

CASE STUDY

Cropping field day draws massive crowd



Group: Jimbour Plains Growers Group

Region: Eastern Darling Downs , Queensland

Location: Jimbour, 25km north of Dalby

Industry: Dry-land grain growing (sorghum, maize, wheat and barley), chick peas and other pulses, and cotton.

Issue: Young growers looking for innovation and new cropping options.

Outcomes: A well attended field day to showcase new cropping options, soil health, new technology and the latest in machinery.

Background: The Jimbour Plains Growers Group reformed after many years in recess following a meeting with the Regional Landcare Facilitator (RLF) in January 2015. The RLF facilitated a discussion with a group of young grain growers at the property of St John Kent, a former leading farmer in the local Landcare movement. The growers identified a lack of access to localised information relevant to eastern Darling Downs cropping systems. One of the options suggested was using a field event format successfully utilised over many years by the Tulloona Conservation Farming group near Moree in northern NSW.

The Jimbour Growers Group Field Day

- 26 August 2015: The Regional Landcare Facilitator took a lead role in the organisation of the event with a small organising committee from the Jimbour area. St John Kent agreed to host the event at his property "Coondarra", a few kilometres west of Jimbour. The group enlisted the enthusiastic support of local growers to bring their machinery to the day. A large number of local businesses provided sponsorship for the day as well as organisational support with Dalby Rural Supplies cooking up a country breakfast and

the Rabobank "chefs" supplying and preparing a barbeque lunch.

The field day linked in with a Department of Agriculture Innovation Grants project which is investigating the role of legumes in cropping systems. This discussion was reinforced by a presentation from the University of Queensland on soil fertility, legumes, crop rotations and herbicide resistance.

There were further presentations and demonstrations on the practical application of technologies such as satellite imagery, drones and the EM38 soil moisture monitoring tool.

The afternoon was spent looking at the amazing array of weed management rigs and technology on display., including weed seeker systems and a discussion on the cost of operation of spray rigs.

The Outcome: Over 150 growers, agronomists and industry representatives attended the field day. Conservation Farmers Inc. chair, Lloyd Russell, said that the day exceeded all expectations and feedback was extremely positive. Lloyd said that it was tremendous to see so many young growers attending which was the target group for the day.

The Future: St John Kent believes that the success of the day indicates a need for this type of field event and the Jimbour Plains Growers Group will look to hold a similar event in 2016 but with a different theme. "As growers we have so many new and exciting technologies at our disposal but knowing how to capture value and realising improved efficiency out of the technology is a challenge for all of us" he said.

Images: Top Left, Growers hear about legumes in cropping systems. Top Right, Shed presentation by the University of Qld.

Support from the Jimbour Plains Growers Group organising committee, the Regional Landcare Facilitator project through the National Landcare Programme, and the event sponsors is gratefully acknowledged.