



Chairman's foreword

Welcome to another edition of the IREC Farmer's Newsletter – in a season which has been the worst ever for most southern Murray-Darling Basin irrigators. Record low inflows have reduced water available for irrigation to unprecedented low levels and the season has put enormous pressure on irrigators as well as the whole community.

Research and extension has also suffered this season with the loss of many valuable trials. Water was removed from crops with reductions in water allocations announced after crops had been established. Our farm saw the loss of a district variety trial and a nitrogen trial, and a precision ag trial was severely disrupted. Two of the trials were managed by NSW DPI and the other by the CSIRO. Reductions in levy income from the drought, for both RIRDC and GRDC, are not a good sign for future new research.

The Irrigated Cropping Forum has however been successful in highlighting irrigation cropping research needs and this year sees the beginning of a program to develop high yielding wheat, barley and triticale varieties specifically for irrigation. If we have access to water the future is optimistic with a growing local demand for grain.

The season has also left many growers questioning production contracts with little sympathy from companies for grower's signing contracts and then having water allocation snatched away. Early closing of irrigation seasons and Snowy water paybacks are all extra challenges irrigators will also have to deal with.

In the last issue of the magazine I mentioned the loss of researchers from CSIRO. The good news is

that John Blackwell has been appointed a professor at Charles Sturt University under the new Centre for International Food Security and will be working closely with the Irrigated Cropping Forum. Liz Humphreys is now working for an international research program - the Challenge Program on Water and Food - as Leader of the Crop Water Productivity Improvement theme. The theme includes projects researching a wide range of crops, mostly in rainfed situations, across Asia and Africa. Liz Humphreys is now working for an international research program - the Challenge Program on Water and Food - as Leader of the Crop Water Productivity Improvement theme. The theme includes projects researching a wide range of crops, mostly in rainfed situations, across Asia and Africa.

The recent return of summer thunderstorms although patchy is hopefully a sign of change to the weather patterns. Rainfall was becoming a novelty. Our farm has experienced 50 mm since July 2006 whereas dry area dams 10 kilometres away are full to overflowing. My wish is to see all the dams in NSW and Victoria full to overflowing so that we can all get back into full production, achieving what you do best.

My thanks again to editor Lucy Kealey and the contributors. This edition features many articles on a wide range of topics. I wish you well for the coming season.

Peter Draper
Chairman, IREC

