



Friday, September 21, 2018

Field day remains the 'Hart' of farming

It seemed all roads in the Mid North and beyond were leading to the Hart Field Day last Tuesday where almost 650 people attended the annual event to hear up-to-date crop growing and research information.

A last minute inclusion in the program providing information on managing crops after frost proved particularly popular, highlighting just how many growers have reached decision-making time on frost-affected crops this season.

Hart Field-Site Group chairman Damien Sommerville said he was thrilled with a big crowd throughout the day, and said the late inclusion of the frost session demonstrated the flexibility of the Hart program and the event's focus on providing relevant information to growers.

"The Mid North has experienced significant frost events recently and people are asking the question, 'what am I going to do with this crop?' so the additional session with Mick Faulkner of Agrilink provided some extra information to help people make those decisions," he said.

Another highlight was lunch-time guest speaker, Crop Protection Australia managing director and consultant Dr Rohan Rainbow, who also presented on the main program throughout the day.

"Rohan really did give some food for thought on where agriculture is going and linked into some of the things Hart is doing with the new weather station here, as well as what we're seeing on social media worldwide regarding genetically modified crops, live export shipping and how that community opinion – or social licence - affects us as farmers," Mr Sommerville said.

A low-key official opening of a new Grains Research and Development Corporation-funded (GRDC) field research facility – fondly referred to as "the shed" – was conducted by GRDC grower communication and extension business group general manager Lucy Broad from Canberra.

The new facility has been particularly welcomed by Hart's 'on-the-ground' trials team, and research and extension manager Dr Sarah Noack said it would enable trial work to be undertaken at Hart more efficiently and effectively.

"For 35 years, Hart has conducted research and trials to improve productivity and sustainability for growers," Dr Noack said.

"The new field lab facility will improve the efficiency of our operations, including processing soil, plant and grain samples throughout the season. Having permanent access to power will allow us to run research equipment on-site, an option not previously available to us without this grant."

In addition to Mid, Upper and Lower North and Yorke Peninsula farmers, the Hart Field Day attracted visitors from Eyre Peninsula, the South East and interstate, further cementing itself as the leading cropping field day in the nation.

“Every year we have people from interstate coming in on busses and consistently they say ‘wow, I wish we had this in our patch’,” Mr Sommerville said.

“We are the peak trials research, one-day event in Australia and with the support of growers and industry bodies in the region and across the country, we continue to build on that and go from strength to strength.

“We really thank everyone who attended, sponsored or supported our event in any way for helping us continue to maintain and grow our field site and events throughout the year, and enabling us to continue the trials and research work that was behind the establishment of this group in the very beginning.”

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