

LUCERNE *Leader*



ISSUE 72 | MARCH 2024



LUCERNE AUSTRALIA MARCH FIELD DAY



AgriFutures
Pasture Seeds



On Wednesday March 6th 2024, Lucerne Australia held their annual March Field Day in Keith, SA where growers, industry, researchers and the AgriFutures Pastures Seeds Advisory Panel came together to catch-up, visit the Lucerne Australia Trial Site and hear the latest results and recommendations from the RD&E projects being delivered to industry.

After a great egg & bacon roll & coffee provided by the breakfast BBQ specialists from RAGT and local coffee van Sweet Desires, attendees had the opportunity to inspect the agronomic trials at the LA Variety Trial site prior to harvest.

John Smith, General Manager, Levied & Emerging Industries kicked off the presentations session with a short overview on

AgriFutures Australia and the role this organisation has in RD&E for pasture seeds. Researchers from Cesar Australia (Luis Mata and Evatt Chirgwin) and SARDI (Alan McKay) followed, providing research snapshots on insecticide resistance in RLEM and Bluegreen Aphids and the new commercial Quantitative DNA test for lucerne seed wasp and associated parasitoid wasps.

More details on the Trial Site and AgriFutures funded Pasture Seeds Research are available on the Lucerne Australia website.

Seed varieties at the Trial Site have been supplied by: Alforex Seeds, Barenbrug, DLF Seeds, Naracoorte Seeds, RAGT, S&W Seed Co and Upper Murray Seeds.



Rabobank

IMPROVED MARGIN OUTLOOK FOR AUSTRALIA'S UPCOMING WINTER CROP

March 12, 2024

by Vitor Cacula Pistoia, Analyst RaboResearch, Australia & New Zealand



Rabobank

Australia's grain growers are looking to improved prospects in the season ahead, with 2024/25 gross margins set to increase on the back of a lower cost of production, Rabobank says in newly-released research report.

The specialist agribusiness bank says with the cost of fertiliser and agrochemicals potentially down as much as 20% while grain prices are forecast to ease just 6% on average, the upcoming Australian winter crop is shaping up to have a much better outlook than the previous season, where gross profit margins had been squeezed.

The report, Australia's winter crop gross margins – which analyses winter crop performance from 2017/2018 – forecasts 2024/25 gross margins for the three major winter crops (wheat, barley and canola) to all come in considerably above last season, albeit still lagging overall averages.

The report forecasts wheat gross margins for 2024/25 to come in at around 34.1% (compared with approximately 20% last season), barley at 32.6% (compared with 25% in 2023/24) and canola at 25.6% (up from 15% in 2023/24). This compares with averages for the period of 43.3%, 40.5% and 44.6% respectively, according to the bank's modelling.

Report author, RaboResearch grain and oilseeds analyst Vitor Pistoia said "gross margins can also be understood as a business's capacity to generate cash and, in that sense, 2024/25 should see a rebuild close to historical levels", with the previous (2023/24) season having been impacted by "substantial grain and oilseed price reductions and still relatively-elevated farm input prices".

"The seeding period for the 2024/25 season is about to start and growers are making the final decisions on what to plant and how to optimise crop rotation. The commodity price forecast as well as the expected cost of farm inputs are considerably different from the previous seasons, which has altered the profitability scenario for the upcoming winter cropping season," he said.

But "as with all things farming", the improved outlook "remains weather dependent", Mr Pistoia said.

Wheat 'the breadwinner'

The report says wheat is set to be Australia's "bread winner" for the season, with the 2024/25 crop likely to see "more dollars per hectare", with a projected gross margin of A\$281/hectare (compared with an average A\$158/hectare in 2023/24).



Vitor Cacula Pistoia, Analyst RaboResearch

Despite wheat prices forecast to be down 8% year-over-year, this is set to be "greatly compensated" by a larger reduction in the variable costs of fertiliser and agro chemicals (forecast to be down approximately 20% for wheat growers), the Rabobank report says.

"The A\$281 per hectare gross margin forecast situates wheat as potentially the most profitable of the three major crops for 2024, together with barley," Mr Pistoia said.

"Also due to the lowest variable cost, wheat might expand its area over other crops, especially canola."

These dynamics – and the fact wheat is the cheapest to produce of the three big Australian winter crops – will likely see the hectares planted to wheat in the coming season remain above the 12-million-hectare mark.

"In the 2023/24 season, wheat was cropped on 12.5 million hectares or 55% of the winter crop area," Mr Pistoia said. "Its total revenue was only exceeded by beef, and Australia is the fifth largest exporter of wheat globally."

He said wheat had been the only crop to have achieved above-average gross margins in four of the past seven seasons.

Barley 'the workhorse'

The bank estimates 2024/25 malting barley margins to come in at around A\$282/hectare (up from an average A\$225/hectare in 2023/24), providing similar margin returns to wheat, and well above canola.

"In combination with the benefits of barley at paddock level, such as weed control and optimising field work schedules, this sees barley as a strong and reliable crop choice for Australian farmers," Mr Pistoia said.

The bank expects 2024/25 Australian planted barley area to remain greater than four million hectares.

Mr Pistoia said China's import tariff on barley – announced in 2020 and scrapped in August last year – had impacted grower margins substantially, with barley recording the smallest margin growth of all three big winter crops between 2019/2020 and 2022/2023.

To find out more about other Rabobank research, contact Rabobank's Adelaide branch on (08) 8124 2300 or Rabobank's Mt Gambier on (08) 8726 2500 or subscribe to RaboResearch Food & Agribusiness Australia & New Zealand on your podcast app.

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"Australian farmers' response came in the form of area reduction – in this period, area planted to barley was reduced by roughly 1.3 million hectares or a 25% reduction," Mr Pistoia said. "Unexpected support for barley growers had come from reduced global wheat and corn ending stocks at the time, which prompted the demand for barley as a feed alternative in the period and avoided further price reductions."

Canola 'the rollercoaster'

The bank forecasts gross margins for canola at around A\$251/hectare in 2024/25 – well up from last season's average A\$158/hectare gross margin, but lagging wheat and barley.

While production costs will be lower, "the global market for vegetable oil is not promising a massive commodity price upside for the 2024/25 season", the report says.

With canola having the highest correlation between margin outlook and cropping area of all the big three Australian winter crops, a reduction in area planted is expected in the season ahead, Rabobank says.

An area of around three million hectares is expected for the 2024/25 season, Mr Pistoia said, with the east coast showing a higher share of "canola area" due to already good levels of soil moisture through the recent summer.

UPPER MURRAY SEEDS UPDATE

David Cowle – National Production Manager - Ph: 0437 076 920
Keith Lange - Area Manager SA/Sth Vic



Upper Murray Seeds Production Update

David Cowle – National Production Manager

At the time of writing, the Upper Murray Seeds (UMS) harvest in Tasmania has almost wrapped up, with one Chicory crop left to harvest. The drills are back out in the field starting the cycle again, with some annuals and Italians already being sown.

Growers have endured the usual climate related challenges this season. However, they have been able to produce some excellent crops, with yields generally being up across all varieties. One of the best performing crops this year was from Burlington Farming in Tasmania, achieving a yield of 1,200kg/ha off the header from one of their Haifa White Clover crops. Cleaning has been progressing extremely well, with purity and germs tests showing minimal effects caused by the rain earlier in the year.

Strong sales results domestically as well as internationally over the last 12 months has resulted in a significant increase in production area for the 2024-2025 season. With the increase in seed produced over the last couple of seasons, we have continued to invest in our storage and cleaning facilities to ensure minimal wait times for truck unloads and timely cleaning of seed for our growers.

On the Lucerne front growers have also endured some challenges with unseasonal and unsettled weather impacting some crops. Early harvested crops have so far exceeded expectations on yield, with fingers crossed for good clean outs. Strong demand for our Silver range of lucerne continues, and we will be looking to increase our production area. We are always interested in talking to new growers, so please reach out to me if you would like to discuss what options may be available.

Upper Murray Seeds Area Report

Keith Lange, Area Manager SA/Sth Vic

In February we welcomed a group of 18 growers from South Australia to our Research Station in Cressy Tasmania. The group was led by Richard Saunders from Pinion Advisory, and the farmers represented a diverse group of farming enterprises.

We thoroughly enjoyed sharing the history of UMS in addition to showing the group our dry matter trial plots, which at this time of year mainly consisted of our deep rooted perennials, legumes and lucerne. Plant breeder Eric Hall spoke to some new varieties of legumes that we are currently assessing and hoping to bring to market in the future. These included Talish Clover, Lotus and a Caucasian Clover. The group took part in a tour of Burlington Farm, which runs a 5000 head sheep operation alongside seed production crops for UMS. The tour finished off with a walk around Burlington Berries, a 60ha berry farm next door. We enjoy showing growers our operation so please reach out to me if your local farming group is coming to Tasmania in the future, as we would be happy to show you around.

This year UMS has also released a new Winter Active Phalaris called Evolution. Offering high winter activity alongside improved persistence and palatability, we now have three phalaris varieties in our range. Evolution will fit into perennial pasture systems mainly suited to sheep and beef operations. It can be sown standalone, however ideally its suited to a perennial pasture blend with Drover cocksfoot and perennial clovers such as AberLasting Caucasian cross.

Availability across most species with the exception of forage cereals, is looking good. Demand has been strong through January and February, and with the warm and dry start to autumn we are anticipating demand to increase even further when the rain arrives, so please be organised to ensure your seed arrives in good time.



BARENBRUG UPDATE

by Daryl Turner, Southern Production Manager



Domestic Lucerne Market

Autumn demand for winter active lucerne has been solid, in line with our expectations. With a drying trend across Southern Australia growers seem more focussed on short term fast feed options, such as forage oats rather than lucerne, but we expect this to change as the year progresses. Supply for key products such as SARDI 7 S2 has been limited so we are eagerly awaiting new season harvest to supply into these key market regions. The improvement in the red meat market is providing some renewed confidence for growers to invest in lucerne. Highest demand is coming from key production areas in southern NSW and northern Victoria.

International Lucerne Market

We continue to experience a very subdued international market due to high carry stocks in some key regions, including Saudi Arabia. Coupled with the economic instability in Argentina, which has limited sales into this market, has led to higher carry stocks than anticipated.

Other major markets are becoming more in alignment with their historical purchasing patterns, so we have seen some easing in demand from these regions compared to the past 2 years. As a result, the strong early demand that we have experienced over the past couple of years has not eventuated and we expect this trend to continue in the short to medium term.

Seed Production Update

Another wet & mild summer has yet again impacted a number of lucerne crops in the South East. Early harvested, irrigated paddocks seem to be on par with their dryland counterparts, with yields down on historical averages. Growers have had to contend with a lack of consistent hot weather, coupled with cool overnight temperatures, rain, wind and storms, flower-stripping & poor bee pollination.

Crops that were locked up later appear to have handled the less-than-ideal weather conditions a bit better and still have the potential to produce above average yields, however they remain susceptible to Lucerne Seed Wasp damage and aren't over the line just yet.

We will start to get an idea of germination quality very soon as samples start to hit the testing laboratories. Barenbrug has some opportunities available for new lucerne (and other species) production in 2024.

Please contact your Production Agronomist for more information.

Aaron Keane -	0408 851 411	(Upper South East)
Alan Gowers -	0427 152 145	(Western Vic/NSW)
Michael Birks -	0456 437 976	(Lower South East)

PRO-015003 FINAL REPORT RELEASED: HERBICIDE RESISTANCE IN LUCERNE SEED PRODUCTION SYSTEMS IN THE SOUTHEAST OF SOUTH AUSTRALIA



The AgriFutures Pasture Seeds Program supports industry sustainability and profitability through effective research and development leading to on-farm adoption. A key Program goal is improved weed management in leviabile temperate pasture seed species, achieved through supporting the development of integrated weed management (IWM) strategies.

Lucerne seed growers consistently rank weed management as a major production issue as it is vital to achieving good seed yields, meeting seed certification requirements and being profitable. Annual ryegrass (*Lolium rigidum*), barley grass (*Hordeum* spp.) and sowthistle (*Sonchus oleraceus*) are major and widespread weeds of lucerne seed crops. In recent years, grower feedback has been that these weeds may have evolved resistance to commonly used herbicides.

This project was initiated by Lucerne Australia with funding support through the AgriFutures Pasture Seeds Program. Plant

Science Consulting surveyed 105 paddocks in Australia's key lucerne seed growing region in early 2022 and evaluated the level of resistance to commonly used herbicide groups in three key weeds. Importantly, it identified the extent of herbicide resistance in these weeds and delivered knowledge that can underpin the development of IWM strategies to maintain a sustainable and profitable industry. The strategies and the resources will be updated on an ongoing basis as new knowledge becomes available, as herbicide resistance and mitigation strategies are ever-evolving.

The full report can be downloaded from the AgriFutures Australia website - <https://tinyurl.com/zkcst8sp>. Further information about the project and weed management in lucerne can also be accessed by visiting the Lucerne Australia website.

INSECTICIDE-RESISTANT BLUEGREEN APHIDS FOUND IN NEW REGIONS AND HOW NATURAL PREDATORS CAN HELP CONTROL THEM

by Stephanie Veskoukis & Evatt Chirgwin



Cesar Australia and Lucerne Australia have been working to develop evidence-based, long-term management guidelines for bluegreen aphids (BGA).

This has involved conducting resistance surveillance to understand where and to what extent BGA have evolved resistance, as well understanding the biocontrol options for BGA.

Below, we update where resistant BGA populations have been newly discovered, what natural enemies can help control them, and the projects future moves.

Resistance updates

BGA populations have been collected from 42 locations, with most in the southeast of Australia, where control failures have been reported. The populations have been collected across multiple crop types, including lentils, lucerne, vetch, clover and medicks.

So far, 30 of the 42 locations have been tested for insecticide resistance. Out of these, 16 populations across SA (12), VIC (2), and NSW (2) have shown resistance to three chemical groups: organophosphates, pyrethroids and carbamates (Fig 1.). However, resistance to organophosphates and pyrethroids appears to be

slightly stronger and more consistent than carbamates.

Our latest round of testing uncovered resistance in the Wimmera region for the first time, along with new resistant populations in SA's mid-north and Eyre Peninsula.

Biocontrol updates

Several species naturally predate on aphids, and the project is trying to learn more about how growers can exploit these species to enhance their pest management outcomes.

Parasitoid wasps are one of the most common and effective groups of aphid predators in Australia. However, to our surprise, the results so far suggest that only one parasitoid species – *Aphidius ervi* – is attacking BGA. Nonetheless, *A. ervi* is a highly efficient biocontrol option – each female can parasitise >300 aphids in her short lifecycle of a few weeks. *A. ervi* is also commercially produced by Australian insect breeders, which means managers can purchase *A. ervi* to boost natural populations or release them into enclosed greenhouses.

Graciously, local agronomists have facilitated sticky trap surveys in the autumn and spring of 2023 to gather baseline data on the presence and diversity of generalist natural enemies in lucerne

seed crops. The sticky traps found greater abundance and species diversity in spring than in autumn. The most abundant predators were the *A. ervi* parasitoids and lacewings across all sites. Lacewings (particularly their larval stage) are voracious predators of aphids. Spiders, lady beetles, and rove beetles were also common generalist predators found at most sites in spring.

Growers can support the natural enemies' populations in their paddocks by referring to Cesar's Beneficials chemical toxicity table. The table provides a guide on how sensitive several natural enemy species are to several commonly used insecticides. The table is freely accessible and downloadable via Cesar Australia's website (<https://cesaraustralia.com/resources/beneficials-toxicity-table/>)

How you can get involved in our next steps

Cesar Australia will continue to test BGA populations for resistance throughout autumn and keep the industry updated on the results.

Growers and agronomists are urged to send in BGA population samples for resistance testing. Instructions on how to send in live aphid samples can be found here (<https://cesaraustralia.com/resources/sending-aphids-for-resistance-testing/>)

To guarantee samples are processed in a timely manner, please send samples by overnight express post on Mondays through to Wednesdays. Please send an email to echirgwin@cesaraustralia.com to let us know you've sent us a sample - the cost of postage can be reimbursed to you by including a tax invoice in the email.

Acknowledgements

This research has been funded by AgriFutures Australia and the GRDC. Cesar Australia are conducting this research in collaboration with Lucerne Australia.

We thank the growers and agronomists who have assisted with sample collections, sticky trap monitoring and chemical history information.



LUCERNE AGRONOMY REPORT

by Scott Hutchings, Senior Agronomist, Cox Rural



Extremely variable Weather conditions and forecasts have had a significant impact on this year's lucerne seed production season. Many irrigated crops were locked up early based on a dry summer forecast and then proceeded to get 6 weeks of well above average rainfall and cool conditions extending throughout December to mid-January. Extremely intense heavy storms impacted many paddocks in peak flower flattening the crops and knocking off flower.

Dryland crops suffered from lack of moisture & regular frost events through October and November. All these events have resulted in extreme yield variation. As a general rule dryland crops that were locked up early and had enough moisture or elevation to avoid the effects of frost have yielded quite well but for everyone that was harvested there was quite a number of paddocks grazed off and abandoned or grazed and slashed and locked up again. After Decembers rain we also saw a lot of late opportunity dryland shut up with highly variable yields and higher seed wasp numbers. It is hard to place an average when dryland crops are yielding between 60kg and 500kg and a reasonable percentage abandoned, or opportunity harvested after setting very late in the season. Irrigation has been a similar story with high variability dictated by timing and intensity of rainfall events, watering strategy & variety. I certainly have not heard of any 1000kg crops with 400-600kg being the average reported back. Top end seems to have maxed out at 900kg off the header with bottom end being so poorly set that they were cut for hay. As a summary I would expect tonnages off certified areas to be down by about 30-35%.

At the time of writing this report harvest was about 70% completed with only about 10-15% of crops remaining to be desiccated and the late hot dry conditions have at least aided harvest to date. Desiccation and windrow timings have been hard to call this year with multiple ripeness stages within crops and a significant later set in some crops. With only light rain forecast until the end of the 3rd week in March we should see the majority off the harvest off before weather becomes an issue although many growers have reported some losses from splitting pods due to the multiple sets and stages of ripeness in this year's crops.

Pest levels this year have fluctuated, Native budworm are a consistent pest but I would not have described them as any more problematic than usual, crop mirids have been ever present and have required multiple spray applications. Blue Green Aphid numbers spiked mid-season but with more control options and management knowledge of resistance better results were achieved than in the past.

This year we are seeing significantly higher seed wasp levels in the paddock and we are also seeing this reflected in reports received from the cleaning sheds. I encourage all growers to get the seed wasp report and use the soon to be released calculator to get a guide to losses from seed wasp damage to start creating some long term data about what influence management decisions & seasonal have on numbers.



Figure 1. Locations where resistant populations have been collected and tested so far.



DAIRY OPTIMISTIC DESPITE GLOBAL ECONOMIC CHALLENGES

by Eliza Redfern, Analysis and Insights Manager, Dairy Australia

As discussed in Dairy Australia's March Situation and Outlook report, favourable seasonal conditions, recovering milk production, and a rebound in global commodity values have been cause for optimism against the backdrop of a persistently challenging macroeconomic environment.

Australian milk production has grown in each month of this season, fuelled by better-than-expected weather conditions, particularly against lower comparable figures of last season. Off the back of this modest recovery, Dairy Australia is now forecasting national milk production to grow slightly, ending the 2023/24 season closer to 1 per cent above last season.

This season's rainfall has generally been well timed, particularly for those regions that were drying out in late spring. Lower-than-expected demand for supplementary feed has resulted in prices dropping below last year in many regions, except in the Atherton Tablelands and southwest Western Australia, where conditions are much drier. Cheaper water has been advantageous for farms reliant on irrigation, in addition to global indicative urea prices tracking below long-term averages. Additionally, moisture built in many regions over this summer is likely to help support production leading into autumn.

Globally, milk supply has been contracting, leading to a rebound in commodity export prices. The United States (US) national herd reached its lowest point since June 2020 (9.357 million cows in December 2023), contributing to production falling every month of this season. Weather conditions across Europe have been challenging, in addition to managing high production costs against lower farmgate milk prices. Volumes produced across

the entirety of Europe have been declining since September, however the impacts of emissions regulations are front of mind for many farmers. Poor pasture growth conditions across New Zealand (NZ) were a hindrance for production during spring. After a hint of milk volume growth in December, NZ production declined 1.2% year-on-year (on a tonnage basis) in January.

Looking ahead, a lack of substantial supply growth will likely support export prices during the second half of the season. Production growth is likely to be limited in both NZ and the US, as drier weather deteriorates pasture in the former, and a lack of replacement heifers plagues the latter. Increased milk flows may also be scarce across Europe, as farm margins remain under pressure.

On the demand side, a weak global economy continues to limit importing demand for dairy. High inflation has been an existing weight on purchasing activity from buyers in key markets across Southeast Asia and the Middle East, who continue to buy product as needed, rather than accumulating inventories. Furthermore, a weakened economy in China bears down on domestic and importing demand, while local milk production and powder stockpiles remain robust.

There is no escaping the persistent economic challenges that lie ahead, and the 2024/25 season is likely to see increased pressure on profitability as global dynamics force an equilibrium here in Australia. However, increased export returns, supportive seasonal conditions and growth in national milk production can all help alleviate our share of the global gloom over the rest of the 2023/24 season.

National milk production – volume produced season to date

Jul23 to Jan24 vs LY	
AUSTRALIA	+2.5%
Queensland	+1.7%
New South Wales	+6.1%
South Australia	+0.9%
Western Australia	+2.6%
Tasmania	+4.0%
Victoria	+1.8%
Gippsland	+3.4%
Northern	+2.6%
Western	-0.6%

LY = Jul22 to Jan23

Source: Dairy Australia

LIMESTONE COAST SEEDS UPDATE

by Greg Excell, Limestone Coast Seeds



This time last year we were right in the thick of the lucerne harvest and were wondering how we could expand our site in terms of storage to cater for our clients varieties of Lucerne. Fast forward 12 months and we have purchased a second site, and the timing could not have been better. The acquisition of our Stirling Road Site at the start of this lucerne harvest means that we have been able to significantly increase our storage capacity and processing capabilities. Fortunately for us, we were able to retain the staff already at the site, and we have been busy upskilling them in terms of their understanding of the seed industry, as well as introducing them to our modern and efficient processes. We are certainly very excited about our expansion and look forward to welcoming new clients and continuing to support our local communities.

At the end of 2023 we installed a Verbruggen Palletizer at our Bunker Road site. Purchased from the Netherlands, we patiently awaited its arrival, and it has had nothing short of an immediate impact, eliminating the need for our staff to manually handle every bag. To be able to load shipping containers without employees having to lift bags is an innovative measure that we hope to build on across both sites.



We are currently processing lucerne at both of our sites and can report that the seed being delivered to us is of a high standard. At this stage we have not experienced any cleaning issues due to seed wasp. In past seasons when seed wasp numbers were high, we encountered a wax residue from the damaged seed which would then interfere with our machinery, but at this stage things are going smoothly, despite the PCR tests being higher than they were at this time last year. I can report that delivery tonnages are down compared to last year, most likely because of the weather conditions over the summer months, as well as seed wasp damage. I strongly believe that we need to continue to have discussions around how our industry can best manage the seed wasp and invest further funds in this area to reduce its impact.

Having just completed thirty years of service in the seed industry, starting out as a seed cleaner to now owning two sites, I continue to share my knowledge with my team of staff and monitor the quality of our processes to maintain the high standards that I expect. Limestone Coast Seeds is very much a customer focused business, and we pride ourselves on providing assistance and support to our clients and customers.

With the acquisition of a second site to better support our expanding client base, our businesses are conveniently set in the heart of the lucerne growing area, meaning that growers have two central locations to deliver their seed. I would like to thank the many clients who express their gratitude on the convenience of using our facilities.



ERGONOMIC SAFETY WITH LUCERNE

courtesy of Safe Ag Systems

Farms are notorious for hard work. Particularly around peak times like harvest and seeding. However, these busy periods are when injuries happen. Minds wander and safety practices tend to fall down the list of priorities. One of those commonly forgotten practices is correct manual handling procedures.

Farmers have become accustomed to contorting themselves, heaving heavy loads and putting up with injuries to get the job done. Or better yet, not complaining about a job or task causing them issues. This is where “ergonomics” comes into play.

What is it?

Ergonomics is the understanding of how people work in their environment. The process involves designing or rearranging the workplace to fit the worker. Think of it as fitting the job to the person. This removes the risk of injury or discomfort while at work.

The most common cause of ergonomic issues is incorrect manual handling. Manual handling involves lifting, lowering, carrying, pushing and pulling a heavy load. Incorrect use of manual handling techniques from poor posture and repetitive movement will often result in back, joint and muscle problems. In 2023, SafeWork reported that 32.6% of all serious claims were the result of body stressing like the above. Understanding ergonomics and training proper manual handling techniques will reduce the likelihood of injury on your farm.

How do these injuries happen?

Moving or lifting bales of lucerne is a common cause of manual handling injuries. Machinery plays a big role but when collecting small squares in the field, you have to lift, move and then stack them onto the trailer. We know these weigh a decent amount and if done incorrectly, you can pinch a nerve or strain your muscles.

Lifting a bale incorrectly, carrying low or twisting to throw a bale above your centre of gravity are probably the worst things you can do. But we know this right? These actions increase the chance of injury, either over time or in an instance.

- Leaning over to lift a bale can strain your back
- Carrying low puts stress and strain on your arms
- Twisting your spine can put pressure on your discs
- Lifting any heavy object above your centre of gravity puts pressure on your lower back

Before considering how we can implement ergonomics let's consider the proper methods when manual handling bales.

- Bend at the knees
- Lift with your thighs
- Keep the bale close to your body as you move

- Take steps to rotate your body and direction
- When lowering the bale to the ground, bend at your knees, keeping it close to your body. OR depending on surface height lunge forward to place it down.

When stacking above your centre of gravity opt for another set of helping hands or use mechanical aids instead. Consider doing an ergonomic assessment to see how to make jobs on your farm easier.

What's an ergonomic assessment?

Think of it as a risk assessment of what ergonomic hazards you face in your day to day. It doesn't have to be manual labour-wise either. It could be as simple as your tractor's seat not supporting your back. The controls on your machinery may be uncomfortable to grasp and so on.

If you are wanting to assess ergonomic issues on your farm, start by:

- Directly observing tasks being completed
- Consulting your workers
- Analysing your Workplace Injury Records

While undergoing your ergonomic risk assessment of jobs and tasks, look for the following:

- **Actions and movements:** avoid any jerky or rushed movements.
- **Posture and position:** reduce how much bending, twisting and reaching is required.
- **Duration and frequency of manual handling:** change tasks frequently to rest muscle groups.
- **Location and distance of transporting loads:** transport close to the body and only across short distances.
- **Weight and force of the load:** opt for pulling rather than pushing a load.
- **Monitor and adhere to weight limits:** Loads over 20kg increase the rate of injury.
- **Characteristics of loads and equipment:** assess the sizing and difficulty of transporting it.
- **Work environment:** ensure your pathway is clear of hazards and risk of injury.
- **Consider training:** have you or your workers received the correct training for manual handling?
- **Personal characteristics of workers:** young workers may be more risk-taking while older ones may be at an increased risk of injury.
- **Clothing:** all clothing should be a snug fit that still enables free movement.
- **Permanent or temporary special needs of workers:** conditions like arthritis or previous injuries may be restricting.

The first step in analysing your working conditions is to communicate clearly with your workers. Informing them you're assessing their actions for their safety and well-being will assist their collaboration.

Once complete, create a list of priorities from your findings and the changes you wish to implement. Go through your control measures and consider whether it's better to eliminate, substitute or opt for mechanical aids for any hazards faced by manual handling.

What risk or control measures can you use?

The following are control measures commonly used for tasks involving manual handling:

- Eliminate
- Substitute
- Introduce mechanical aids

One example of this would be substituting small squares for larger, round bales. You're eliminating the need for manual handling by using mechanical aids such as a telehandler.

But we know we can't rule out small hay squares entirely. If transporting smaller squares think of using hay/bale hooks. They hook onto hay squares to make transporting and stacking them easier. They also prevent you from grabbing the uncomfortable bailing twine as well!

What's next?

Once you understand the ergonomics of your farm you can make the necessary changes to reduce the need for manual handling. Creating a farm environment that prioritises the comfort and safety of your workers.

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.

SYNERGY SEEDS UPDATE

by Craig Myall, Managing Director



The total of Australia exports of Lucerne seed in the calendar year of 2023 was 5,481mt. This figure was 1,348mt less than the year prior, 4,240mt less than 2021, and 5,180mt less than 2020. In fact, you have to go back to 2018 to find a year that was similar to this year in tonnage, and that was the only year at this level in the last 11 years according to my figures. As the previous (2023) harvest was below the long term average, the industry is again starting the current 2024 harvest with an extremely low carryover position.

Major destinations of this seed were to Saudi Arabia – 1,965mt (down 1,005mt on year prior), USA – 1,329mt (up 114mt), South Africa – 580mt (down 121mt), Argentina – 397mt (down 197mt), and China – 374mt (up 230mt). These 5 countries make up 85% of the seed shipped during the period.

There has been a lot of talk in the market surrounding Saudi Arabia and what the impact of the increased Wheat plantings in their country will have on Australian Lucerne Seed moving forward. Whilst it is still an unknown at this point what the demand will look like in the short and long term, their dairies still require fodder, and nothing produces hay like Lucerne!

Domestically we are seeing an increase in demand for plantings of Lucerne at present. With the recovery of both the sheep and cattle livestock pricing, this is driving confidence in returning or increasing the lucerne area to be sown. The summer rainfall in the eastern states has given a much needed boost to soil moisture, which will also drive confidence in sowing in the Autumn of 2024.

The 2024 harvest is now in full swing and we are still forecasting the certified production will come from an area similar to the last couple of years (15,000ha). Yields in general seem to be below the long-term averages, however some Dryland crops have produced some excellent results for those that timed it right with the inclement weather received in December and January. Seed quality to date looks good, however seed wasp has been a factor again this year. Best of luck to all on their results!

If you are planning a new Lucerne seed site in 2024, Synergy Seeds have attractive seed contracts for its growing Proprietary Lucerne range. Please feel free to contact Ian, Wayne, Nathan or myself on the numbers listed below to discuss our options.

CONTACTS				
	Craig Myall	Managing Director	0409 392 320	craig@synergyseeds.com.au
	Nathan Smith	Sales & Supply Manager	0487 655 220	nathan@synergyseeds.com.au
	Ian Freebairn	Production & Procurement	0427 241 448	ian@synergyseeds.com.au
	Wayne Heading	Production & Procurement	0427 071 458	wayne@synergyseeds.com.au
	Adam Davies	National Forage Sales & Marketing Manager	0498 632 496	adam@synergyseeds.com.au

DLF SEEDS UPDATE

by Jess Nottle, Seed Production Agronomist



How's the season?

It's lucerne harvest time! At the time of writing, we've seen approximately 30% of our dryland crop harvested and delivered for cleaning, with pleasing yield results. The delayed harvest due to our summer rain events has made for a later harvest for most dryland crops and we'll see a high demand for storage and cleaning capabilities at cleaning sheds shortly when the irrigated and dryland harvests both hit full steam. Later irrigated crops that dodged the Christmas & early January rainfall events have set well, although lucerne seed wasp levels indicate that we may lose a higher percentage of this crop than we'd like.

Insect pest pressure has been relatively kind this year with the back half of the monitoring period quieter than normal. Irrigation management has been key with the unseasonal and scattered rainfall events.

Year-on-year we are seeing more pesticide failures (both weeds & insects) which reinforces the need for careful and considered pesticide applications, closely followed by regular monitoring for any issues. If a problem is found, ensure to develop a program to combat any resistance issues in the coming years.

As per usual, we are experiencing good demand for our high-performing lucerne varieties in the domestic market, despite quite some volume of uncertified seed predicted to become available in the coming months. In particular our grazing tolerant varieties, Stamina GT5, Warrego GT6 & Torrens GT8; we see a constant increase in demand for these varieties as consumers search for the highest-performance forages.

International markets

The International Market for Lucerne remains relatively quiet with uncertainty as to the size of the Australian crop (both certified and uncertified) and the level of inventory held overseas. Those who attended our Seed Grower Info Sessions earlier in the month will be briefed on the outlook of the international lucerne seed market as it currently sits. For up-to-date market information, please contact our Seed Production Advisors (Jess & Anthony) on the numbers listed below.

DLF Seeds – Seed Grower Info Sessions

Many thanks to the seed growers and advisors that attended our Seed Grower Info Sessions run in Keith, Padthaway & Frances in early February. We were pleased with the attendance and conversation generated during & after the sessions. The sessions highlighted DLF's investment in Breeding, R&D, and our long term outlook for lucerne and legume seed production here in Australia.



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 to access our 2024 Product Guide.

<https://publuu.com/flip-book/191099/766717/page/1>



You can purchase our seed through your local rural supplier.

2024 Sowings...

DLF Seeds have openings for new lucerne seed plantings in 2024, plus other pasture seed crops suited to southern SA & VIC. We are also looking for suitable areas for very profitable high-grade seed bulk up jobs for various pasture seed species.

Get it touch today to ensure you secure your preferred planting option!

LUCERNE EXPORT STATISTICS FROM AUSTRALIA

- January 2014 to January 2024

courtesy of Teague Australia

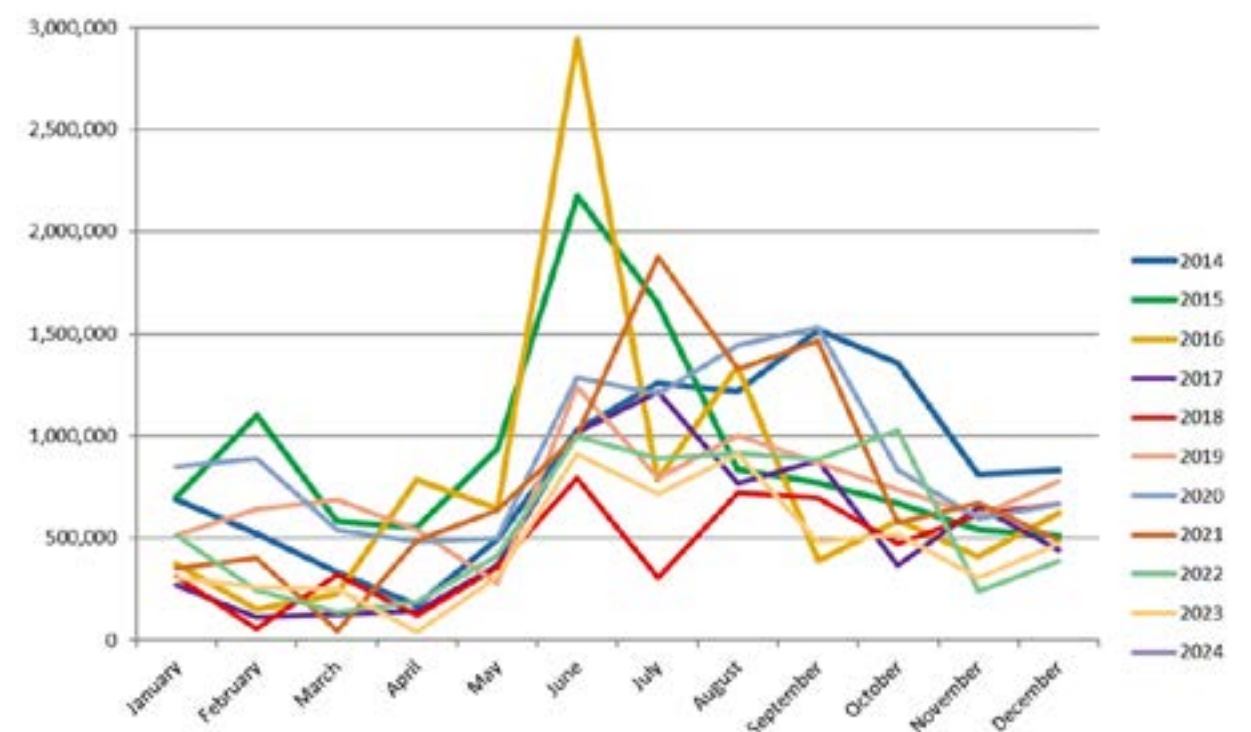


Quantities below are in kg.

	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	Year to date Difference 2020 & 2021
Jan	687,172	698,895	374,150	266,596	307,530	512,692	850,518	352,056	515,246	302,936	459,850	+156,914
Feb	518,553	1,099,252	148,919	108,988	57,008	639,425	887,613	400,125	243,786	258,837		
Mar	334,033	582,929	227,050	127,000	321,205	684,044	539,525	44,500	137,329	249,852		
Apr	171,816	549,340	784,031	143,025	123,100	536,501	482,194	439,500	186,064	40,819		
May	495,472	940,000	644,704	363,023	355,575	281,335	495,875	633,571	409,715	310,224		
Jun	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	910,183		
Jul	1,260,782	1,649,080	786,450	1,214,352	303,288	792,380	1,205,927	1,875,361	891,632	715,121		
Aug	1,217,121	834,178	1,339,684	767,256	721,730	1,002,472	1,443,626	1,329,201	914,012	908,522		
Sep	1,516,965	770,857	388,207	882,195	698,665	871,762	1,533,097	1,463,717	885,058	482,480		
Oct	1,356,922	667,503	588,199	364,673	472,480	738,090	832,925	573,749	1,026,920	520,252		
Nov	810,704	543,246	409,700	649,318	615,285	609,028	595,095	670,850	237,888	307,116		
Dec	829,293	511,127	623,560	443,729	664,134	775,684	667,771	488,544	385,212	474,742		
Total	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	5,481,084	459,850	

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

Lucerne Exports Statistics from Australia 2014-2024



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

Seed Production & Purchasing

Jess Nottle – 0438 302 148

Anthony Quilter – 0427 572 125

TATIARA SEEDS REPORT

by Graham Ramsdale, Tatiara Seeds



25 years ago, Tatiara Seeds was offered the opportunity to set up a seed processing business in the newly formed Keith Industrial Estate. It was a bare site which we developed into a purpose built location to service Keith and the surrounding area.

Following 23 years of seed processing at Keith, the current directors and shareholders wished to consolidate Tatiara Seeds to the one site at Bordertown. After discussions with Peters Commodities we thought it appropriate to sell the Keith site to them. Peters Commodities made up the majority of the deliveries at the Keith site where broad beans, faba beans, lentils and vetch were processed, packed and loaded into shipping containers. The plant and equipment surplus to Peters Commodities requirements have been retained by Tatiara Seeds and moved to the Bordertown site. Included in this were 20 silos, which Tatiara Seeds wished to keep to provide enough storage for incoming crops.

We had a busy time moving out of the Keith site back to Bordertown ready for the first receival of new season's lucerne seed which was on the 16th January. The amount of offal in the seed processed until now range from a low of 10.2% to a high of 42.7%. Most growers are reasonably happy with their dryland yields; the best I have heard of is about 500 kg/ Ha. One grower I know set up his irrigated crop in early November to try to avoid seed wasp infestations, watered it all the way through when needed until early February and harvested it on the 9th March with a yield of

337 kg/Ha. Reports I am hearing is that growers who set up their lucerne stands later are reasonably happy with the amount of pods in their crops, but reports of seed wasp activity is alarming some. Some growers could see their crops weren't setting enough seed to be viable and therefore cut those paddocks for hay. There are also reports of an abundance of lucerne seed throughout the world and the price to the growers may reduce accordingly. Due to the very cool summer we have had, we are noticing that more early lucerne seed has in excess of 30% hard seeds prior to processing, and so requires scarification.

Our aim is to offer our growers the best service and efficiencies that we can.

- Main Office** - Maddie 8752 0054
- After Hours Deliveries** - Graham 0428 990 979
- Peter 0424 590 505
- Processing Questions** - Stephen 0447 313 898
- Despatch Enquiries** - Sharon 8752 0739
- Buying & Selling of Seed** - Brett & Kate 8752 0024
- Seed Cartage to Tatiara Seeds** - Geoff 0437 817 351

LUCERNE AUSTRALIA Members

Allen's Warrawee Park	Dinyarrak Farms	Kelvale Emu Flat	Nalang Pastoral Co
Altus, TJ & JL 'Moonmera'	Farmer, BL & RE	Kenwyn Proprietors	Newton Pastoral Pty Ltd
Bergan Park	Florando Partners	Kester, RJ & J	Nupey Pty Ltd
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	Scottswell Partners
Colara Farms	Harvey, M & K Family Trust	Loller, B & L	Simpson Farming
Connor Pastoral Co Pty Ltd	Hawkins, MM	Makin Nominees	Twynem Partners
Corlinga Partners	Hunt, DB & JS	Maluka Partners	Vandeleur Rural Holdings
Crawford, CJ Pty Ltd	Hutchings, SC & CA	Maroona Proprietors	Vowles, BJ & SM
Creston Partners	Hyfield Pastoral Pty Ltd	Martin, JP & SGP	Wallis, PA & ML
Crouch, RJ & Co	Jarra Farm Trust	McMurray, BJ & CB	Wilsdon, RE & TK
Darwent Agriculture Pty Ltd	Jesse, Cameron	McMurray, JA & KA	
	Keller Partners	McWimay Pty Ltd	

LUCERNE AUSTRALIA

Gold



Rabobank

Silver



Associate/Bronze

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

LUCERNE AUSTRALIA *Executive Committee*

Got a question for Lucerne Australia?

Contact the Executive Officer or any of 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.



Ben Farmer, Deputy Chairman
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 supplying 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.



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.



Aaron Freeman, Grower Member
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.



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.