



# ANNUAL REPORT



**DECEMBER | 2023**

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# Executive Officer's Report



The 2022-23 financial year was a mixed bag for the Irrigated Cropping Council, presenting us with both challenges and opportunities:

- Our team grew to 6 with Amy Miner joining the research team as our “Agricultural Trials Officer” in Sept 2022. Amy is originally from Canada, after completing her degree at Monash University she started her career with Agriculture Victoria. Most recently she worked in Carnarvon, WA as a technical officer with DPIRD. Amy has been supporting Damian and Rohan in the delivery of winter and summer small plots and demonstrations.
- We were hit by the flooding which impacted many across the region in Oct 2022 and the main research site sat under water for a considerable period. We ended up writing off 34 trials on the block including all canola, faba bean and chickpea trials, the barley variety and PGR trials as well as the durum trials under the overhead. We were able to collect data in the lead up to this loss which has enable us to generate valuable information on disease, standability and biomass production.
- The board revised our strategic plan and developed a new brand, the Irrigation Farmers Network, to better reflect the organisation. We worked with Tamara Marwood from Create Business to develop strategies to maintain and grow the organisations capacity to deliver to farmers that are grounded in our values.
- IFN worked with Latrobe students to develop an internal data structure and naming convention, allowing team members to access RD&E data or resources for the purposes of project reporting, extension services, remote working and handovers.
- We continue to grow and develop our partnership network; we are now working with 50 partners who support us to continue delivering value to our members.
- We moved! In the last couple of days of the year we moved into our new premises on Tate Drive. Although not a larger space it is a new building gives our research team more comfortable and safe working environment.

*Charlie Aves*

EO Irrigation Farmers Network

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# Research Report

## 2022-23 PROJECT DELIVERY

We continue to deliver some of the only irrigated variety trials. For those trials we didn't get harvest results for, we shared the long-term results of these trials to help members with their variety decisions.

The research team planted irrigated canola, barley, wheat (main, early and late sowing trials) and faba bean trials, thanks to the ongoing support of Nuseed, BASF, Pacific Seeds, Pioneer, RAGT, AGT, Intergrain, Seednet and the University of Adelaide.

The GRDC Optimising Irrigated Grains project was completed at the end of the financial year. We acted as principal partner to FAR Australia in delivery of the research component of this project and led the Irrigation Discussion Groups.

This project investigated maximising productivity of irrigated durum, canola, barley, faba beans, chickpeas and maize.

The research team have pulled the findings of 66 trials a year into good management guides for each of the crops and the 8 discussion groups ran 72 in-person meetings attracting 2,083 people, 11 virtual meetings attracting 432 people, 21 focus paddocks, created 16 videos & podcasts, either through the GRDC media channels or our own, and most importantly all groups saw changing practice over the life of the project.



Trials 17



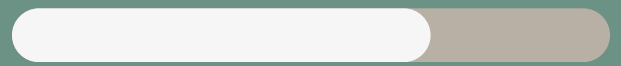
Plots 1318



Partners 50



OIG Trials 66



OIG People 2515



Focus Paddocks 21

visit [www.irrigationfn.com.au](http://www.irrigationfn.com.au) for results and more information

# Event Highlights



## SPRING FIELD DAY

**September 2022, Kerang, attendance 90 people**

Our ICC Field day is a chance to open the research gates and provide insights into the latest irrigated variety and agronomic research in the region. Crops in focus include canola, wheats, barley, faba beans and chick peas. Key speakers included Optimising irrigated grains -Nick Poole FAR Australia, Irrigated Variety trials - Damian Jones and seed company representatives and WaterCan calculator Matthew Harrison, University of Tasmania.



## IRRIGATION INSIGHTS 2023

**July 2023, Moama, attendance 97 people**

The Irrigation Insights 2023 Conference brought together experts, researchers and farmers in the field of irrigated agriculture, providing attendees with invaluable insights and strategies for prosperous farm systems. The cross-industry conference was designed in collaboration with Murray Dairy, CottonInfo and Rice Growers. The program delved into long-term climate projections and short term seasonal and water outlooks to increase understanding of their implications and how farmers can effectively utilise this knowledge to optimise their practices. The conference also featured key information from local research providing valuable insights to help farmers make informed decisions and optimise their farm systems.



## IRRIGATION DISCUSSION GROUPS

**-SOILS FARM WALK**

**March 2023, Pretty Pine, attendance 20 people**

This farm walk as part of the OIG project focused on how we can understand and improve our soils. Learn from our local research, a paddock scale on farm demo and a soil pit. Damian Jones, Trials Manager Irrigated Cropping Council discussed results from the Soil Amelioration - GRDC Project that aimed to develop and validate soil amelioration and agronomic practices to realise the genetic potential of grain crops grown under a high yield potential in an irrigated system. Michael Hughes and Chris Liphuyzen, local Farmers set up a paddock demo to trial deep ripping and subsoil manuring. The aim was to create a better soil for cropping and/or pasture systems and Sam North, Research Hydrologist NSW DPI provided key Learnings from a soil pit. The soil pit is a handy tool to help identify soil constraints and assess root development and depth. Sam will provide insights into understanding your soils, their constraints, and ways to help rectify issues including irrigation scheduling to aid infiltration.





## PRE HARVEST DINNER

**November 2022, Pyramid Hill, attendance 25 people**

The Preharvest dinner aimed to provide the opportunity for farmers to get off farm, talk to other farmers about the challenges and opportunities that the 2022 harvest season has thrown our way. There's nothing we can do about the weather, lets focus on what we can do, including:

- Harvesting big, lodged, wet crops - a group discussion led by Damian
- Support available for flood affected farms - Anna McPhee RFSW
- Looking after yourself - Warren Davies the Unbreakable Farmer



## SUMMER CROPS - MAIZE FARM WALK

**February 2023, Tatura attendance 40 people**

The Summer crops Field walk was a collaboration between ICC and Maize Australia. The walk provided the latest information on maize production and agronomy. Key sessions included Optimising Crop Nutrition - Damian Jones, Trials Manager Irrigated Cropping Council, Productive Maize Systems - Ian Hamono and IPM - Options for pest control - Liz Mann, MAA, Maize agronomy for high yielding crops - John Auer - HSR Seeds and Maize Markets - Shawn Fletcher, Corson Grain

## STRONG NETWORKS



## SOILS FIRST AID

**March 2023, Congupna, attendance 15 people**

Soils are one of the most important aspects of farm systems, this farm walk was to provide information for farmers and industry about understanding and improving their soils for sustainable productive systems, particularly around the benefits of building carbon. In addition to share the latest results from local trial work about building carbon in cropping systems and improving infiltration in non-wetting soils. Cassie Scheffe, AgriSci, Nick O'Halloran, AGVic and Damian Jones, ICC were the key speakers.



## NSW RESEARCH HUB PLANNING SESSION

**November 2022, Deniliquin, attendance 14 people**

Planning session including farmers, state departments, technology and infrastructure companies, local farmers and local agronomists focused on the infrastructure needed to meet the research needs of the local community at Deniliquin. This meeting informed the development of a whole-farm plan by Russell Healey, Rich River Irrigation Developments.



## STOCK MANAGEMENT AREA WORKSHOP AND FARM VISITS

**June 2023 Lindifferon & Bunnaloo, attendance 29 people**

Farm visits and practical workshops looking at the establishment and operation of stock management areas as a tool to manage stock in drought, flood or at other critical times. Murray LLS's Garry Armstrong and Rebecca



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## EVENTS SUPPORTED

- GRDC Update Boort, July 2022 – Damian presented on “Irrigated Canola Agronomy – revisited, reviewed and revised”.
- Riverine Plains Innovation Expo, July 2022 – Belinda and Charlie set up a trade display at the Innovation Field Day, sharing project outcomes from the SNSW Drought Resilience and Innovation Hub, Plan2Farm, GRDC Optimising Irrigated Grains and Smarter Irrigation for Profit.
- Charles Sturt University, Agricultural Careers Day, Aug 2022 – Charlie joined the Farming Systems Group Alliance to discuss the career opportunities in our organisations.
- Sustainable Soils Forum, Mar 2023 –Charlie set up a trade display at the Innovation Field Day, sharing project outcomes from the SNSW Drought Resilience and Innovation Hub, Plan2Farm, GRDC Optimising Irrigated Grains and Smarter Irrigation for Profit.
- Advance Southern NSW Forum, Mar 2023 – Belinda engaged with post-graduates to build their practical skills and identify post-degree opportunities and potential career pathways focused on building drought resilience.

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# Southern NSW Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (Hub)

Belinda continues to act as Knowledge Broker for the SNSW Drought and Innovation Hub. Highlights from her year include:

- Success in the highly competitive Future Drought Fund grants for projects benefiting irrigation and mixed farming businesses in our region. Just prior to the end of the financial year, we were successful in winning funding for 3 new projects through the extension and adoption round.
- Active lead in drafting recommendations into the productivity commissions report into the Future Drought Fund on behalf of the Farming Systems Group Alliance, which led to 8 of the 9 recommendations being acknowledged.

Belinda continues in this role and acts as your conduit to a network of state government departments, universities, industry and community groups. [https://irrigationfn.com.au/snsw\\_innov\\_hub/](https://irrigationfn.com.au/snsw_innov_hub/)

## Year Ahead 2023-24

Continuing projects include:

- 53 paid entries into our Irrigated Variety Trials.
- Saving our soils during drought, our final two workshops and farm visits looking at Stock management areas were held in Nov 2023.
- GRDC Improving Heat Tolerance, led by University of Western Australia.
- Knowledge Broker host for SNSW Drought and Innovation Hub.



# New Projects 2023-24

- 18-month NGN project from GRDC "Improving irrigated grain production using facilitated action learning groups".
- GRDC Infrastructure Grants – enabling us to buy a new plot harvester.
- Flexible Irrigated Farming Systems – a Future Drought Fund project enabling us to look at strategies to maximise profitability during full, partial and zero allocation years.
- De-risking the seeding Program – a Future Drought fund project led by Ag Excellence Alliance where we will be looking at early sowing.
- Future Drought Fund, long term trials – investigating the interdependence and whole-system effects of cropping and livestock components and managing environmental and social impacts in response to seasonal variation.
- GRDC RiskWi\$e – a small project looking at N accumulation and use with pulses in the rotation.
- Southern NSW Hub funding to support the co-design of solutions to build climate change resilience in farming. These funds will be utilised to ensure the new site at Deniliquin is truly representative of the needs of irrigated cropping farmers, now and into the future.



## Thank you to our sponsors

Thank you to our partners and event sponsors, your contribution is greatly appreciated to ensure we can deliver quality research and information for the cropping industry.



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