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Students linking theory with practice at Hart

Third year agricultural science students are combining theory with practice as part of a new partnership between the Hart Field-Site Group and the University of Adelaide's School of Agriculture, Food and Wine.

A key component of the arrangement is for students to visit the Hart site to broaden their exposure to the issues facing farmers.

Dr Gurjeet Gill is an associate professor at the university and explained why the relationship with Hart is such a great fit with the ag science program.

"Hart is a well known farming systems group with an excellent reputation and it is so close to Adelaide," Dr Gill said.

"It's vitally important for our third year students, who will be working in the industry next year, to visit a site like Hart to look at some of the leading questions farmers need addressed through research."

"We can use some of the trials set up by the Hart group as practical exercises for students to assess the effectiveness of different practices in managing those problems."

He added that students quickly come to appreciate that it is not just what the lecturers are trying to teach them, these are also the issues the industry is interested in.

"It puts things in really good perspective and we'd like to bring our third year students here every year," he said.

University of Adelaide associate professor Dr Glenn McDonald agreed and said the trial work being conducted at Hart aligned with a lot of the content covered in agronomy subjects.

"It's a chance for our students to integrate theoretical and practical knowledge and to consider what the ultimate outcomes required for commercial farmers are," Dr McDonald said.

"Students can also look at opportunities for careers in agriculture by considering the role of farming systems groups in research."

A combination of lectures delivered in the Hart shed and hands on experience gained by sampling, measuring and recording trial work in the field adds diversity to the sessions.

Being able to speak to members of the Hart team, many of whom are farmers themselves, also helps students get a real sense of what the research is trying to achieve.

Student Henry Ball is from a farming family at Riverton. He said he had appreciated the opportunity to see the real life application of the theory taught in lectures.

“At Hart you can actually see the research being done to assist farmers as well as being able to learn more about the trial process,” Mr Ball said.

For student Rehn Freebairn from Adelaide it is also the exposure to the practical side of the theory learnt in lectures that has piqued his interest.

“We get to see what’s going on in the industry; what research is being carried out, the agricultural issues I’ll be dealing with in my career and the people who are working on finding resolutions to these issues,” Mr Freebairn said.

Media contact:

HFSG Research & Extension Manager, Sarah Noack, 0420 218 420.



Photo captions (clockwise from top left):

Samples and measurements being taken and recorded in Hart trials by third year students from the University of Adelaide’s ag science program.

Hart chairman and Brinkworth farmer Justin Wundke talks to University of Adelaide third year ag science students about why time of sowing trial results are so important to his farming business

Third year students Rehn Freebairn and Henry Ball in the field at Hart

University of Adelaide’s Dr Glenn McDonald delivers a lecture to third year ag science students at Hart