

Growing capacity in seasonal climate risk management in south-east Australia

January 2006 – February 2008



Location: South-east Australia

Principal investigator

Chris Sounness, Department of Primary Industries, Victoria

The need

There are mixed messages in farming circles regarding the relevance of seasonal climate risk management (SCRM) tools. Technical information has been generated by climate risk researchers but currently has minimal market value among the vast majority of farmers. This project will build industry capacity in the area of SCRM to create the realisation that SCRM has a market value and is a priority area in which farmers and agribusiness should invest resources.



How this project fits with MCV objectives

The project will engage all levels of the agriculture industry to create awareness and assist decision makers in relation to SCRM, with a particular focus on working with producers. Landholders will be equipped to utilise SCRM tools and improve on-farm decision making. This will assist the sustainability of the natural resource by better matching inputs and land capability to seasonal conditions.

Project objectives

1. Train a seasonal climate risk agronomist in VIC DPI who will be recognised as a key SCRM contact in south-east Australia
2. Create an inventory of climate risk management tools applicable to crop and pasture production in south-east Australia, identifying their strengths and weaknesses from the perspective of farmers in different regions
3. Work with farmer groups to encourage support for the adoption of climate risk management tools appropriate for each industry and region
4. Develop links between the various users and developers of SCRM tools to help refine and customise the tools to better meet the end users needs

Methods

- › Training & Collaboration: Liaise with SCRM researchers and extension staff to build knowledge; list personnel involved in SCRM nation wide and reference material; gain insight into interstate SCRM delivery methods
- › Tools inventory: Develop inventory of all available SCRM tools applicable to crop and pasture production in South-East Australia; identify regional strengths and weaknesses for each tool
- › Regional Reference Groups: Establish at least 3 reference groups in Victoria and NSW broadacre cropping regions (BCG, Wimmera, MSF, SFS, NSW). Reference groups to work on (i) SCRM tools which have local applicability, (ii) outputs for SCRM tools and (iii) identify what is missing in SCRM tools.
- › Build on existing training modules (Workshops & On farm testing): Delivery network to consist of small (neighbourhood) and large farm groups; use on farm testing (demonstrations) to assess applicability of SCRM tools; training will encompass a continuous improvement cycle approach (plan, act, review); gather baseline level of understanding of SCRM issues from farmers via a 'needs' survey
- › Evaluate success of training modules and extent of adoption of SCRM tools by farmers in each region

Desired outcomes

Create capacity in SE Australia in delivery of SCRM expertise to farmers, agribusiness and grower groups.

Highlighting the value of SCRM tools will enhance their uptake by broadacre farming industries. With greater uptake, producers can make informed decisions that better manage production and environmental risks faced at the beginning and during the production season.

Achievements to date

- › Attended BOM Advanced Climate Course and SCRM workshop
- › Collaborated with TOPCROP agronomists, BCG, SARDI, WA DPI, and NSW DPI
- › Victorian DPI TOPCROP agronomists accepted 'Matching Inputs to Yield - Using Climate Risk Tools' as the 2006 state focus concept
- › Published poster for APEN 2006 conference, titled: "Integrating seasonal climate forecasts into farm management decisions: working with Gymbowen farmers (North Western Victoria)"; this poster was written in conjunction with the project "Tools to reduce the impact of climate variability in South Eastern Australia" (DAV0006)

What is left to do?

Decide upon the best method of delivering information to engage growers and create awareness of SCRM, distribute 'needs' survey to producers, establish reference groups in Victoria and NSW, tabulate tools inventory, and work closely with SCRM research projects.

MCV is a collaborative program between the Grains, Rural Industries and Sugar Research and Development Corporations; the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Dairy Australia; Meat & Livestock Australia; and Land & Water Australia. The National Farmers Federation and Australian Wool Innovation Limited are associate partners.

For more information on MCV, visit <http://www.managingclimate.gov.au>
Land & Water Australia is the managing agent for MCV.
Land & Water Australia
Level 1, 86 Northbourne Avenue, Braddon ACT 2612
GPO Box 2182, Canberra ACT 2601
Phone: +61 2 6263 6000 Email: managingclimate@lwa.gov.au

