



# Extending technology to rice growers

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## in a rice hull

- Over five years, IREC has managed, coordinated and implemented a range of projects and activities to promote new technologies for rice-based farming systems, through the IREC *Farmers' Newsletter*, field days, farm competitions, rice industry meetings and discussion groups, and regular planning and review of irrigation farming R&D

***Since the project 'Capacity building for a productive and sustainable rice farming system' began in 2001, it has made significant progress in educating the rice farming community about best practices in rice and irrigated farm performance. The current project will end in July 2007, and several changes are proposed to the current project structure to ensure success into the future.***

## Project deliverables to date

### Farmers' Newsletter

The *Farmers' Newsletter* continues to provide a source of easily-digestible technical information to growers across the three irrigation valleys of southern New South Wales (Lachlan, Murrumbidgee and Murray) and northern Victoria. Each year, three editions were produced including the Rice R&D edition and the magazine continues to be well received by growers and key industry people. The magazine is now also accessible via the internet, through the IREC website and individual articles can be downloaded.

Over the course of this past year and with the additional support of GRDC, the mailing list and distribution of the *Farmers' Newsletter* has expanded. It now reaches over 4500 irrigators and key decision makers across the region from the Lachlan Valley through to northern Victoria – the area represented by the Irrigated Cropping Forum (ICF).

### Irrigated Farm Competition 2006

The IREC again held its annual irrigated farm competition. This year the focus was on broadacre farms and was won by Tim and Sue Watson from Hillston. The Watsons impressed the judges with their innovative use of flood, furrow, drip and sprinkler irrigation methods, to provide the best irrigation methods for the range of crops they produce, from winter cereals through to vegetables and cotton.

A review of the competition has been held and the event for 2007 will be a new format to 'showcase' best practice

irrigation rather than the former competition format. Details on the new event will be publicised early in 2007.

### IREC Website

The IREC website – [www.irec.org.au](http://www.irec.org.au) – is now fully developed and running to provide an online service to all growers and the wider industry to access up-to-date research information, articles and information on upcoming events.

### GRDC Update August 2006

The IREC once again hosted the Murrumbidgee/Lachlan GRDC Irrigation Update in August, which was attended by around 130 people in Griffith. 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 and electronically via the IREC website.

Issues covered at the Update included:

- Market opportunities for irrigated grains
- Herbicide resistance mechanisms and common misconceptions
- Managing irrigation and nitrogen in grain crops with Yield Prophet
- Water availability risk and the development of a water index futures market
- Benefits of pulses in rotation
- Value adding grain through livestock
- Drive over banks
- Irrigated cropping on a changing climate
- Grazing management and the yield of winter wheat in southern NSW
- Direct drilling into heavy stubbles
- Cotton as a new enterprise
- Irrigated wheat evaluation
- Biodiesel in Australia



### NSW DPI-IREC activities

In addition to the initiatives described so far, IREC also works in conjunction with NSW DPI to support the following activities:

#### Revision & publication of Ricecheck Recommendations

Data for 279 crops was entered into the Ricecheck database this season. The objective of improving adoption of three Ricecheck key checks was successful with an increase in adoption of the plant number check by 22%, nitrogen uptake check by 16% and microspore water depth by 16%. The 2005 *Ricecheck Recommendations*, *Rice Crop Protection Guide* and *Rice Variety Guide* with new 'primefact' layouts and MANAGE rice CD were mailed to every grower.

#### Rice pre-season meetings

The seven rice pre-season meetings were attended by 495 people. Topics included Quest quality, the variety Reiziq, staggered sowing strategy, crop protection including the new herbicide Barnstorm® and bloodworm product Dominex®, and Ricecheck and research results on split nitrogen.

#### Rice field days


The rice field day at RAPPL at the end February 2006 was successful with 300 people attending. The annual update for pilots was combined with retail agronomists attracting 80 participants.

#### Rice discussion groups

The number of discussion groups run by district agronomists climbed from the drought affected number of 28 in 2004–05 to 36 this year.

#### Future of IRE-6A

The current project IRE-6A will end in July 2007 and IREC will be proposing some new ideas to continue this project, including:

- four editions of the *Farmers' Newsletter* each year to manage the edition size of the publication and also the timeliness of the articles
- a move away from the Farm Competition to some form of non competitive showcasing of irrigation best practice
- a general shift in the geographic limitations of the project operations to more formally include the Murray Valley and work more closely with representatives from that region
- a separation and clarification of the rice technology transfer roles such as the rice discussion groups, rice field day and *Ricecheck*.
- improved knowledge management within the rice industry and a service to manage the information generated by the industry through the various industry groups and research providers
- support of industry development across the main rice growing areas along with other projects relating to crop residue management
- capacity building through international travel opportunities. 

#### RIRDC Project IRE-6A

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#### Visit the IREC website for:

- information on IREC
- back copies of the IREC *Farmers' Newsletter*
- papers presented at the GRDC updates
- a calendar of events for the irrigation industry

[www.irec.org.au](http://www.irec.org.au)



Figure 1: Finalists of the 2006 IREC Irrigated Farm Competition, Malcolm and Maree Brown, Warburn; Glen and Julie Andreazza, Willbriggie; and Tim and Sally Watson, Hillston. Absent are Ian and Jan Auld, Hay.



Figure 2: The Murrumbidgee/Lachlan GRDC Irrigation Update was attended by around 130 people, with growers and service providers presented with cutting edge information on irrigated crop production.