22
Atherton Tablelands	350	290
Darling Downs	370	260
North Coast NSW	415	230
Central West NSW	315	193
Bega Valley	354	285
Goulburn/Murray Valley	332	186
Gippsland	298	100
South West Victoria	330	200
South East SA	363	210
Central SA	358	210
South West WA	296	275
North West Tasmania	277	250

\*Atherton Tablelands and Gippsland are pasture hay.



Source: Dairy Australia, Australian Fodder Industry Association (AFIA), \*Atherton Tablelands and Gippsland are pasture hay.



# SYNERGY SEEDS UPDATE

by Craig Myall, Managing Director



Australian Lucerne seed exports totalled 1,650mt in the final quarter of 2022 which is broadly in line with the quantities shipped in the same period over the last 7 years. Saudi Arabia was again the most prominent destination receiving 685mt of seed, followed by South Africa who imported 251mt. Egypt who has been rather quiet in recent years received 232mt and the USA continued to be a major importer obtaining 196mt during the October to December 2022 period.

For the calendar year, 6,830mt was exported from Australian shores which is the lowest total since 2018, significantly behind the totals of 9,271mt, 10,661mt and 8,683mt shipped in the last three years. There is no doubt supply has been the major factor in this decline, however price sensitive markets have also chosen to either import competing producing countries seed or not import their normalised levels of seeds. A prime example of this is South Africa which over the last 2 years have imported 1,282mt and 1,095mt, however only took 701mt in 2022. Saudi Arabia which is the major importer of certified Australian Lucerne production received 2,970mt in 2022 (43% of total), and although this was

less than recent historical figures, my belief is that supply was the limiting factor there.

Looking to the 2023 harvest and some dryland and early irrigated stands are now harvested and the yields to date have been average. The bulk of the irrigated harvest will occur this year in the months of March and April with some stands expecting to roll into May. We wish all seed producers the very best with the 2023 harvest as we attempt to re-stock the barest cupboard in possibly the history of the industry.

For those who have new planting areas available in 2023, Synergy Seeds currently have seed contracts for the with attractive terms for its Proprietary Lucerne range. Please feel free to contact Wayne, Nathan or myself on the numbers listed below to discuss our options.

Finally, we look forward to attending the South East Field Days at Lucindale again this year. Please feel free to drop into our site 182 on the corner of Robinson St and Rayner Rd for a barista brewed cup of Synergy coffee!!

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# AGRIFUTURES SEED WASP PROJECT UPDATE (PRJ-012189)

by Alan McKay, Daniele Giblot-Ducray, Kym Perry, Kate Muirhead and Lamyaa Alhwash (SARDI), Ray Correll (RHO Environmetrics), James De Barro (Alpha Group Consulting)



## Lucerne seed wasp and parasitoid results reported for 2023 harvest

In 2023, the AgriFutures Pasture Seeds Program funded project will cover the costs of testing for lucerne seed wasp (LSW) and two associated parasitoid wasps in lucerne delivery samples.

The combined results for LSW and the two parasitoid wasps is a measure of seeds lost in each load. The tests will be run and reported to the cleaning sheds at the same time as the golden dodder test.

In June/July 2023, SARDI will issue the annual grower report to track changes in wasp levels across the seasons. This year, for

each delivery samples the % of clean seed yield loss caused by LSW and associated parasitoid wasps will be added to the report. The calculation incorporates the total levels of wasps and the cleanout rates; it does not however include measures of wasps that pass through the header or disperse before harvest, so the actual yield loss per hectare will be greater.

## Project Final Report

The data collected by PRJ-012189 is being consolidated for final analysis and to prepare the final report and recommendations by June 30, 2023.

# FATIGUE MANAGEMENT

*courtesy of Safe Ag Systems*



As the cooler weather approaches, so does the beginning of the seeding season. If you've been farming for a while, you probably know your routine by heart and could do it with your eyes closed. You might even say you go on autopilot for it? If you said yes, it's a problem you may be unaware of.

A recent article featuring a 78-year-old Queensland farmer who became trapped in a grain silo is a prime example of what can happen when you become too familiar with the task at hand. A task he has carried out many times before was the catalyst for his near-death experience. "No matter how confident you are doing something, things can and do go wrong," the man said.

The key message from this article is to never forget the risks associated with your job and allow yourself to zone out. While it's seems simple, it's actually more challenging than it sounds. Once you've safely done a task numerous times without fault, your brain subconsciously forgets about the associated risks causing inattention, otherwise known as **autopilot** or **zoning out**.

How many times have you zoned out while driving the same roads, yet you still arrive at your destination but without any recollection of the journey? That's going into autopilot. The same goes with putting on your shoes in the morning, do you remember which foot you did first?

Unlikely. The more often we do something, the more likely we are to continue to do that thing the same way. Unless something happens to change our thinking.

Another reason we go into autopilot for repeated tasks is we're rushed or frustrated. You might be working against the weather, trying to get everything done before the rain comes. Or a bearing seized on your machine and you need to get it replaced urgently to continue work, so you're rushing to get to the local parts dealer before they close for the day.

In times like this we are not thinking about the present. We're thinking ahead about 'how to resolve' the issue, and what will be impacted if you can't get it sorted. Next, adrenalin and cortisol kick in and the conscious mind gets sidelined resulting in tunnel vision on the problem. This is where inattention and impulsivity can come into play and unnecessary risks are taken.

Agriculture is a dangerous industry. On top of working long hours, we also work with some pretty dangerous hazards like machinery, animals, chemicals and more, therefore inattention or autopilot at the wrong time can be dangerous or fatal.

When you know about autopilot, you're more aware of it in yourself and others. We recommend doing the following to help you avoid inattention and prepare for the new season ahead.

1. Before undertaking a task, **identify any potential hazards** that you may encounter, such as faulty farm machinery, chemical exposure, and tripping hazards, and conduct a thorough risk assessment. This could involve identifying

areas of the farm that may be particularly hazardous, assessing the condition of equipment, and reviewing safety procedures. Keeping yourself in the 'now' by changing up your routine prevents you from zoning out.

2. **Check over and prepare your machinery and equipment.** You should always ensure that all equipment is properly maintained and in good working order before you begin seeding. Inspect machinery for any wear and tear, check fluid levels, and replace any worn or damaged parts. This could also be a part of your Pre-start checklist before you begin operating. This will bring to attention any faults and make sure you are aware of what you're currently doing in the present.
3. If your going out in the field, start questioning yourself on what personal **protection equipment (PPE)** you may need? This could include sunscreen or clothing that provides sun protection, sturdy work boots, eye protection, and respirators or masks if working with chemicals.
4. Another reason for inattention? **Fatigue.** Solution to this? A good night's sleep. Like many agricultural workers, you probably work long hours daily, and even more during your harvest periods. Yet without enough sleep and rest, your brain gets clogged up with waste products that impair our conscious judgement. So much sure you catch up on your Z's every night.

Download a copy of our Free Fatigue Management resource to refer to while seeding.

It's important to remember that inattention doesn't end when seeding does. Inattention happens to everyone. You, your workers, contractors, visitors, family, friends and neighbours. Yet no one will admit it. Especially if it's happening while undertaking a task associated with risk.

However, incidents still happen and inattention will be a significant contributor to pretty much all of them. So make sure everyone present on your farm is aware of it too. Making small changes to their everyday routine will help reduce human error and will ensure everyone goes home safe.

This article has been written specifically for our members by Safe Ag Systems. As a member of Lucerne Australia, you can receive a 10% discount off your annual subscription. Terms and Conditions apply so please head to their website Safe Ag Systems or contact their team on **08 8490 0939**.

# DLF SEEDS UPDATE

by Jess Nottle, Seed Production Agronomist



## How's the season?

As I write, the dryland lucerne harvest has just begun. While off-the-header yields are varied, it's good to see a few of the earlier paddocks yielding higher than expected following a terribly cool period during flowering. In the back half of February, we have noted some wasp numbers in paddocks, albeit at low numbers. We are anticipating some damage to later irrigated crops.

With the delayed harvest of annual pasture seed crops due to the cool & wet spring conditions, we are about to see the inevitable squeeze on our local cleaning sheds. Demand for annual pasture seeds has intensified now we are closer the traditional autumn sowing period. Customers in our eastern states are keen to sow soon following continuous thunderstorms and good soil moisture. We anticipate the demand for lucerne cleaning will also be high with most lucerne seed currently sold out and awaiting the new crop. The lucerne harvest will be condensed with a big overlap between the dryland and irrigated harvest, putting further pressure on storage and cleaning at sheds.

Following observations in established lucerne crops over the past season, it's evident that Integrated Pest Management (IPM) solutions are becoming increasingly important in our perennial seed crops such as lucerne. We have observed plenty of pesticide failures over the years however last year seemed to present more than ever. Talk with your lucerne agronomist or seed production advisor to develop a plan of attack for the coming years pest management, and ensure you make note of any failures. Ensuring full recommended label rates of pesticides are used, and correct spray application techniques will aid us in managing our risk to developing further pesticide resistance. Perhaps it's time to look at reducing our high reliance on chemical pesticides, and considering other management options? A chat for another day...

## International Markets

The International Market for Lucerne remains at a standstill with the uncertainty as to the size of the crop and the uncertainty of the supply from other origins. As we mentioned in the December newsletter, suppliers from other origins will find ways of moving into our traditional markets at a lower price point. While these suppliers will not be able to replace the entire Australian supply, it does put downward pressure on pricing as the market operates in a range that we have to be within. This is something we are monitoring closely and continuing to work with our customers who buy our proprietary varieties as a preference over the Common types.



## Improve your feed base this autumn

Got some hungry stock to feed? Looking for a quick feed option, or an additional species to bulk up your quality lucerne silage/hay in spring? We've got you covered with our huge range of temperate pasture seed options. From high-performance ryegrass to annual & perennial clovers, forage cereals, and bulky pasture mixes, you'll find it all listed in our autumn pasture guide. To discover our premium pasture options, go to the following link then click 'download' to access our autumn pasture guide.

[https://issuu.com/sjshep/docs/dlf0024\\_autumnguide2023\\_fa\\_issuu](https://issuu.com/sjshep/docs/dlf0024_autumnguide2023_fa_issuu)

You can purchase our seed though your local retailer.

## Lastly...

DLF Seeds have openings for new lucerne seed plantings in 2023, plus other seed crops suited to southern SA & VIC. Get it touch today to ensure you get your preferred planting option!

Find us at the South East Field Days at Lucindale, Site 286 Hurst street.  
Free BBQ and cool drinks, come say Hi!

Seed Production & Purchasing

Jess Nottle – 0438 302 148

Anthony Quilter – 0427 572 125



# UPPER MURRAY SEEDS REPORT

by Charlotte Sutherland, Business Development Manager



## Background

This is the first time we have written a report for the Lucerne Leader so thought it would be a good opportunity to introduce ourselves and give you an update on Upper Murray Seeds (UMS). Established in 1993 by Stewart and Kate Sutherland, UMS is an independent family-owned agribusiness leading the way in producing and distributing Australian pasture seed to farmers across the nation. As a vertically-integrated business, Upper Murray Seeds offer customers everything from seed production, processing, agronomy advice and quality seed. Our extensive range includes temperate, tropical and sub-tropical varieties.

For more than two decades, the Upper Murray Seeds team of qualified and experienced researchers have been breeding and developing different varieties of pasture seed under authentic farming conditions. Our research program was first established in the Upper Murray region of New South Wales. In 2018, the program relocated to the Cressy Research Station in the Tasmanian Midlands.

The Upper Murray Seeds Silver Lucerne range is made up of four varieties covering winter-activity levels, 5, 7, 9 and 11. These highly productive, palatable, and persistent lucernes have been purpose-bred to resist common diseases and pests by Australian researcher, Dr Ian Kaehne. Dr Kaehne, a former principal research scientist at the South Australian Research and Development Institute, has been endlessly fascinated by the quest for improving plant genetics since establishing SARDI's lucerne breeding program in 1969. His objective in breeding the Silver Lucerne range was to create truly multi-purpose plants across a wide range of winter-activity groups.

Dr Kaehne explains, "The silver lucerne range was bred to meet the demand of the Australian farmer. Characteristics such as high leaf:stem ratio, excellent herbage quality, long-term persistence, broad grazing-tolerant crowns and significant foliar, root and crown disease resistance were all vital in selection". One consideration that can often be overlooked when breeding forage varieties is seed yield. During the development of the Silver range, a strong emphasis was placed on breeding varieties that were not only market leading when it comes to forage performance but also the opportunity to produce above average seed yields, ensuring the varieties are a viable option for our seed production partners.

## Seed Production

We would also like to introduce David Cowle our Seed Production Manager. David comes to UMS with extensive experience in agricultural production including dairy, horticulture and for the past ten years in the role of Tasmanian Manager for Palla Pharma. David also has an understanding of livestock and pasture systems via his involvement with the family farming operation focused on livestock production. With a strong background in agriculture he will continue to build a valued service to our grower base.

With our domestic and international lucerne market ever expanding, and our lucerne varieties performing well across the world, we still have some lucerne contracts to fill for 2023. David can be contacted on 0437 076 920 or davidc@uppermurrayseeds.com.au



**AFIA**  
Australian Fodder Industry Association  
2023 Events - Save the dates!

**Fodder Festival & National Conference**

Tuesday 15 August - see the latest industry machinery & technology in action.

Wednesday 16 & Thursday 17 August - join us to discuss key issues & innovations.

Bendigo region, Victoria  
[www.afia.org.au/events](http://www.afia.org.au/events)

The banner features a green background with a calendar icon, a tractor icon, and a group of people icon. Below the text is a photograph of a large crowd of people gathered in a field, looking at various pieces of agricultural machinery, including harvesters and tractors.

# LUCERNE EXPORT STATISTICS FROM AUSTRALIA

## - January 2013 to January 2023

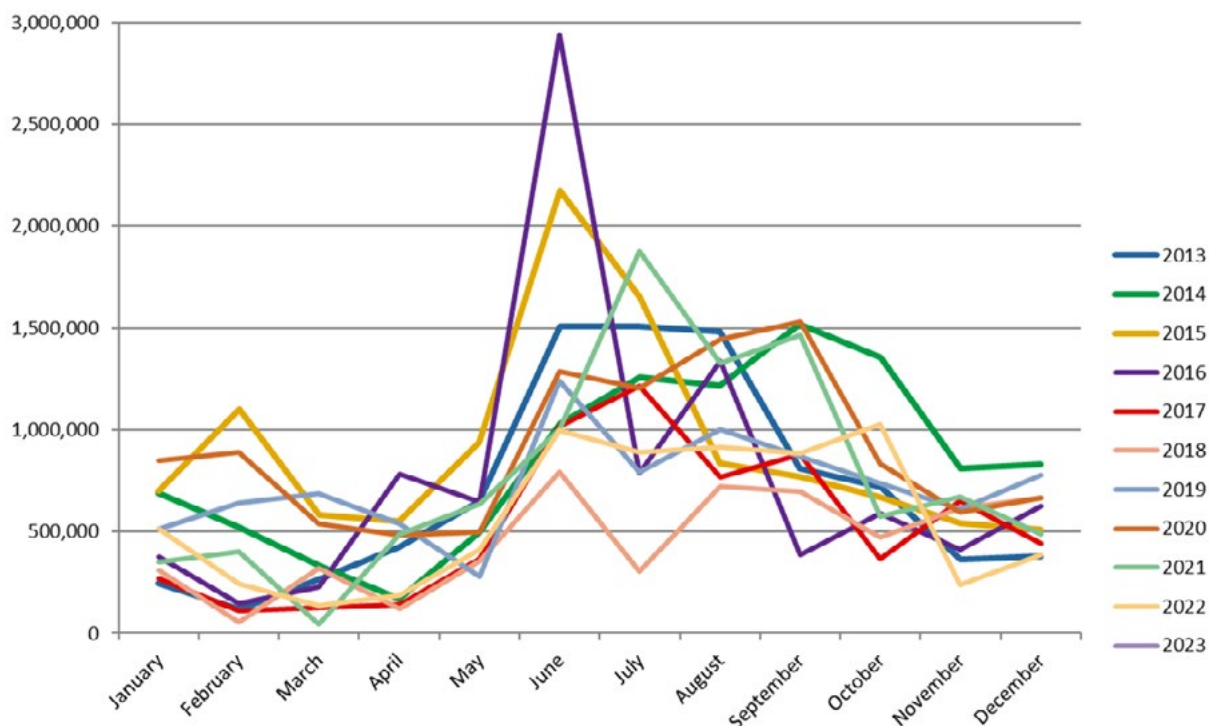
courtesy of Teague Australia

Quantities below are in kg.

	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Year to date Difference 2020 & 2021
Jan	245,741	687,172	698,895	374,150	266,596	307,530	512,692	850,518	352,056	515,246	302,931	-212,315
Feb	118,025	518,553	1,099,252	148,919	108,988	57,008	639,425	887,613	400,125	243,786		
Mar	269,091	334,033	582,929	227,050	127,000	321,205	684,044	539,525	44,500	137,329		
Apr	424,057	171,816	549,340	784,031	143,025	123,100	536,501	482,194	439,500	186,064		
May	647,509	495,472	940,000	644,704	363,023	355,575	281,335	495,875	633,571	409,715		
Jun	1,509,605	1,029,000	2,176,805	2,942,685	1,018,477	794,995	1,239,461	1,286,579	1,000,145	996,989		
Jul	1,510,278	1,260,782	1,649,080	786,450	1,214,352	303,288	792,380	1,205,927	1,875,361	891,632		
Aug	1,482,357	1,217,121	834,178	1,339,684	767,256	721,730	1,002,472	1,443,626	1,329,201	914,012		
Sep	811,667	1,516,965	770,857	388,207	882,195	698,665	871,762	1,533,097	1,463,717	885,058		
Oct	719,882	1,356,922	667,503	588,199	364,673	472,480	738,090	832,925	573,749	1,026,920		
Nov	363,877	810,704	543,246	409,700	649,318	615,285	609,028	595,095	670,850	237,888		
Dec	379,122	829,293	511,127	623,560	443,729	664,134	775,684	667,771	488,544	385,212		
Total	8,481,211	10,227,833	11,023,212	9,257,339	6,348,911	5,434,995	8,682,874	10,661,226	9,271,319	6,829,851	302,931	

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

### Lucerne Exports Statistics from Australia 2013-2023



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

# S&W SEED COMPANY

by Peter Gibbs, National Production Manager - S&W Seed Company



At the time of writing S&W has received half of its dryland lucerne seed harvest. The current cooler weather conditions haven't helped with both ripening and harvesting of the remaining dryland fields.

Irrigation is yet to start, this is primarily due to the later closing up period from the very wet Spring we received in 2022. I am expecting that the majority of the harvest will be late March into early April which is around 2-3 weeks later than normal.

Weather during pollination was quite varied and this is reflective in the potential yield being average to slightly below average. Seed wasp numbers have been low but earlier insect pressure from both green and crop mirid have made their mark contributing to the slightly lower yield expectation.

International markets continue to be strong in both demand and pricing, and we have been receiving numerous enquiries from not only our existing clients but new ones as well on product availability. Inventory levels around other producing countries are very low which is helping with this demand.

Our domestic sales have been very encouraging with very strong demand for forage cereals and vetch along with annual ryegrass and clovers. Ours sales team have been very busy taking orders and ensuring product is being delivered in a timely manner. Lucerne is also creating strong demand domestically and with the delayed harvest there will be a short turn around from cleaned in bag to the customer.

S&W will have a wide range of lucerne, annual clover, medic and forage cereal for production this year, for more information please call Peter Gibbs on 0427574027 or [petergibbs@swseedco.com](mailto:petergibbs@swseedco.com)

From all of us at S&W, we wish all our seed producers an uninterrupted lucerne seed harvest.

## LUCERNE AUSTRALIA Members

Allen's Warrawee Park	Dinyarrak Farms	Kelvale Emu Flat	Newton Pastoral Pty Ltd
Altus, TJ & JL 'Moonmera'	Farmer, BL & RE	Kenwyn Proprietors	Nupey Pty Ltd
Bergan Park	Florando Partners	Kester, RJ & J	Ryan, NJ & LK
Berry, S & J Family Trust	Forster, SA & KA	Kinyerrie Partnership	Sanders, DE & FM
Brecon Proprietors	Fry, AL & JE & Son	Kuchel, DJ & CE	Sanders, GE & LM
Brown, DC & DG	Glendoon Pastoral Co	Lake Ellen Pastoral	Sanders, SN & DA
Cacia Downs Farming Co	Graetz, S & H	Leach, PJ & Co	Sanders, RJ & ED
Circle H Farms	Harvey, M & K Family Trust	Loller, B & L	Scottswell Partners
Colara Farms	Hawkins, MM	Makin Nominees	Simpson, GE & TM
Connor Pastoral Co Pty Ltd	Hunt, DB & JS	Maroona Proprietors	Twynem Partners
Corlinga Partners	Hutchings, SC & CA	Martin, JP & SGP	Vandeleur Rural Holdings
Crawford, CJ Pty Ltd	Hyfield Pastoral Pty Ltd	McMurray, BJ & CB	Vowles, B, K & M
Creston Partners	Jarra Farm Trust	McMurray, JA & KA	Wallis, PA & ML
Crouch, RJ & Co	Jesse, Cameron	McWimay Pty Ltd	Wilsdon, RE & TK
Darwent Agriculture Pty Ltd	Keller Partners	Nalang Pastoral Co	Zacker Pastoral P/L



# LUCERNE AUSTRALIA

## Sponsors

### Gold



**Rabobank**

### Silver



### Associate/Bronze

AJ Cotton & MA McDonald	Gibbs Agricultural Consulting	S & W Seed Co
Alpha Group Consulting	Imperial Valley Milling Company	Seed Force
AFIA (Aust. Fodder Industry Assoc)	JJ O'Connor & Sons Pty Ltd	Stoller Australia
Barenbrug Australia Pty Ltd	Kalyx Australia Pty Ltd	Synergy Seeds Pty Ltd
Brandt	Kongal Seeds	Tatiara Seeds
Cox Rural Keith	Limestone Coast Seeds	Teague Australia
D & M Rural	Naracoorte Seeds	Upper Murray Seeds
DTS Seed Assurance	Nutrien	Vermeeren Bros Manufacturing
Elders Keith	DLF Seeds	Western AG
Farmers Centre	Safe Ag Systems	Wilchem
Forage Genetics International	SA Apiarists Association	Wise Farm Equipment
Frank Fatchen Pty Ltd		

# LUCERNE AUSTRALIA *Executive Committee*

Got a question for Lucerne Australia?

Contact the Executive Officer or any our Executive Committee Members who will be happy to help.



**Scott Hutchings, Chairman**  
Contact: 0428 551 188

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.



**Aaron Freeman, Deputy Chairman**  
Contact: 0428 875 600

Aaron manages 'Colara' at Tintinara owned by the Munro Family producing dryland lucerne hay and seed, cereal hay and cropping along with a self-replacing merino flock and prime lambs. Aaron and his wife Penny also own and operate a contract harvesting business Colara Contracting along with a prime lamb enterprise on a recently purchased property.



**Katrina Copping, Executive Officer**  
Contact: 0439 538 332

Katrina was raised on a mixed farming enterprise at Mundulla and as an active partner in a family farm at Avenue Range has a good understanding of rural issues. She has spent most of her career working in research and extension and is strongly passionate about agriculture.



**Ben Farmer, Associate Member**  
Contact: 0438 501 269

Ben started with Alpha Group Consulting at Keith in 2013 before purchasing a lucerne property with his wife Rachel in December 2016. After a period of time with Nutrien Ag Solutions they began Wilkei Seeds trading a large portion of feed grains and suppling a wide range of pasture seeds both to seed exporters and businesses throughout Australia. Ben believes his direct experience within most facets of the lucerne seed supply chain brings a valuable and unique perspective to the LA Executive Committee.



**Adam Zacker, Grower Member**  
Contact: 0417 853 799

Adam owns and operates the family farm at Tintinara with his wife Hannah. They run a mix of cropping, sheep (both self-replacing Merinos and prime lamb production), a herd of Angus cows and both dryland and irrigated lucerne seed and hay. Adam is passionate about the lucerne industry and its challenges.



**Rodney Lush, Grower Member**  
Contact: 0419 862 510

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.



**Scott Campbell, Grower Member**  
Contact: 0417 887 562

Scott and his wife Sophie Campbell own a mixed farming business at Keith, producing Lucerne seed, hay grain and prime lamb production. As a business with a high reliance on lucerne Scott believes it is important to keep abreast of industry issues both domestic and international. His family have been involved in the lucerne seed industry for more than 40 years.



**Harrison Berry, Grower Member**  
Contact: 0447 998 421

Harrison manages a family farming operation at Brimbago, south east of Keith with cropping and sheep enterprises and as well as producing flood irrigated and dryland Lucerne seed. Before returning to manage the Brimbago property 5 years ago, Harrison worked in the Mining industry and also the Civil/Construction industry. This variety has provided a range of different insights and learnings, but he has a strong passion for the agricultural industry and is keen to contribute in building the lucerne seed industry further.



**Greg Excell, Associate Member**  
Contact: 0408 838 684

Greg has more than twenty eight years experience in the seed industry. He has performed various roles including seed cleaning, grain drying and engineering, and has now purchased his own seed processing site called Limestone Coast Seeds. Greg works collaboratively with both growers and marketers to ensure that only Lucerne seed of the highest quality is exported. From working in the seed business for many years it is obvious to Greg the many benefits that Lucerne Australia can offer the industry.