

MEDIA RELEASE

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New trial launched at Hart to boost soil fertility and water retention

A new multi-faceted trial at Hart in South Australia's Mid North is set to investigate novel cropping strategies to strengthen soil health and build resilience in farming systems.

The trial is funded through the Future Drought Fund's Long-Term Trial Grants and joins a network of "innovator sites" across South Australia.

Hart Field-Site Group research officer Kaidy Morgan (pictured below) will be joined by Melissa Rebbeck from Metamor Engineering at the Hart Field Day on September 16 to speak about the new 'Novel cropping strategies to improve soil fertility and water retention' trial.



Kaidy said across the next three years, a range of approaches to achieve these outcomes would be tested, including stubble management, organic amendments and treatment sprays to promote nutrient availability.

"The project is about building the resilience of farming systems by increasing soil resilience to things like drought, which has obviously been very relevant to this region over the past couple of years," she said.

"The trial is aiming for a deeper investigation into soil improvements, and better understand how grain yields and productivity can be improved.

"We're looking at two different methods of stubble management, so cutting at a standard height and then also cutting at a taller height and rolling that to achieve two different soil cover treatments," Kaidy said.



“We’ll be testing chicken litter applied in year one, and the residual effect of that across multiple years.

“Other soil amendments will include biochar - in treatments with chicken litter – inorganic fertiliser, and investigate if we can reduce inorganic fertiliser use, and what effect it has on water holding capacity.”

Kaidy said the trial would also test bacterial and fungal products to improve stubble breakdown over summer, potentially enabling higher stubble cover.

Planting cereals with a temporary legume, and then spraying out the legume to improve soil cover and nitrogen fixation, as part of a cereal rotation, will also be investigated.

Kaidy said she was looking forward to sharing the new project with visitors at the Hart Field Day, and said it was an excellent opportunity to see a trial from the start, and follow its journey over coming years.

“It’s great to have this long-term trial, and while it might take a couple of years to be able to see any visual results, there’s a lot of really different and exciting things that we’re looking at - seeing where the future might be taking us,” she said.

The Hart Field Day will be held on Tuesday, September 16, 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.

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

Tickets are now available, and early purchase is encouraged.

While sales will remain open online until lunchtime on the 16th, sign up before you arrive to 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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