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## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Friday, 21 February, 2014**

### **NUFFIELD SCHOLAR TO GIVE INSIGHT INTO FARM OPERATIONS**

Soil moisture capacitance probes are not quite the crystal ball of cropping, but for New South Wales farmer Bruce Watson and the farming partnership he runs with his father and brother-in-law, they are certainly providing some valuable decision-making data.

Bruce, a Nuffield scholar, will be in Clare on Wednesday, March 12, to address delegates at the Hart Field-Site Group's free *Getting the Crop In* seminar where he will give an insight into his farming operations as well as the challenges and solutions they have experienced first hand.

On the back of the 2006-2007 drought, the farming partnership sought funding as well as making a significant personal investment into installing soil moisture capacitance probes on their 3200 hectare Parkes property to give them a clearer insight into what was happening below the surface of their continuous cropping farm.

With eight probes now spread across the property, soil moisture data is collected to assist in the cropping management decisions being made by the family.

Bruce says the soil moisture capacitance probes enable more accurate data on moisture depth than the traditional push probes, enabling better management decisions.

"The old saying that if you can measure it, you can manage it rings true," he says.

"Last year for example we had very little moisture going into the cropping season, so using the moisture data we made the decision to put a bit more barley in than canola because we didn't have the soil moisture to support it.

"Using the data has also given us confidence to buy nitrogen, and also in terms of grain marketing, with no rainfall for August and just one significant rainfall in September last year we backed out of forward selling grain based on the soil moisture data."

The moisture probes are just one of a number of innovative farming techniques being used on the central New South Wales property.

Parkes is not traditionally a summer cropping area, but the foresight of Bruce and the farming partnership has seen sorghum, mungbeans and even corn now being grown to capitalise on the area's often volatile summer rainfall.

With three properties spread over a 50 kilometre radius, Bruce says they have been "dabbling" in summer cropping over the past three summers.

As well as the obvious benefits of production from the crop itself, the foray into summer cropping is providing some control of wild oats and ryegrass, and taking advantage of any summer downpours.

“Three weeks ago we had 85-95 millilitres of rain on our main farm, so we were able to take advantage of that moisture and plant 240ha of mungbeans,” Bruce says.

“Summer cropping brings some optionality to our cropping system if we do have a climatic event like a summer downpour hit us that we can take advantage of.”

Hear more from Bruce Watson about his farming ventures, trials and tribulations at the Getting The Crop In seminar.

For more information see the Hart Field Site Group website [www.hartfieldsite.org.au](http://www.hartfieldsite.org.au) .

Please RSVP to Sandy Kimber on 0427 423 154 or email [admin@hartfieldsite.org.au](mailto:admin@hartfieldsite.org.au) by March 7, 2014.

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*Nuffield scholar Bruce Watson of Parkes, New South Wales, will be the keynote farmer speaker at the upcoming Getting the Crop In seminar in Clare on Wednesday, March 12.*