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MEDIA RELEASE

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FARMING ON THE 'EDGE'

Turn into the last cropping paddock on your left as you head west out of South Australia toward the Nullarbor, and you will be heading onto some of Bryan, Dianne and Kai Smith's Yanama property.

It is in the Nundroo district, about 23 kilometres North West of Fowlers Bay, and the furthest most westerly cropping district in the State.

With it comes the challenge of wombats, dingoes, camels and a 12-inch rainfall in the old measure.

Despite the challenges, Bryan admits with much of his property hugging the coastline, "some days the view from the office is very pleasantother days it's very windy".

And it is a vastly different environment from that at Laura where he began his farming life in a very reliable rainfall area.

Bryan will be the keynote farmer speaker at the Hart Field-Site Group's Getting the Crop In (GTCD) seminar on March 6 at The Valley's Lifestyle Centre, where he will share his experiences and the challenges he has faced in farming over the years.

Having bought Yanama in 1989 in partnership, Bryan and his family experienced the breakdown of the farming partnership, financial difficulties and thousands of kilometres of travel commuting from Laura to the Far West Coast, before making the decision to move the family there in 2004.

The Smith family crop between 2500-4000 hectares to wheat, barley and canola on the 16,000ha property (as well as leasing a further 12,000ha). They also run up to 4000 Dorper sheep, although the numbers are currently back to 1000 ewes and 300 weaners.

Despite the differences between the Mid North and the Far West Coast of SA, Bryan says essentially farming remains the same wherever you are.

"The principles of farming are pretty much the same," he says.

"The problems you face are similar, with some variations - control your weeds, get your diseases under control, get the nutrition right and add water."

There is however, no doubt that farming on the Far West Coast comes with challenges not familiar to most Mid North growers.

"It's 150km to the nearest silo, we've got huge wombat issues, and being one of the first properties running sheep inside the dog fence we have regular problems with wild dogs, losing at least 100 sheep since Christmas," Bryan says.

“And we’ve got camels now coming in off the Nullarbor because it’s so dry and they’re damaging fences and infrastructure in their wake.”

Growers at the GTCI seminar will have the opportunity to hear first hand of Bryan’s experiences of running the property.

He will join a full program of speakers at the free GTCI seminar on March 6. Other key speakers will include Glencore state manager Ben Oliver speaking about the ‘Glencore takeover of Viterro and how it affects you’.

Rabobank’s Global Financial Markets expert Campbell Keane will give an insight into how weather patterns are shaping grain markets.

SARDI’s Rob Wheeler will present the latest updates on cereals, and there will be a full update of the Hart Trials results as well as the release of the 2012 Hart Trial Results book.

Kicking off with a free breakfast at 8am, the seminar runs til 12.15pm and will be followed by the Grains Research & Development Corporation (GRDC) Farm Business Update For Growers from 1.30pm-4.30pm.

Topics for the GRDC forum will include ‘tax effective debt reduction strategies’, ‘the drivers of profit in farming systems’, effective communication in farming businesses and machinery and labour efficiency.

It is a great opportunity for growers to spend a day getting up to date with the latest agronomy and market news before the beginning of the 2013 growing season.

For more information take a look at the Hart Field Site Group website www.hartfieldsite.org.au. Please RSVP to Sandy Kimber on 0427 423 154 or email admin@hartfieldsite.org.au before March 1, 2013. Or to register separately the GRDC forum head to www.orm.com.au or call 03 5441 6176.

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