

From collaborative farming to crop nutrition

LEIGHTON PEARCE

The 16th Annual SANTFA Conference will be held at the Barossa Arts and Convention Centre, Magnolia Road, Tanunda, on Friday, February 21. To guarantee a seat and your choice of forum sessions, contact the SANTFA office to reserve your place now.



GRANT BYRNE



JOHN GLADIGAU

Collaborative farming and alternative farm business models, the pulse supply chain and crop nutrition are just a few of the topics on the agenda for this year's annual conference.

Speakers will include Mallee farmer and businessman John Gladigau, who will discuss his experiences with collaborative farming, Grant Byrne, CANFA's 2011 Conservation farmer of the year, and Nuffield scholar Lachie Seears.

Peter and Nikki Thompson, who advocate 'conscious capitalism', and crop nutrition expert Rob are also on the program.

John Gladigau and his wife Bronwyn own a 2,000 ha property at Alawoona that is now part of a 'collaborative farming' business.

In 2006 John was awarded a Nuffield scholarship to study collaborative ventures around the world and in 2007 travelled to the USA, Canada, NZ, Mexico, Brazil, UK and Europe, gaining a global perspective on the business of agriculture and visiting many businesses involved in collaborative arrangements that were creating long-term benefits for all involved.

John and Bronwyn, in conjunction with another local farming family, now operate 'Bulla Burra', a collaborative farming venture formed by merging the two

family farms.

Bulla Burra is heading into its sixth cropping season and this year will sow 8,500 hectares to wheat, barley, canola and mustard.

John is excited about the potential of this new farming model as a means of building long-term profitability and sustainability for the agricultural sector while retaining the integrity and heritage of family farms and the fabric of local communities.

He will discuss collaboration models, their benefits and challenges, with reference to his experiences in the development of Bulla Burra and his role with Collaborative Farming Australia.

Queensland farmers Peter and Nikki Thompson are partners in Soil2Soul, an 'ethical business' focused on using innovative methods to produce healthy food with minimal adverse impact on the environment and 'connecting people back to their food'.

The Soil2Soul business model involves urban investors 'who share the Soil2Soul vision' of a 'vibrant new future' for agriculture in Australia.

The Soil2Soul model separates the business of food and energy production from land ownership, which is funded by investors. This frees the management

team to develop and operate the property without the burden of high capital debt, often a major stress on family farms, with profits divided between the operating entity and the urban investors.

Peter and Nikki, who will both speak at the conference, also run Echo Hills Cattle Partnership, 'a collaboration between rural and urban partners producing natural beef in a sustainable environment'.

They will explain why they see a need for such a model and outline their experiences with Soil2Soul and the positives and pitfalls they have encountered.

Grant Byrne, CANFA's Conservation farmer of the year in 2011, will discuss why he farms the way he does and his vision for the future of his family in farming.

Grant, who has been cropping in the central west of NSW for 30 years, prides himself on adapting and developing technologies and techniques to create an integrated system that is able to reach its full potential.

His business has a long history of manufacturing its own equipment and altering new equipment to suit its needs, with a 40-metre self-propelled boom spray with a 6,000-litre tank built on a cotton picker a good example of the innovation and engineering skill applied to this concept.

Lachie Seears is a third-generation farmer in the South East, where his family crops between 1,000 and 1,200 ha of wheat, barley, canola and broad beans a year as

part of a 2,920 ha mixed cropping and livestock operation.

He recently completed a Nuffield scholarship tour of 12 countries to research the pulse processing supply chain and potential value-adding opportunities for the Australian pulse industry and at the conference will discuss his observations of what happens to pulse crops once they leave the farm gate.

As part of his study Lachie spent time with consumers in Egypt to see how they use faba and broad beans, and in Canada focused on what the industry there is doing to value-add their pulse production. He also talked with pulse brokers and processors to gain an understanding of these elements of the supply chain and what is involved in buying and re-selling pulse crops.

Rob Norton is the Regional Director - Australia and New Zealand for the International Plant Nutrition Institute (IPNI); a not-for-profit, science-based research and education institute that operates in more than 50 countries with the aim of identifying and undertaking plant nutrition research and education to improve nutrient management in cropping

Rob, who will discuss nitrogen-nutrition decisions, says source, rate, timing and placement are all critical considerations when making decisions about nitrogen nutrition.

“When selecting rates it is important to consider the crop demand for nitrogen, the fertiliser’s ability to supply the nitrogen needed in the appropriate form and the expected nutrient use efficiency,” he said.

“Timing and placement will affect efficiency, with nitrogen available earlier in the season going to yield and later supply going to protein. Under the right conditions, small amounts of N can be used to boost protein but this is not always profitable.

“Split applications applied as the season unrolls, and careful balancing of other nutrients such as sulphur, will help improve efficiency.

The conference structure will provide good opportunities for networking and allow delegates to engage with SANTFA’s valued sponsors: Glencore Grain, Bayer, John Deere, Soil Management Systems, Manutec, Topcon, Sentek, Serafin, Best Environmental Technologies, FarmOz, Goldacres, AgriTrading and Animal Control Technologies Aust.

PROGRAM

8:15 – 8:45	Registration
8:45 – 8:50	Welcome: Brad Moyle, SANTFA President
8:50 – 9:50	Paul Jasa, Extension Engineer (University of Nebraska – Lincoln) – Cultural practices for soil & water conservation
9:50 – 10:15	Morning tea
10:15 – 11:05	Forum 1 (Choose A or B) A. Alternative land management models – Peter & Nikki Thompson & John Gladigau B. Crop nutrition – Rob Norton & Greg Butler
11:05 – 11:10	Session changeover
11:10 – 12:10	Steven Hobbs (Vic) – Energy efficiencies on farm
12:10 – 12:50	Lunch
12:50 – 1:40	Forum 2 (Choose A or B) A. Disc seeders – Craig Davis & Paul Jasa B. Advanced tyne performance – Andrew & David Parkinson
1:40 – 1:45	Session changeover
1:45 – 2:30	Lachie Seears (SA) – Value adding to pulses
2:30 – 3:30	Grant Byrne (NSW) – Looking to the future
3:30 – 3:55	Afternoon tea
3:55 – 4:40	Steve Lanyon (Vic) – My evolution in farming
4:40 – 4:50	Steven Hobbs (Vic) – Biodiesel demonstration
4:50 – 5:00	Closing comments: Brad Moyle, SANTFA President
5:10 – 6:00	Drinks & field demonstrations of biochar & biodiesel manufacturing



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