

MEDIA RELEASE

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Dry seeding trial gives early insight into impact of soil moisture on wheat and canola

With bigger farms to crop and drier autumns, dry seeding is becoming more common on Australian farms.

As a result, the impact of dry sowing on wheat and canola plant establishment and yield is being put under the microscope in a series of trials being undertaken in South Australia, including one at the Hart trial site.

Early observations of the trial will be the talking point for University of Adelaide associate professor Dr Glenn McDonald and Hart Field-Site Group researcher Kaidy Morgan (pictured together below right) at the Hart Field Day on Tuesday, September 19.

Dr McDonald said the trials aimed to give some clear data to assist farmers make decisions and weigh up the 'risk and reward' of dry sowing.

"People talk about controlling depths of sowing to help improve establishment under dry conditions, or farmers may increase their sowing rate to compensate for the expected poorer emergence," he said.

"But through this trial, we're trying to put numbers on some of those risk management strategies."

While it is early days, and without yield data from a first harvest of the trial, Dr McDonald said there were some preliminary observations he was keen to share.

"The question is one of risk management," he said.



“Do you delay sowing to try and sow into better moisture? But by delaying sowing potentially you're having a negative impact on the yield of the crop, so there's a trade-off between time of sowing and yield and emergence.

“Some of those trade-offs that we're trying to look at include whether if you wait until you've got the soil moisture and best establishment, does that give a better result than sowing earlier and getting lower establishment?”

The SA trials are being undertaken at Hart, Tarlee and Bute, and as Hart's regional intern, Kaidy has been working on the trial in her patch.

“It is important that we figure out the best way to be able to sow earlier in the season without having a negative effect on yield potential,” she said.

“From our early observations at Hart, without yet having yield data, it seems that regardless of soil moisture at seeding time, deep sowing reduced crop establishment in both wheat and canola.

“It will be interesting to see if this is reflected in yield data at the end of the season, or if poor establishment is overcome by an increased season length in treatments that were sown earlier in the season.”

Kaidy said early indications were also showing that early sowing may be less of a factor than timely, consistent rainfall during the germination period.

“We have noticed reduced plant establishment in treatments that were sown into declining moisture, as there was enough moisture available to trigger germination, but then plants were unable to successfully establish as soil moisture was reduced and there was no follow up rainfall,” she said.

The Dry Seeding into Marginal Moisture session will be presented three times across the day, as part of the Hart Field Day rolling program.

The field day will be held on Tuesday, September 19, with gates open at 9am and official opening at 10am. First sessions start at 10.30am sharp.

Admission is \$45 (students \$15), including access to all sessions and guest speakers, as well as a Hart Field Day Guide with articles and information from each of the sessions.

Full catering is available throughout the day (some vendors taking cash only).

The Hart trial site is 10 kilometres north of Blyth, just off the Blyth to Brinkworth Road.

Bus and group tours are welcome and are encouraged to contact organisers now.

Early ticket purchase is encouraged. Sales will remain open online until lunchtime on the 19th, so sign up before you arrive and fast-track your way through the gate.

For tickets, or for more information head to the Hart Field-Site Group website www.hartfieldsite.org.au (look for Events/Hart Field Day in the main menu), or contact Sandy Kimber on 0427 423 154, or email admin@hartfieldsite.org.au

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