

# LUCERNE *Leader*



ISSUE 76 | MARCH 2025



## RON BADMAN FAMILY CHURCHILL FELLOWSHIP: ARE YOU THE NEXT CHURCHILL FELLOW?

Churchill Fellowships are open to Australians established in their industry, keen to explore global best practice to help tackle a particular problem or issue. No academic qualifications are necessary. Fellowships fully fund expenses for 4-8 weeks of international travel. Applicants design their own itinerary and travel.

In 2025 the Ron Badman Family Churchill Fellowship will be awarded. It is open specifically for anyone involved in an aspect of agriculture with a focus on seed production, pasture development and irrigation.

Ronald Badman was a self-employed pasture seed producer and grazier who was awarded a Churchill Fellowship in 1967 to travel to the United States, where he studied irrigated seed production, processing and marketing.

The results of his Fellowship opened doors for the passionate farmer from South Australia's south-east. Over the years that followed, Ron became one of the most significant contributors to the development of the Australian seed industry, hosting research trials, and becoming active in numerous industry organisations, and he changed Australian agriculture for decades to come.

Ron was so impressed by the life-changing experience, that in 1990, he became the first Churchill Fellow to sponsor opportunities for others. The Badman family made a generous donation to the Trust to enable a Fellowship to be awarded every four years in perpetuity, to someone wanting to explore issues relating to seed production, irrigation and pasture development.

Ron passed away in April 2006 aged 94 years. The Trust values the opportunity to celebrate one of our earliest Fellows, and his lifelong achievements in agriculture, by awarding this sponsored Fellowship.



For more information go to:  
<https://www.churchilltrust.com.au/sponsor/?id=SP000254>



**Rabobank**

# THE CORPORATE SUSTAINABILITY REPORTING DIRECTIVE: A CHALLENGE OR A CHANCE FOR AGRI-FOOD COMPANIES?

*courtesy of Rabobank*



**Rabobank**

Starting in 2025, the Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive (CSRD) will require large companies and listed small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs) operating in the European Union to report on sustainability impacts, risks, and opportunities related to their operations and their supply chains, Rabobank says in newly-released research.

The report, *The Corporate Sustainability Reporting Directive: A challenge or a chance for agri-food companies?* by the agribusiness banking specialist's RaboResearch division, says non-listed SMEs and most farmers and growers are not directly subject to the CSRD, but many will be indirectly affected by buyers or suppliers seeking sustainability data and improvements for their value chains. This is expected to stimulate the proliferation of holistic on-farm programs for sustainability, since farming is where most sustainability impacts and risks in the agri-food sector originate.

However, the report said, while the letter of the CSRD calls for reporting only, its intent is to transform business behaviour toward integrating sustainability into decision-making processes, beyond mere reporting. Despite initial compliance struggles and costs, companies may benefit from enhanced positioning, differentiation, and reputational gains.

"By raising awareness of sustainability within firms, their value chains, and to investors, the CSRD is expected to foster a virtuous cycle that will enhance supply cooperation and accelerate the sustainability transition of the European agri-food industry, though its full effects will take years to materialize," it said.

**A change for European food systems: A chance for agri-food companies**

Report author, RaboResearch analyst, Camillo Alborghetti, said the CSRD provides opportunities for companies to improve their positions toward buyers subject to the CSRD seeking value chain information and sustainable inputs, as well as towards buyers aiming to realise their voluntary ESG-related value chain commitments. However, he said, it remains to be seen whether these opportunities will persist as the playing field becomes more level. "Only time will tell if and when the potential benefits will outweigh the costs and challenges associated with the CSRD's implementation."

Mr Alborghetti said it is clear that the CSRD is here to stay as it presents a critical component of the EU Green Deal. "Additionally, the demand for (more) sustainability data will continue to grow. Providing such data is set to become a hygiene factor in doing business, much like food safety was in the past."

The European Commission is increasingly pushing sustainability from the public domain into the private arena, Mr Alborghetti said. "The CSRD is just the beginning. More regulations are on

the horizon, such as the EU Deforestation Regulation, the newly approved Corporate Sustainability Due Diligence Directive, and the EU "Green claims" directive. Moreover, the EU is not alone in seeking corporate sustainability transparency. This trend is becoming international, with similar developments occurring in other regions, includes Australia and New Zealand's climate disclosure laws, and the Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) climate rules in the US."

"You cannot manage what you cannot measure," Mr Alborghetti said. "Companies can implement the CRRD strategically by starting to measure their sustainability impacts and risks today and by using sustainability insights to abate those risks and impacts. By starting now, companies may also gain an opportunity to improve their market positioning and differentiations for the years to come, at least until sustainability reporting becomes business-as-usual for the whole industry."

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.

Rabobank Australia & New Zealand Group is a part of the international Rabobank Group, the world's leading specialist in food and agribusiness banking. Rabobank has more than 120 years' experience providing customised banking and finance solutions to businesses involved in all aspects of food and agribusiness. Rabobank is structured as a cooperative and operates in 38 countries, servicing the needs of more than nine million clients worldwide through a network of more than 1000 offices and branches. Rabobank Australia & New Zealand Group is one of Australasia's leading agricultural lenders and a significant provider of business and corporate banking and financial services to the region's food and agribusiness sector. The bank has 87 branches throughout Australia and New Zealand.





# THAT'S A WRAP! 2025 VARIETY TRIAL FIELD DAY

by Danielle Lannin, EO

Thanks to our field day hosts

- AgriFutures
- SA Drought Hub
- RAGT – and the legendary David Peake for his barbecuing skills

This was the last year of the variety trial field day at the Lucerne Australia site on Riddoch Highway. Over the past 7 years the different yields of 27 varieties have been tested under different irrigation rates, and now how they perform using growth regulants or pod sealants.

These varieties now come out of certification and are likely to be used for other production research as identified by our trials committee. The results from the final year will be presented at the July Breakfast.



A change of plan meant that breakfast and coffees were enjoyed in the Keith Football Clubrooms while the crowd of 56 growers, processors and advisors, heard from speakers on blue green aphid management, weed control updates and pollination management. Thanks a lot to Aaron, Peter and Evatt for being a part of the day.

A big thank you to site host, Simon Allen and his team, for all the work you do behind the scenes; to Ag Xtra for their site management; and also to the Lucerne Australia Executive Committee for your ongoing leadership in making the day work.



## WILKEI SEEDS: MARCH UPDATE

*by Ben Farmer, Wilkei Seeds*

The level of attendance and engagement at the Lucerne Australia Field Day was, for me, a reflection of the perseverance, determination and adaptability of our lucerne industry members. Despite having been through a challenging season, withdrawal of our largest export market and dealing the impact of S&W Seed Co voluntary administration, our members show a continued appetite to improve their production system. It was pleasing to see a number of new industry businesses, many regular associate members and a healthy number of grower members on what could best be described as a good spray day.

Wilkei Seeds is extremely proud to be a Silver member of Lucerne Australia and highly value the work Lucerne Australia does in research, advocacy and representation. Our industry is incredibly fortunate to have such strong industry representation in Lucerne Australia and encourage all other industry stakeholders to support, communicate and engage where possible. A wholistic collaboration within the industry will ensure our continued growth and sustainability.

Despite the challenges we've all faced in recent months, it is pleasing to witness positivity in the global lucerne seed market. It is also pleasing to have experienced weather conducive to seed production likely meaning a reward for producers who persisted with seed production. Over the last few months, we've been working on our own export markets and have recently

registered as an Australian seed exporter. We have domestic and international customers interested in a range of lucerne seed and we're actively looking for new and old season lucerne seed. If you've got seed from last season, are about to harvest or considering growing in the years to come, please get in contact with us.

We'd like to wish all growers a safe and pleasing lucerne seed harvest season. May it rain once the harvesters are parked in the shed and the hay has been baled!



## MURRAY NANKIVELL: MARCH UPDATE

*by Matt Rowett, Director, CPA*



With offices servicing the lower south east, upper south east, Murray lands, southern Mallee and Western Victoria, the advisors of Murray Nankivell are working with their clients to gain additional finance for their businesses, to continue to be able to operate their business for the long term. With the value of land in these regions increasing significantly over the past 5 -7 years, the need to maximise the production from every hectare is at front of mind, for farming businesses.

Businesses looking to expand and minimise risk continue to view irrigation properties as an investment worthy of consideration. The drier season has also brought more interest in hay production from irrigation, as well as within cropping rotations.

With March being a key planning month for farming businesses, we are working with farming families on succession and business planning, for the long term.

Fodder conservation and water conservation tax incentives remain in place, with the immediate write off equipment rules, limited to equipment costing less than \$20,000 excluding GST. The balance of managing cash flow, banking requirements and taxation, remains for farming businesses, even after a below average rainfall season. We encourage farming businesses to both actively understand their 5 year average tax rates, and their tax position, prior to June 30, not just when their annual tax is prepared.

If you would like to book an appointment with one of our advisors to find out how we can help you and your business, please visit our website at [www.murraynankivell.com.au](http://www.murraynankivell.com.au)



# NEW FROM WILCHEM: AMINO MASTER

## The Foundation of our Signature Trace Element Range

Wilchem are pleased to announce a fresh source of Amino Acid sold as a stand-alone product or as a part of our Signature Trace Elements which have long been successful in Lucerne Seed production in the Upper South East.

## The Role of Amino Acids in Plants

Amino acids serve multiple functions in plants, ranging from structural components to precursors for hormones and other growth substances. Their presence and availability can significantly affect a plant's overall health, resilience, and yield.

### Protein Synthesis

At the most basic level, amino acids are integral to protein synthesis. Proteins are essential for the structure, function, and regulation of the body's cells, tissues, and organs. In plants, proteins play roles in cell structure, enzyme function, and the regulation of key metabolic pathways.

## Stress Response

Amino acids are crucial in helping plants respond to and recover from stress conditions such as drought, salinity, extreme temperatures, and nutrient deficiencies. Certain amino acids act as Osmo protectants, substances that help maintain cell volume and fluid balance under stress. For example, proline accumulates in plants subjected to drought or salinity stress, protecting cells by balancing osmotic pressure.

## Growth Regulation

Amino acids can influence plant growth directly and indirectly through their role as precursors to phytohormones and growth regulators. Tryptophan is a precursor for auxin, a hormone that influences cell elongation, root development, and fruit growth. Similarly, methionine is a precursor for ethylene, which regulates fruit ripening and leaf abscission.

For more details contact Gordon Childs  
Mobile 0409 156 532 email [gchilds@wilchem.com.au](mailto:gchilds@wilchem.com.au)



# VARROA MITE: COMBATING A SERIOUS PEST TOGETHER

by Aaron Woolston, Varroa Development Officer, PIRSA under the National Varroa Mite Management Plan

## Varroa Mite in Australia

Varroa destructor is a parasitic mite that feeds on the fat bodies of honeybees, and acts as a vector for other viruses and disease leading to serious hive health decline. Varroa is fatal for a beehive if left unmanaged. Varroa was first detected at the Port of Newcastle in June 2022, and after unsuccessful eradication attempts has spread throughout NSW. A Victorian incursion was detected at Hattah, 60km south of Mildura in November 2023. Varroa has not yet been detected in South Australia and the Department of Primary Industries and Regions (PIRSA) remains committed to keeping varroa out as long as possible to give industry as much time as possible to adapt.

## Impact of Varroa on Beekeepers

The mite is estimated to contribute to a drop in commercial honey production between 30% – 60%, and a drop in number of hives strong enough to be used for pollination services nationwide. Varroa will impose significant increases in labour and chemical treatment costs on beekeepers. The Australian Honey Bee Industry Council (AHBIC) estimates 30% of commercial beekeepers will leave the industry Australia wide.

## Impact on Lucerne Seed Production

Varroa will mean less hives available for pollination services. Flow on effects could include increased costs of pollination services. The traditional partnership between beekeepers and lucerne growers may need to change as beekeepers come under pressure from significantly increased operating costs and lower production.

Varroa will also mean the destruction of 90% to 100% of feral bee colonies. The residual pollination currently being facilitated by these feral bee colonies can be significant. The impacts of this are yet unknown and will be different depending on grower location and number of feral hives present.

## National Varroa Mite Management Plan

The National Varroa Mite Management Program is overseen by the Consultative Committee on Emergency Plant Pests (CCEPP) and the National Management Group (NMG). The NMG is made up of representatives from the Federal Government, every state and territory department and executives from relevant peak industry bodies and Plant Health Australia. Following a decision to transition from eradication to management in September 2023, the Varroa Mite Transition to Management (T2M) Plan will provide an orderly transition to management, minimising the ongoing effects of Varroa mite naturalisation on the European honey bee industry and pollination-reliant industries with a focus on business continuity. It aims to slow the spread of Varroa mite to allow beekeepers, pollination-dependent industries and the



community sufficient time to prepare for expected future arrival. The primary focus will be training beekeepers and providing them with the skills they need to manage Varroa mite and maintain healthy beehives.

Varroa Development Officers (VDOs) will engage with commercial and recreational beekeepers to extend best management practice guidelines and resolve problems. VDOs in South Australia work out of PIRSA

A National Pollination Industry Coordinator role will gather relevant information from pollination-dependent industries on their concerns, knowledge gaps and future needs related to living with Varroa mite within their industry.

## Whats Next?

The National Pollination Guide, a publication about to be released by the National T2M plan is aimed at helping growers work with beekeepers to manage the impacts of varroa. In South Australia, the VDO team in conjunction with Lucerne Australia will be announcing some short workshops on how to work together with beekeepers to combat varroa mite. Stay tuned as we release dates for these workshops and move forward to tackle this serious pest together.



# LEARN HOW SOIL DATA CAN HELP YOUR BUSINESS

Healthy and productive soil is essential to getting the most out of your farming system. Using soil test data can help you get there, but are you using it as effectively as you can?

If you are interested in learning more about soil testing methods and using soil data to make informed business decisions, the Making soil data work for your business information session might be right for you.

Join Brian Hughes (SARDI), Kirsten Barlow & Geoff Ross (Precision Ag), and Adam Hancock (Elders Rural Services) to learn:

- how to interpret data from soil tests
- best practice soil sampling methods and tests available (including for soil carbon)
- using soil data to make strategic business decisions
- more from your own soil tests. You can bring them with you on the day, or submit your soil tests before by email, if you want more detailed feedback.

This workshop will also be a chance for you to hear from Brian about an upcoming project that will investigate lucerne production and persistence in acidic soils, and how you can be involved.

**Where:** Padthaway Bowls Club

**When:** Thursday 13 March, 9am – 1pm

**Cost:** Free, lunch and morning tea provided

If you're interested in attending this workshop, please email Kate Morris, Soil Extension Officer (Kate.Morris@sa.gov.au).

## New grant program to help empower farmers

If you're interested in improving the sustainability of your farm, sharing your ideas to help your community, or just making a more environmentally friendly change, now is a great time to start planning.

The Limestone Coast Landscape Board is releasing a new grant program in March 2025 for projects that will tackle some of the biggest challenges that face our region, now and in the future. Projects can address:

- Increasing agricultural adaptation and mitigation to climate change
- Understanding and improving soil, water & nutrient management on farm
- Ways to confidently enter carbon markets

Successful applications will also have an element of peer-to-peer learning, either through workshops or field days.

To stay up to date on these grants, please email Matthew Hay, Sustainable Agriculture Facilitator (Matthew.Hay@sa.gov.au).



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# AUSTRALIAN FODDER INDUSTRY ASSOCIATION HAY REPORT: FEBRUARY 2025



Across Southwest Victoria, South Australia, and Southwest WA, ongoing drought conditions push farmers to adopt adaptive strategies such as reducing livestock, sourcing agistment, and relying on water-saving practices.

- Northwest Tasmania continues to struggle with bushfire warnings amidst record dry conditions. Showers are forecast for parts of the state, but rainfall in the northwest remains minimal.
- In Goulburn/Murray Valley, dry conditions aid hay recovery after a wet season last year, while the February feed gap contributes to steady demand. Lucerne cutting is underway, and its quality is slowly improving.
- Cereal and vetch hay flow into the South Coast from Central West NSW, helping ease reliance on costly imports, while local silage production is beginning to slow external shipments.
- Levies and charges on agricultural products came into effect from 1 January 2025. The DAFF has provided comprehensive information on their website.
- Registrations are now open for the AFIA National Fodder Conference being held from Tuesday, 22 to Thursday, 24 July 2025, at the Sheraton Grand Mirage Resort, Gold Coast. Download the Sponsorship Prospectus from the AFIA website for interested sponsors and exhibitors here: <https://afia.org.au/events/afia-national-fodder-conference/>
- Red Fire Ant Invasion of QLD and NSW: Under the Biosecurity Act 2014, everyone—including individuals and organisations - as a general biosecurity obligation (GBO) to take all reasonable steps to prevent the spread of fire ants. Fire ant biosecurity zones are also in place to help manage the movement of materials known to spread fire ants, such as soil, hay, mulch, manure, quarry products, turf, and potted plants.
- Buyers are encouraged to feed test and view fodder before purchase to ensure the quality of feed.

## Southeast South Australia

- Another dry week for the region, with no rainfall recorded and only 10mm forecast for the coming week. Temperatures have dropped to the mid to high 20s, with cooler nights offering some relief for livestock and crops.
- Shedded oaten hay and lucerne are appearing on the market, with lucerne listed online for as high as \$500/t. These prices are driving interest and online visits, particularly for lucerne, suggesting demand for quality hay, though many farmers believe prices at this level are unrealistic.
- In Keith, activity remains minimal, with little enquiry or movement reported. Many farmers are holding onto stock, possibly waiting for either prices to drop or for more clarity on their feed needs post-harvest.
- Harvesting is underway, and while rainfall is sorely needed for long-term relief, farmers are hoping it holds off until their crops are out of the paddock. Sentiment remains flat as the region awaits the autumn break.
- With no significant weather changes on the horizon and hay stock slow to shift, the dry pattern continues

to dominate both sentiment and decision-making in the region. Farmers are managing costs carefully and monitoring market activity as they plan for the months ahead.

Some change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +5 (\$365 to \$405/t). Prices increase this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$430 to \$450/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$150 to \$180/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Pasture hay: +/-0 (\$265 to \$345/t). Prices remain steady this week.

*Please note:* Unless stated otherwise, prices are per tonne, sourced and delivered locally. The price range indicated is for feeds of varying quality with the price range generally indicative of quality of feed. We recommend feed testing and viewing of fodder before purchase to be sure of the quality of feed.

## Central South Australia

- Dry conditions continue to dominate, with no rainfall recorded last week and only 5mm forecast for the coming week across 95% of the state. Temperatures have eased following recent heatwave conditions, dropping to the mid-20s in southern areas and low to mid-30s around Hawker and Port Pirie. Coastal wind warnings are currently in effect in the southern region.
- Farmers are still feeling the sting of these prolonged dry conditions, with many reporting no proper rainfall for 18 months. Despite this, hay movement is surprisingly slow, as many stocked up back in October and are still working through supplies.
- The lack of current buying and selling activity seems to reflect a cautious approach, with farmers holding onto what they have while closely watching the skies and hoping for an autumn break.
- Outlook: With no major weather changes on the horizon, the region remains in a holding pattern. Demand for hay may pick up if the conditions continue or supplies begin to run low, but for now, movement is limited, and sentiment remains uncertain.

No change to pricing this week.

- Cereal hay: +/-0 (\$280 to \$380/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Lucerne hay: +/-0 (\$410 to \$470/t). Prices remain steady this week.
- Straw: +/-0 (\$160 to \$200/t). Prices remain steady this week.

*Please note:* Unless stated otherwise, prices are per tonne, sourced and delivered locally. The price range indicated is for feeds of varying quality with the price range generally indicative of quality of feed. We recommend feed testing and viewing of fodder before purchase to be sure of the quality of feed.



# MENTAL HEALTH IN DRY CONDITIONS

*courtesy of Safe Ag Systems*

The seeding period for lucerne is an essential moment for lucerne farmers. It's a period of considerable physical and financial investments, with a lengthy wait until you reap the rewards. Unfortunately, with southern states experiencing extended dry spells, many growers feel stressed about another turbulent year ahead.

It's important to focus on what's within our control. And unfortunately, rain isn't one of them.

We've gathered some helpful tips for taking care of yourself this season to support your mental well-being and avoid fatigue.

## How Fatigue Affects Farm Safety

Fatigue occurs after prolonged periods of stress, which reduces cognitive function and reaction times. This is particularly dangerous during the lucerne seeding period. When farmers operate heavy machinery, handle chemicals, and work long hours, fatigue can set in.

Common risks include:

- Machinery accidents due to lack of focus.
- Poor chemical handling, leading to exposure risks.
- Physical exhaustion, increasing the likelihood of injury.

Lack of water is also a major concern for lucerne growers this year, particularly those relying on irrigation or hoping for autumn rain to establish crops. When water tables and soil moisture are low, growers must make tough choices about whether to plant, delay, or adjust seeding strategies. These high-stakes decisions can lead to:

- Increased anxiety over finances.
- Sleep disturbances due to constant worry.
- Decision fatigue, which can impact judgement and decisions.

Without enough sleep and rest, the brain gets clogged up and impairs our judgment. When we're tired, we start operating on autopilot and no longer recognise the risks around us. This buildup can lead to 'inattention', which can be fatal when operating large machinery.

When you're stressed, you're not thinking straight, and you're rushing the job. When you're tired, you forget the risks, and your reaction time drops.

It only takes one moment of inattention to cause an accident after all.

Fatigue, and its related effects, are a hidden risk on farms. It poses not just a physical challenge but also a mental one. Your mental health can suffer, especially during challenging seasons.

## How to Manage Your Mental Health

"Weather was the top answer farmers gave (47%) when asked what triggered (farmers) mental health issues." (Norco, National



Farmer Wellbeing Report 2023)

Weather is the one element we can't control, no matter how hard we hope or wish for it. But it's a significant factor affecting the mental well-being of farmers.

Taking yourself out of that threshold of stress or depression can be challenging. Especially if you've been in that zone for a while! To take care of your mental health, combat fatigue, and ensure safety on the farm, you can use these practical strategies.

1. Prioritise planning and risk management
  - Conduct risk assessments to keep your brain active and aware of potential dangers.
  - Develop a clear seeding schedule to reduce last-minute pressure.
  - Have alternative plans in place for low-rainfall scenarios.
  - Conduct regular equipment maintenance to avoid accidents due to operator error.
2. Monitor mental and physical Health
  - Recognise signs of stress, burnout, and fatigue.
  - Check in with any workers or contractors you may have on-site.
  - Take regular breaks and maintain proper hydration and nutrition.
  - Have a good sleep routine before and during stressful periods.
3. Speak up if you're struggling
  - Talk to family, neighbours, or mates for support during this period.
  - Communicate with other lucerne growers to see what their seeding plans are.
  - Access professional help through rural support networks or mental health services like Lifeline.
  - Make time for hobbies or activities outside of farming to unwind and recharge.

And the most important tip? Know when to ask for help.

By recognising the link between stress, fatigue and safety, farmers can take proactive steps to protect their well-being and reduce risks on the farm.

Prioritising mental health is not just about personal well-being. It directly impacts productivity, decision-making, and long-term sustainability in agriculture.

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.

# DELTA AGRIBUSINESS: LUCERNE AGRONOMY REPORT

by Elyssa Hausler & Scott Hutchings, Delta Agribusiness

The 2024/25 lucerne seed season has been one of the most successful years for seed set. This has been a result of the warm temperatures (45 days above 30 degrees Celsius since the beginning of December) and the ability of growers to stress irrigated crops due to lack of rainfall. This meant that we have seen crops flower, stress, set, fill and ripen all in a quick and timely matter leading to desiccation occurring around 2 weeks earlier than the average.

Looking back on the season, we started off with limited available soil moisture and lack of stock feed. This meant many dryland seed paddocks were written off and used for feed early. These paddocks unfortunately did not receive rain to recover and if these paddocks have been grazed too hard it is expected plant numbers in these stands will have declined. Only a handful of opportunistic dryland paddocks were carried through to seed where yields were hit and miss depending on the area they were grown.

The area of irrigated stands did not change significantly to what was locked up originally at about 50% of the normal, with only a few growers taking advantage of the seasons weather locking up a couple more paddocks for seed later into the season.

Fortunately, in December and early January we saw low pest numbers with the main species being native budworm and green mirids. It wasn't until early-mid January that native budworm numbers increased and we saw a normal flight pattern occur. Green mirids stayed at a consistent low number throughout the season. Unlike recent years, we only started to see Australian crop mirids come in around mid-January which aligned well with clean-up sprays and the end of flowering so we did not observe high crop mirid damage like we have previously. Seed wasp have been low this season with only minor numbers creeping in around late January-early February.

Beneficial numbers were particularly high in December with the main species being ladybirds however, they did decline slightly later on. Throughout the season there were also consistent numbers of lacewings, spiders, nabid bugs and hoverfly larvae which was a positive observation. This was most likely due to the decreased amount of insecticides applied and a favourable environment for insect reproduction. Due to the lack of rainfall, summer weeds have been minimal which has also meant bee activity was concentrated on the lucerne assisting a successful pollination.

Hay production has been successful with the high demand for feed creating an easy market to sell into with prices slowly increasing as frosted cereal hay stocks decline. It has also been successful logistically with the lack of rainfall events preserving quality and creating a smooth run. Growers have also seen high pigweed and wireweed numbers in hay stands which is best controlled with a pre-emergent herbicide in November-

December. Chemical applications later in the season can decrease the quality and growth of the cut following application, unless topped to reset the stand, and typically weed control is not as successful.

Early indications of yield are historically high with irrigated stands yielding between 1,000-1,500kgs so far. Seed test weight has also been reported to be higher than usual and with low seed wasp numbers hopefully low wasp damage as well. The last time we saw a season as rewarding was around 10 years ago. A great result on what has been an exceptionally warm and dry summer.



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# BARENBRUG UPDATE

by Aaron Keane, Barenbrug



The 2024 / 2025 production season is shaping up to be almost the complete opposite to what the industry experienced in the previous season, with consistently warm to hot weather throughout Summer, minimal rain, low weed & insect pressure and almost no discussion around Lucerne Seed Wasp. A number of growers have commented that hay production has been a profitable exercise this season too. Expected seed yields should also make seed production a profitable exercise as well. The icing on the cake will hopefully be favourable weather conditions throughout the harvest period, low cleanout rates and high seed quality.

Over the past 6-8 months there has been a lot of discussion and comments made regarding seed production contracts, and in particular the view that all seed marketer's contracts are the same. This is in fact incorrect, Barenbrug seed production contracts are market leading and subsequently has sought

recent feedback from growers regarding our contracts which has yielded positive results. Barenbrug seed production contracts include important terms and conditions that appeases growers concerns and added financial protection.

Barenbrug has multiple lucerne and non-lucerne sowing options available in 2025, including lucrative early generation production. Please reach out to your Production Agronomist to discuss sowing opportunities available to you and for further information on our production contracts.

<b>Aaron Keane</b>	0408 851 411 (Mid-North / South-East / Western Vic)
<b>Michael Birks</b>	0456 437 976 (Lower South-East)
<b>Alan Gowers</b>	0427 152 145 (Victoria / NSW)

## RESEARCH IN ACTION: LUCERNE SEED DAMAGE TESTING

*courtesy of AgriFutures, De Barro Agricultural Consulting, Waite Analytical Services & Seed Services*

In 2008 a 5-year research project was completed by James DeBarro into the cause of abnormal seedlings in final clean seed.

This research identified that the principal cause of abnormal seedlings is due to seed harvest damage and that different paddocks can require different header management at harvest.

Headers should be operated to suit the crop rather than using standard operating procedures on all types of lucerne seed crop.

An outcome of the research was the development of the Lucerne Seed Damage test kit (LSD Kit). The kit enables growers to monitor for seed damage through the harvest process. It's easy –

1. A ferric chloride solution is used to drench a measured sample of lucerne seed. The kit provides the equipment to measure out 100 seeds and soak them completely in a vial of solution.
2. The ferric chloride solution stains cracks and chips to the seed coat jet black.
3. Within 5 minutes, damaged seeds begin to stain and the treatment process is concluded in 15 minutes.
4. After 15 minutes of soaking the 100 lucerne seed sample is emptied into a petri dish for damage assessment.
5. The number of stained seeds is expressed as a percentage of the total number of seeds in the test sample.

Testing seed gives growers the opportunity to adjust header settings to mitigate seed damage at harvest. Damaged seeds have damaged embryos which leads to abnormal seedlings at germination. There are many different types of abnormality and these seeds can invariably not be cleaned out in the cleaning process. The test is very accurate and gives a close approximation of the likely percentage of abnormal seedlings in the final germination analysis. Abnormal seedling presence exceeding 15% in the clean seed line can be a significant market impediment.



*This project was funded by AgriFutures (RIRDC); and delivered by De Barro Agricultural Consulting, Waite Analytical Services, Seed Services.*

## NARACOORTE SEEDS: MARCH SEED UPDATE

by Joshua Rasheed, Pasture and Lucerne Seed Specialist, Naracoorte Seeds

### Lucerne Seed

It is going to be an interesting Lucerne seed season coming up with the area of production down considerably this year due to lower grower prices in 2024, high Lucerne hay prices and a strong lamb market. This year certification stats to December 2024 show registered certified Lucerne seed area is down 40% compared to last year. This is a huge drop in production area with certified Siriver area even greater @ close to 50%.

Lucerne seed harvest has only just started in the past week or so with yields and quality looking good so far which is great for growers. Let's hope this continues through the next few months. With regard to public lucerne seed carry-over we are again at very low levels with not a lot of seed left to offer. Earlier it was looking like we might be carrying a reasonable portion of our 2024 crop into the 2025 season but sales for certified and uncertified seed were very strong since Oct/Nov with many tonnes exported over Dec/Jan.

Forecasts are always hard to predict but with low carry-over seed and record low production area locked up I would like to think we will see grower prices increase from the lows of 2024. Time will tell.

### Pasture Seed

My advice for anyone looking to plant pasture this year would be to get your seed requirements in order early as we have many products that are short due to a poor 2024/25 harvest. Forage cereals are already starting to sell out and legumes in general will be very tight with most clovers expected to sell out this season. Annual Ryegrass is also at its lowest inventory levels we have seen for many years.

With spring and summer been very dry in much of Southern Australia we are expecting and starting to see many orders coming in for annual pastures as needs for hay & silage grow. Most areas outside of our region enjoy earlier breaks and start sowing seed from March & April where we are often sowing later in April and May. My feeling is if you wait to order your seed when required you might be unpleasantly surprised with some products no longer available.

To discuss your pasture seed requirements or if you are looking to sell public pasture seed, please feel free to call us at Naracoorte Seeds on (08) 8762 1944 or call me on 0427 790 655.





# LUCERNE EXPORT STATISTICS FROM AUSTRALIA

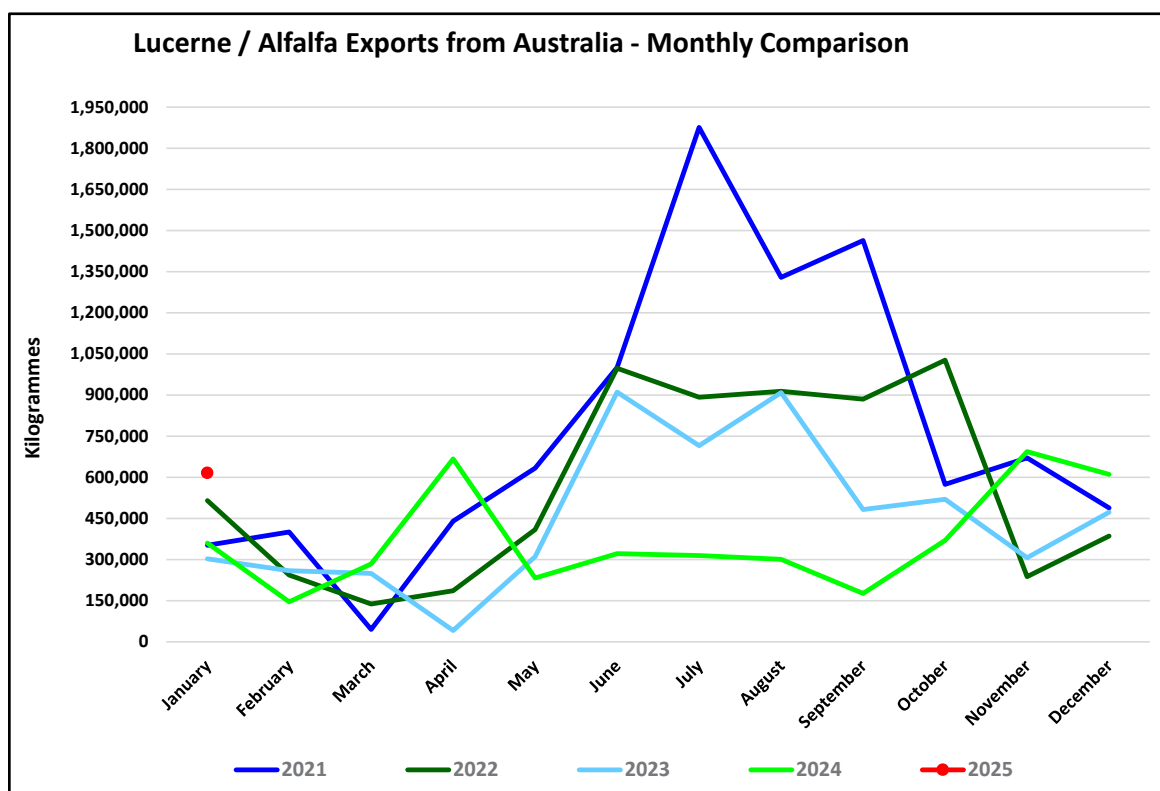
- January 2015 to January 2025

courtesy of Teague Australia

Quantities below are in kg.

	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	Year to date Difference 2024 & 2025
Jan	698,895	374,150	266,596	307,530	512,692	850,518	352,056	515,246	302,936	359,725	615,614	+255,889
Feb	1,099,252	148,919	108,988	57,008	639,425	887,613	400,125	243,786	258,837	145,333		
Mar	582,929	227,050	127,000	321,205	684,044	539,525	44,500	137,329	249,852	284,060		
Apr	549,340	784,031	143,025	123,100	536,501	482,194	439,500	186,064	40,819	667,244		
May	940,000	644,704	363,023	355,575	281,335	495,875	633,571	409,715	310,224	232,465		
Jun	2,176,805	2,942,685	1,018,477	794,995	1,239,461	1,286,579	1,000,145	996,989	910,183	321,018		
Jul	1,649,080	786,450	1,214,352	303,288	792,380	1,205,927	1,875,361	891,632	715,121	314,968		
Aug	834,178	1,339,684	767,256	721,730	1,002,472	1,443,626	1,329,201	914,012	908,522	300,844		
Sep	770,857	388,207	882,195	698,665	871,762	1,533,097	1,463,717	885,058	482,480	176,056		
Oct	667,503	588,199	364,673	472,480	738,090	832,925	573,749	1,026,920	520,252	369,989		
Nov	543,246	409,700	649,318	615,285	609,028	595,095	670,850	237,888	307,116	693,213		
Dec	511,127	623,560	443,729	664,134	775,684	667,771	488,544	385,212	474,742	610,214		
Total	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	4,475,129	615,614	

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



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

# FOR THE DIARY

March 2025	11th – 13th	Women in Seed Network Tour Tasmania
	13th	<i>Making soil data work for your business</i> Padthaway Email Kate.Morris@sa.gov.au
May 2025	1st	Winston Churchill Trust closes <i>Ron Badman Family Churchill Fellowship for small seed industry growers &amp; professionals</i>
	19th – 21st	ISF World Seed Congress Turkiye
July 2025	22nd – 24th	AFIA National Fodder Conference Gold Coast
August 2025	25th – 28th	ASF Seed Business Convention Christchurch NZ
November 2025	16th – 19th	International Herbage Seed Group Conference Launceston, Tasmania

## LUCERNE AUSTRALIA Members

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



# LUCERNE AUSTRALIA *Sponsors*

*Gold*



**Rabobank**

*Silver*



*Associate/Bronze*

AJ Cotton & MA McDonald	Farmers Centre	Synergy Seeds Pty Ltd
Alpha Group Consulting	JJ O'Connor & Sons Pty Ltd	Tatiara Seeds
AFIA (Aust. Fodder Industry Assoc)	Kongal Seeds	Teague Australia
Barenbrug Australia Pty Ltd	Limestone Coast Seeds	Upper Murray Seeds
Brandt	Murray Nankivell	Vermeeren Bros Manufacturing
Delta Agribusiness, Keith	Naracoorte Seeds	Western AG
D & M Rural	RAGT	Wise Farm Equipment
Elders Keith	Sonia Winter & Associates	

# 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.



**Ben Farmer, 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.



**Rodney Lush, Deputy Chairman**  
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.



**Danielle Lannin England,  
Executive Officer**  
Contact: 0439 538 332

Danielle is based at Keilira, where she is involved in a broadacre grains and Merino wool farming business with her husband Jonathan and his family. She has over 20 years' experience in agricultural extension and working with grower groups across Australia and brings to the lucerne industry strong governance, membership, strategic planning, project management and administrative skills.



**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.



**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.



**Will Secker, Grower Member**  
Contact: 0427 578 255

Will and his wife Sarah own and manage farms in the Keith area producing lucerne seed, lucerne hay, prime lambs and wool, winter crops and a small herd of Angus cattle. Since returning to the family farm in 2003, Will and Sarah have had a strong focus on irrigated lucerne seed production. Will is passionate about all facets of lucerne seed production and marketing.



**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.



**Ryan Vandeleur, Grower Member**  
Contact: 0400 577 767

Ryan farms in the Upper South East, 10 km east of Tintinara on the Dukes Highway. Vandeleur Rural Holdings is a family farming business with properties located in the Mid North and South East. Their properties are mixed farming businesses comprising of 'Rices Creek' poll merino sheep stud, Black Angus cattle, cropping, dry land and irrigated lucerne seed along with hay production.

Ryan brings to the committee insight into lucerne production, particularly lucerne seed and hay production. He is a passionate lucerne grower who works alongside our other like-minded people to continue to develop his knowledge around the lucerne industry.



**Aaron Keane, Associate Member**  
Contact: 0408 851 411

Aaron has been in the seed industry since 2008, starting with Seed Services Australia. During his time at Seed Services, he had a number of roles in both the laboratory and certification programs. In July 2023 he joined Barenbrug Australia as a Seed Production Agronomist, covering the Upper South-East across to the Eyre Peninsula.