

Australian grains: big prospects

Herbicide risk management

WHILE most farmers' focus is firmly on the upcoming harvest, the general manager of a farm chemical distribution business is urging growers to make sure they do not miss opportunities to lock in the best possible prices for common herbicides such as glyphosate and trifluralin.

General manager of WA-based 4Farmers, Neil Mortimore, said glyphosate prices were in a firming trend, and that farmers needed to think about locking in supplies, both for summer spraying and for the 2013 seeding period.

He said there had been an almost 70 percent rise in the technical price of active glyphosate, which he said had so far equated to a \$1.20/litre increase in the Australian retail price.

Mr Mortimore said Australian farmers had so far been largely insulated from the rises because of low demand and retailers using existing stocks, but he forecast glyphosate retail prices would climb in 2013.

He said there had been strong demand from the northern hemisphere, with farmers looking



to a big plant to capitalise on high grain prices, but he thinks there may be a small window over Christmas and into January when demand slackens due to winter dormancy, and that this may present opportunities for Australian growers to lock in prices.

In spite of the price rise, Mr Mortimore does not think it will be a repeat of 2008, when retail prices soared as high as \$12/L.

"It could easily rise from current levels to over \$5/L, but it's not going to be a dramatic rise like in 200," he said.

He said Chinese manufacturing plants were currently running at

full capacity and there was strong international demand, but the dynamics of the market were not like 2008 and there was unlikely to be so much volatility, with the potential for more Chinese plants to be brought online.

In terms of one of the other major pre-sowing chemicals, Mr Mortimore said trifluralin prices had fallen about 20pc at a wholesale level, which presented good value for growers, in light of the probability of strong international demand into the new year.

"You compare it to seasonal lows of about \$4.50 last year, and current pricing around \$5 is good value, given strong grain prices."

He said there had yet to be a strong spike in Australian demand for glyphosate yet from the northern summer cropping belt, but that he expected there would be demand from people looking to summer spray to conserve moisture.

"Summer spraying is becoming more prevalent as people look to preserve moisture for the following season and livestock numbers decrease in some areas."

WHILE growing conditions in South Australia have tested many grain growers, the season has been kind to South East cropper Simon Ballinger, Wolseley.

Mr Ballinger (on right) is pictured in a crop of Tjilkuri durum wheat with University of Adelaide durum breeder Jason Able during the Durum Growers Association SA annual South East crop walk on October 16.

He farms at Wolseley in SA and also has land in Serviceton, Victoria, and says durum has played an important role in his crop rotations in the past few years.

The crop is enjoying somewhat of a renaissance in the Upper South East and in the far west Wimmera in Victoria, and Mr Ballinger said he was pleased with what he had seen so far with the Tjilkuri cultivar.

"I've had Tjilkuri in the program for the past two years and it's performed well, so I'll keep going with it," he said.

"Durum makes up 15 percent of my total wheat area."

"With a good finish it yields really well. Last year it went 5 tonnes to the hectare. But it can drop off in drier finishes."

Mr Ballinger said part of the reason more farmers in his area were looking at durum again were the area-based contracts offered by



South East crops looking a treat

pasta manufacturer San Remo, which he said made durum an appealing alternative, as it takes some of the risk out of forward-contracting the crop.

The Tjilkuri crop pictured was sown on June 12 into a bean stubble.

It was kept fresh after receiving 6 millimetres of rain in mid-October, and good falls of more than 40mm during September.

And, unlike other areas of the Upper South East and Mallee in SA, frost has not been an issue this season.

Tjilkuri is a relatively new

durum variety, only released in 2010.

It was the third to last variety released by SA durum pioneer Tony Rathjen.

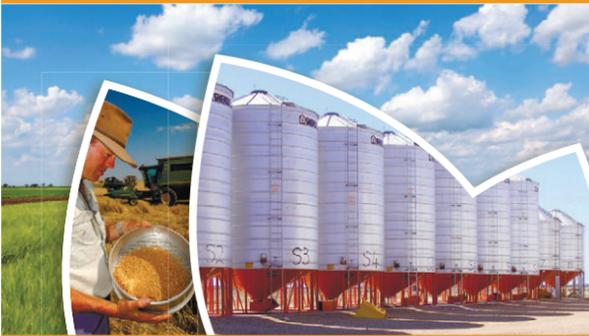
The other, newer varieties are Yawa and WID802.

Yawa was released in September and WID802 was officially launched by Dr Able at the SE crop walk last week.

WID802 is a high-yielding durum suitable for production in most areas of southern Australia.

It is moderately resistant to leaf and stripe rust and resistant to stem rust.

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Grain Trade Australia is proposing to increase the receival standard for the test weight of wheat from 74 kg/hL to 76 kg/hL for the 2013/14 harvest.

GrainGrowers has monitored the test weights of samples received from producers last harvest for the 2011/12 *National Wheat Quality and Variety Report* and found that from all the wheat samples received from around the country 3.7% did not meet the minimum test weight receival standard of 74 kg/hL.

GrainGrowers is assembling data to oppose the increase in Test Weight standards and need your assistance to do this. By supplying samples for the *GrainGrowers National Wheat Quality and Variety Report 2012/13*, you will be assisting us to produce data to show the financial impact that these proposed changes will have on growers.

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