



BOARD BIS – January / February 2007

NEWS FROM THE BOARD:

Advisory Board of Agriculture meeting: Board met on 6th February, following an Executive meeting, with member reports and working group meetings on the 7th February. This was the first meeting held under the new format.

Annual Report 2005 – 2006: The Board's annual report has now been tabled in Parliament and recorded in Hansard.

ABA membership 2006 / 2007: Ministerial approval now finalized for all new Board members. The Board now has full representation from all Ag Bureau regions.

Ag Excellence Forum: To be held at the West Adelaide Footballers' Club. Dinner to be held in the evening of 26th March and a day forum on 27th March. Information and details will be soon forthcoming.

ABA Chair visiting the Riverland: Board Chairman Mark Dennis is planning a visit to the Riverland on 1st May. A program is being developed which includes a field inspection and hopefully time to meet with Branch Executives.

Former ABA Executive Officer moves to SAFF: Deane Crabb, Executive Officer for 13 years, is moving to SAFF as Policy Manager. He takes up his new position on 5th March. He has been in the Department for 40 years!

BUREAU ACTIVITIES:

Appila: As ABA rep, Upper North member Neville Ferme attended Branch presentation dinner: made to Arnold Wurst for +70 years service to the Bureau and Don Bottrall for 20 years' membership.

Free Eyre: Former ABA chairman David Jericho, is chairman of Free Eyre, a group of Kimba farmers coming together to develop a base plan aiming to set up a company to pursue best options for the future. Areas being investigated include grain-based foods, intensive livestock, aquaculture and livestock feeds and grain accumulation. The group is working this month towards developing a corporate identity and searching for suitable directors.

Kangaroo Island Field Day: The bi-annual field day was held 22nd February: well attended and lots of people passed through the tent. The Ag Bureau site was next to AgKI and some PIRSA staff, which worked well.

Karoonda Farm Fair: 30th and 31st March. The Bureau / ABA will again have presence with a display. A site has been booked.

Laura: Branch held a "Safety for Older Farmers Workshop" on 9th February in conjunction with AgHealth Australia and Southern Flinders Health.

Mallala: Harvest Report meeting held chaired by Tony Craddock (Rural Solutions).

Milang: Did not meet in January but their February meeting was on seeder innovations and inspections. 21st March will be a Beef Field Day with speakers on nutrition and marketing.

Millicent: November Meeting preceded by BBQ tea provided by Millicent Farm Supplies followed by Stephen Fisher speaking on livestock vaccinations and the pestivirus in cattle. February meeting was a field trip looking at wind farms, a cattle feedlot and a dairy followed by BBQ tea.

ABA funded by the



Mobilong, Monarto and Frayville: Met at Graham Wilmhurst's on January 15th and Board rep, Vic Walter gave a short summary of his life and passed on ABA news and Ag Bureau info. Attendance down a bit but still a good night was had by all. The meeting on 28th February will be at the Summerfield Hall with Grain Marketing, Forward sales and Futures the topics. 19th March should be on Bio Fuels at the Monarto South Hall

Murray Mallee: EC Information Sessions have been held in the Murray Mallee over the past fortnight. Held in Parilla, Karoonda, Murray Bridge, Paruna and Wunkar. As an initiative of the Murray Mallee Drought Response Task Force, these 1.5 hour sessions covered EC eligibility, application process for income support and interest rate subsidies and further assistance from the Rural Financial Counselling Service of SA and Centrelink.

Owen and Tarlee: Community get togethers held by these Branches. Both were excellent evenings giving opportunity for members to discuss issues and "adverse seasonal conditions" in their areas. Tarlee had their local GP attend, discussing Depression.

Parawa: Had a break for January, and February meeting was an Open Forum where members talked about whatever pleased them, and proved to be a fruitful night. 5th March is a Field Day looking at Weed Control, Revegetation Site, Property Development, Swamps and Remnant Vegetation Sites: 9am to 12.30pm.

Riverland: Long serving Bureau member, and "Riverland legend", Jack Seekamp passed away recently. Jack joined the Bureau (according to our records) in 1943 and received his 50-year award in 1994. He was a member of the Renmark Branch and heavily involved in the Field Days and other Riverland community projects. A card has been sent on behalf of the ABA and the Ag Bureau to Jack's family.

Riverland: Most Irrigation Branches are having a month or two off during grape harvest.

South East Community Gathering: A community gathering at the Kybybolite Sports Complex has been arranged through the SE Bureau / WAB on *Thursday 1st March at 3 pm.* Keynote speaker is Pita Alexander, a Farm Management Accountant from NZ. Ken Solly (Agribusiness Consultant), Yvonne Correll and Lyn Teakle will also speak and provide ABA / WAB updates. Invitations by way of a flier have been sent to Bureau members and office bearers in the South East.

Wattle Range: February meeting on irrigation followed with pasture establishment in March.

SEASONAL CONDITIONS:

Drought: Guidelines are available from:

- PIRSA Prudential and Rural Financial Management, toll free on 1800 182235
- Service SA Drought Link website www.service.sa.gov.au/drought

Further information is available from:

- PIRSA website drought page www.pir.sa.gov.au/drought
- Drought Hotline: 180 2020 (freecall)

EC (Exceptional Circumstances) Update

Announced in January that four regions can now apply for full EC drought assistance. Farmers and agricultural-dependent small businesses in the Central and Western EP, as well as the Upper SE and Murray Mallee, can apply for income support and interest rate subsidies until 31st March, 2009.

Lower EP was not declared EC, but those affected in the region can still apply for income support for up to six months as prima facie was established in December 2006. The National Rural Advisory Council (NRAC) has asked for additional information in assessing LEP's application.

Further EC applications

Five new EC applications have been prepared and lodged with Commonwealth

Individual applications for income support and interest rate subsidies would need to be justified on a case-by-case basis once EC declaration was gained for any of these regions.

EC info Sessions

Run 16 sessions across 5 regions – newly EC and Prima Facie declared – in partnership with RFCSSA and Centrelink. Focus on how eligible farmers and small agriculture-dependent businesses in EC-declared regions can apply for income support and interest rate subsidies until March 31, 2009. Have proved very successful.

New announcement 13 Feb – Drought commitment reaches \$33M

The State Government has boosted assistance for SA's drought-affected farmers to more than \$33m with the announcement of further relief measures.

Package to date includes:

- \$13.8m package of further business support measures and concessions for farmers in Exceptional Circumstances areas to develop and implement business plans for their futures.
- \$4m initial aid package announced in October last year which kick started the government's drought response measures.
- \$1.16m in financial relief for irrigators announced in November last year.
- \$12m to meet South Australia's contribution towards interest rate subsidy assistance for primary producers in the state's 'Exceptional Circumstances' (EC) declared areas.
- \$2.4m worth of resources from state government agencies to focus on the overall drought response.

State Government assistance focussed on rural families, their finances, and their farms. The new package includes \$14,000 grants for individual farmers to develop and implement business plans for their future (Planning for recovery).

Community Support Grants

\$500,000 has been made available for community projects that will contribute to building the resilience and spirit of rural communities.

Grants of up to \$5,000 are available for group activities that will support rural communities in areas affected by drought conditions.

Applications received by PIRSA Prudential & Rural Financial Services and assessed at the end of each month by a panel.

Guidelines available from www.pir.sa.gov.au/grants or phone 1800 182 235

Grants Snapshot

The *Guide to Drought Assistance Measures* document compiles a list of grants and other assistance measures that drought affected individuals and communities may be able to access.

Evolve as new information and grants are announced. It includes Federal and State drought assistance measures and grants of relevance to farming communities in EC declared areas.

Also includes measures announced by industry, business and communities, and other support measures, that are non-drought specific, but that may also be relevant. For full details, visit www.service.sa.gov.au/drought.asp

Drought E-News

If interested in receiving this weekly update, please email Karen Shepherd (shepherd.Karen@saugov.sa.gov.au). You will be sent the next edition and can automatically subscribe using the link contained at the bottom.

PIRSA Executive dinner meeting: Lower North ABA rep, Richard Konzag, is attending this meeting at Roseworthy Campus as part of their visit to the Northern Adelaide Plains.

Upper North: ABA rep Neville Ferme has held meetings with Mid North Health and PIRSA for setting drought priorities and programmes.

KI: ABA rep Shirley Pledge meeting with Drought Response Team to look at the water issue and rural counsellor (changing again on the Island).

Upper North: Thunderstorm activity: falls ranging from five mm to 80 mm: some isolated falls up to 120 mm. Small businesses have sold a lot of herbicides to combat summer weeds.

Lower North: Thunderstorms produced 34mm of rain at Mallala in January to follow up the 30mm that fell just before Christmas. Germination of summer weeds (again) as well as volunteer cereal etc. A lot of spraying has been done throughout the district by the croppers with some graziers leaving the green as feed. There will certainly be a green bridge to carry over any rust or other diseases that may be present.

Riverland: Citrus crops are looking reasonable – now for reasonable markets and prices. Dryland farmers suspected of spraying weeds after the rain.

The district had up to 60 mm of rain late in January - saved some irrigation water, gave the citrus a boost, split and damaged grapes to varying amounts (10 to 15% damage on already light crops of wine grapes to making it unviable to pick and process drying varieties - currants and sultanas)

Water is still a major concern and next year could be anything. Some vineyards are showing the stress from the heat and reduced water.

Fleurieu / Murray Plains: Murray Plains and Milang areas had about 30 to 35mm of rain in January which relieved the bushfire threat for a while. Hand feeding is in full swing with the green pick from the rain all gone. Stock in good condition with cattle caved or about to and sheep due in a few weeks.

Parawa had some of the best rainfall from 18th to 20th January ranging from 108 mm to 72 mm, with good germination on clover, which has all but died off now. The green pick was valuable feed at this time of the year. Stock water has been replenished to some degree and taken that concern out of the equation. Stock feeding is generally in full swing as little paddock feed is available. The fire threat has been lessened considerably. The area will be looking for a March / April break as fodder reserves aren't great.

Kangaroo Island: Like elsewhere, very dry. Scattered showers in late January but no long-term benefit. Surface cover levels declining and dust a problem, so hopefully not too many windy days before opening. Water levels at a critical stage with many farmers busy full time carting water and keeping up with feeding. For townships and farmers on mains, water being accessed from private source and plenty of testing of salt levels

Mid and Lower South East: January rain varied from 60 to 100mm with majority receiving 70 mm. Dryland lucerne pastures revived and good germination of sub clovers but with no follow up rain, grazing is limited and supplementary feeding of stock continues. Irrigation is continuous and LSE regions are now hand feeding. Large volumes of hay have been brought into the region, in particular in the MSE with people expecting to supplementary feed until May / June. Many have set up feedlotting / confinement areas to protect the environment as much as possible.

The **next issue** for 2007 will be produced on **Friday 30th March**. **Any comments or questions**, please contact Executive Support team on 1800 652 258 / 8226 0351