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MEDIA RELEASE

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PRE-SEASON CROPPING SEMINAR A SUCCESS

With another grain harvest completed and the next growing season imminent, about 170 graingrowers and agricultural industry representatives gathered at the Getting The Crop In seminar in Clare last week.

Hosted by the Hart Field-Site Group, and sponsored by Rabobank, the annual seminar gave guests the opportunity to hear from leading industry and farmer speakers about grain variety performance, the latest Hart Field-Site trials results, global market trends and harvest operation updates.

South Australia's most westerly farmer Bryan Smith gave an informative and entertaining insight into his farming operations and the battles he faces in farming against the weather, environment, distance, and feral animals including wombats, dingoes and camels.

Rabobank Global Financial Markets expert Campbell Keene spoke about the impact of the drought in the United States and South America's step up in the production of soya beans and corn.

"These are the two main things for growers to watch," he said.

"I'd be watching US weather conditions and whether the drought will break and how much corn and soybean South America produce this year, with more reliance on the South American market to fill the void as a result of the US drought. These will both affect domestic pricing of grain in Australia.

"Growers should be watching the futures markets, there may be opportunities in forward selling and using commodity swaps to hedge."

Glencore SA accumulation manager Benn Oliver and Viterra storage and handling manager Michael Hill gave an insight into the general operations of grain receival sites during the 2012/2013 harvest.

Hart Field-Site chairman Matt Dare said having Glencore and Viterra representatives to speak provided an opportunity for growers to vent some concerns and ask questions about issues including freight rates, operating hours, segregation and site access.

"We had some good questions and discussion which should have provided some good feedback to Viterra," he said.

"I think growers want to vent to Viterra a bit and this was a forum to do that. It reinforces these concerns from a different audience than those at their own meetings and hopefully they'll take that on-board and make some improvements as a result."

SARDI New Variety Evaluation senior scientist Rob Wheeler gave a detailed review of grain variety performance, both last season and historically over the past five years or more.

He said growers had quickly adopted new, more profitable grain varieties but should weigh up some of the risks they may carry in terms of disease resistance and resultant potential yield losses.

Peter Hooper gave a review of the 2012 Hart trials.

Of particular interest were results from trials looking at stored water and weed control.

“It was a good season for looking at the benefits of stored water, so the trials looking at reducing evaporation and managing crop growth were quite successful especially given the marginal moisture at the end of the growing season last year,” Peter said.

“The mild springs of 2010 and 2011 meant for a greater set of weed seeds so the trial work looking at weed control, particularly rye grass and wild oats, produced results which reinforced our previous findings giving us confidence in the strategies we’ve been following.”

Peter said with very little or no stored moisture to kick off the 2013 growing season he expected a very different situation with possible changes to management decisions. He said growers would be very dependent on in-season rainfall and won’t have the buffer of stored soil moisture.

Washpool farmer David Boulton said he found the seminar beneficial for its wide range of speakers and take-home information.

“Hart is close-ish to home so it gives a good perspective of what’s happening in the trials,” he says.

“You can read all you want about trials, but being able to come along and hear all the basics about what is happening in trials being done in this area and also hear what other farmers are doing is really beneficial.”

Chairman Matt Dare said the Hart Field-Site Group was extremely happy with the large attendance and positive grower support for the concept of the Getting The Crop In seminar.

The next event on the Hart calendar is the AGM on Monday, April 15, followed by the Winter Walk on Tuesday, July 23.

For more information take a look at the Hart Field Site Group website www.hartfieldsite.org.au

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