



Accolades & advancement for irrigators

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IN A RICE HULL

- ▶ A combo-seeder, designed for working in heavy stubble has been purchased by IREC, for use by farmers and groups in local trials
- ▶ The 2005 Irrigated Farm Competition (Horticulture) highlighted irrigators who enjoy success through novel partnership agreements, innovative technology and risk management strategies
- ▶ IREC is encouraging and working with other groups and organisations to identify key areas of R&D, so coordinated proposals for funding can be tendered to appropriate organisations

IREC has been involved in a wide range of activities from purchasing a minimum tillage seeder from India, for irrigators to trial in heavy stubbles, to working with regional and national organisations to ensure that public monies allocated to irrigation research are directed towards the best and most practical outcomes.

Since the last report, established events on the IREC calendar have taken place, highlighting the great things being achieved by the region's irrigators, and the opportunities that exist to consolidate ongoing success.

Lifetime Achievement Award

The 2005 Lifetime Achievement Award in Irrigation and IREC's "Hall of Fame" membership was awarded to Roy Sainty for his efforts in challenging the limits of agriculture in this region. Roy was a horticulturalist at Hanwood for some 60 years. As well as farming and producing fruit to a high standard, Roy and his peers were very actively involved in the development of industry organisations in the MIA and in the development of discussion groups, to disseminate information and technology to farmers. Amongst other senior industry positions, Roy was Chairman of IREC for 21 years. Roy's award and achievements were reported in the previous edition of the *IREC Farmers' Newsletter* (No. 170, pp 8–9) but suffice to say that Roy was a thoroughly endorsed awardee.

The Lifetime Achievement Award will be awarded as appropriate, not necessarily annually, to people who have contributed significantly to the advancement of irrigated agriculture in the Murrumbidgee Valley over many years.

Irrigated Farm Competition 2005

IREC held its annual irrigated farm competition, with the

2005 competition for horticultural farms. From a strong field of finalists, the competition was won by citrus producers Dean Morris and Wayne Protheroe. Originally sole operators on small farms, the pair has formed a novel business partnership and with that combined strength, implemented innovative technology across their properties, including an open hydroponic irrigation system, and vertically integrated the business to give more market control and better risk management. A full report of the Farm Competition was presented in the previous edition of the *IREC Farmers' Newsletter* (No. 170, pp 10–11).

Dean and Wayne have since been recognised at the 2005 ANCID Conference in Mildura as leading irrigators in Australia in a water use efficiency showcase.

Planning for the 2006 competition for broadacre irrigation farms in the Murrumbidgee Valley is underway.

GRDC Update July 2005

IREC once again hosted the Murrumbidgee GRDC Irrigation Update in July, in Griffith, which was attended by around 100 people. This Update provided growers and service providers with a huge amount of cutting edge information through concurrent sessions on crops, economics and new technology. Proceedings from this Update are available through the IREC office.

This Update, combined with ongoing effort through the Irrigated Cropping Forum has led to an increase in the attention that GRDC (Grains Research & Development Corporation) is giving to issues associated with irrigated cropping.

As a direct result of this higher interest in irrigation issues and previous investment from GRDC in wheat performance evaluation under irrigation, IREC has now commenced



negotiations with a range of interested parties to develop a specific winter cereal breeding programme for irrigated agriculture in the southern regions of Australia.

Farmers' Newsletter

The *Farmers' Newsletter* has undergone an expansion in its distribution and the large area editions are now being received by over 4500 irrigators across the four valleys covered by the Irrigated Cropping Forum, ie the Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Murray valleys in NSW, and the Goulburn/Murray region in Victoria. This expansion has been as a result of new GRDC funded projects combined with continuing support from the rice industry.

We have had an approach from the CRC for Irrigation Futures about the possibility of using the magazine as a model for extension of CRC information to the irrigation community.

Happy Combo-Seeder

CSIRO has imported two Happy Combo-Seeders from India, one of which has been purchased by IREC. These machines offer a new technological solution to dealing with heavy stubble loads under irrigation or dryland cropping. The machines were developed by CSIRO and Punjab Agricultural University for direct drilling wheat into rice straw in north west India, with funding assistance from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR). The machines will be evaluated under Australian conditions and it is hoped that they will see some use on irrigation farms this coming summer. Potential applications include soybeans into barley or wheat straw, wheat into maize and wheat into wheat. Watch out for them!

Any farmer or organisation wanting to evaluate a Happy Combo-Seeder can contact the IREC office on 02 6960 1550 or Liz Humphreys at CSIRO on 02 6960 1500.

More R&D for irrigators

Throughout 2005 IREC was very active in pursuing projects to assist in providing support and research into the issues identified at last year's research priority days. The successful

projects were reported in the previous edition of the IREC *Farmers' Newsletter* (No. 170, pp 5–7) but to recap they are the Oilseed Industry Development Officer, the high value irrigated agriculture projects and the bay automation project at Coleambally. These projects are being run through the Irrigated Cropping Forum (ICF) which brings together the research needs of the four valleys of the southern Murray-Darling Basin.

IREC is working to encourage interested groups, eg irrigator groups, irrigation companies and research organisations, from the Murrumbidgee Valley or an even a wider area, to put forward a "portfolio" of projects dealing with improvement of irrigation infrastructure, technologies and practices to the National Water Initiative (NWI). The benefit of a "portfolio" is it that provides a coordinated approach to research in the region and eliminates duplication, providing the most effective and efficient outcome for all stakeholders.

Future of CSIRO Griffith

IREC has taken up the cause of maintaining CSIRO in Griffith. We have become concerned that once again the site is under threat from internal CSIRO reviews and budget constraints. It is amazing that only last year the Honourable Peter McGauran as Minister for Science was unveiling the new \$4.5 million upgrade of the site, which is at risk of being closed due to high per capita cost structures.

We must all fight hard to maintain the presence of the pre-eminent scientific organisation in the most productive area of the country. We must also ensure that CSIRO is fully engaged across all its divisions to deliver on ground benefits to the advancement of irrigated agriculture. 🌞

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Figure 1 IREC and CSIRO have purchased two Happy Combo-Seeders from India, which will be evaluated under Australian conditions



Figure 2 The Happy Combo-Seeder offers a new technological solution for dealing with heavy stubble loads under irrigation