Boosting Barley and Wheat Profitability in the Great Southern Region - Hyper Profitable Crops Project

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Key Messages

- Supporting farmers to close the yield gap and improve profitability in wheat and barley.
- Peer-driven learning through discussion groups and benchmarking activities.
- Strong focus on profitability and engaging younger farmers.
- Local paddocks benchmarked regionally and nationally, including cost of production.
- A comprehensive high rainfall zone cropping manual in development.

BACKGROUND

The GRDC investment 'Hyper Profitable Crops' project is well underway in the Albany region, with strong farmer engagement. Led by FAR Australia in collaboration with Stirlings to Coast Farmers (SCF), the initiative builds on the success of the previous 'Hyper Yielding Crops' project, taking the next step by placing more emphasis on profitability and younger farmer engagement.

The project is designed to support farmers in closing the yield gap in barley and wheat crops through the adoption of advanced agronomic practices, while also maximising profitability. Importantly, it incorporates local benchmarking, regional trials, and facilitated grower discussion groups to drive practical, data-informed decision-making.

A bonus of this project will be the development of a comprehensive high rainfall zone cropping manual. The manual will include case studies and insights to guide farmers in future decision making.

DISCUSSION GROUPS

In 2024, three discussion groups were established in Albany/Great Southern region around Kojonup, Mount Barker/ Kendenup and South Stirling Regions - drawing farmers in from nearby areas as well. With approximately 10 farmers and an agronomist in each group, discussions have been valuable and thought-provoking. The meetings kicked off in July 2024, with further meetings having been held in October 2024 and February 2025. These will continue regularly during the project.

BENCHMARKING PADDOCKS – FOR PROFIT TOO, NOT JUST YIELD!

A key feature of the 'Hyper Profitable Crops' project is the benchmarking program. In 2024, 16 local farmers volunteered paddocks (wheat or barley) to be entered into the program. Building on the Hyper Yielding Crops Project, this new benchmarking program also incorporates profitability. Data collected from each paddock includes:

- Baseline soil testing (to depth)
- Farmer input records
- Harvest cuts
- Head and grain counts
- Yield and protein

The benchmarking will not only done regionally, but also nationally to give participating local farmers a strong reference point for their own production and profitability.

NVT CO-LOCATED TRIALS

Each year of the project, small plot trials will be co-located with the NVT (National Variety Trials). The idea is that farmers participating in the discussion groups can guide the research in each trial based on the production challenges of that region. These trials will also be visited as part of the discussion group meetings and will hopefully provide research with real local relevance.

SUMMARY

The Hyper Profitable Crops project is set to continue through 2025 and 2026, with regular discussion group catch-ups, field days, and benchmarking updates. We're always keen to welcome new participants—especially younger farmers who want to get more involved in research and are keen (as mustard) to push the production limits of the region!

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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