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VICTORIA DROUGHT RESILIENCE ADOPTION AND INNOVATION HUB PROJECT FACT SHEET

Drought Resilience Practices in Mixed Farming Systems

Project Term: 2022-2023 (12 months)

Funding source:

This project is supported by the Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub – Hub Projects program, which is funded through the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund.

Partner/s:

This project is led by the University of Melbourne, with Hub members Riverine Plains Inc, Southern Farming Systems, Birchip Cropping Group and Federation University, along with network partner Mallee Sustainable Farming.

Project Background:

Consultation with producers and advisors through Victoria Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (Drought Hub) activities has identified common gaps in the application and use of livestock containment across South Australia, Victoria and Tasmania.

The overarching interest is to determine if stock containment could be used more strategically, to not only manage livestock and groundcover during drought, but to also capture synergies and opportunities between the pasture and crop systems in other periods to build resilience in the farming business.

Project Activity:

This project aims to fast-track direct support to cropping and livestock farmers across Victoria, South Australia and Tasmania in the management of pastures and use of livestock containment and feeding systems for drought resilience.

Of particular interest is:

- What are the most appropriate containment feeding approaches for different farming systems and locations?
- What are the trigger points to make decisions to place livestock into containment, that optimise profitability and the resilience of the farm system?
- What real time information and tools could assist in warning when these trigger points are approaching, so producers can make decisions earlier rather than later (i.e. real time, high resolution satellite monitoring to help inform groundcover estimates)?
- What new dual-purpose plants could be introduced into cropping rotations to provide crop benefits in good years, but provide 'bridging fodder' alternatives in dry years (to explore new species that provide crop and livestock flexibility)?

Project Deliverables/Result and Impact:

The use of demonstrations, activities and outputs in this project will help improve farm decision making and lead to improvements in soil cover and livestock welfare and nutrition in periods leading into, during and post drought.

This project will also equip farmers and advisors with tools and regionally appropriate trigger points to make informed drought related decisions. The project will focus on the timing and decision to use containment feeding and fodder management to preserve soil condition, pasture survival, animal welfare and to optimise profitability and recovery after the drought breaks.

Name and Contact details

For further Information, please email Riverine Plains' Director of Research, Dr Sara Hely at research@riverineplains.org.au