

# ExtensionNet

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## APEN is Born

The gestation of APEN is over and slowly our extension baby is being born. There is activity around the country as regional chapters are forming to make our dream a reality. It gives the interim core group great heart to see this happening. I am getting positive feedback about the need for APEN and there seems to be a strong energy flow that augurs well for APEN's future. We must build on this.

We have meetings being held in the Northern Territory, South Australia, and south east Queensland in October. Groups are planning meetings in north central Victoria, north east Victoria and south east New South Wales and northern New South Wales. Tasmanians have formed an interim management committee that is meeting monthly and

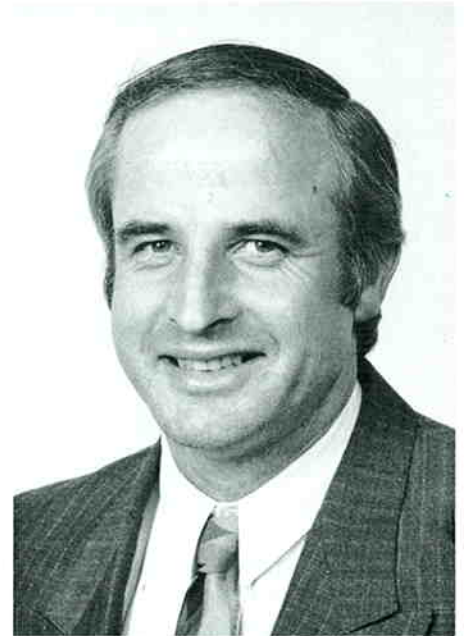
they are planning to formalise this in the near future. We have received two formal applications, one from Tasmania and south east Queensland, to form regional chapters.

The Secretariat has received over 100 subscriptions and there is a continual steady flow. Please keep them coming and remember to sign up your colleagues.

APEN has two corporate sponsors at \$2000 each. We are very grateful to the Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Agriculture Victoria for agreeing to sponsor us at this stage.

We have sent out some material to the interim contact people to provide information that may assist you to set up regional chapters. I want to reiterate that the acting management committee is not deciding where the regional chapter boundaries will be. That is something that you will have to decide collaboratively, depending on what is going to work for you and fit your needs. Please contact members of the acting management committee of APEN if you think we can be of assistance.

One of the areas that many of us are struggling with is how to evaluate what we do and the programs we are involved in. Evaluation will be one of the key topics that the ComEx Forum, jointly sponsored by APEN and the AIAS, will focus on. The ComEx Forum is being held in Melbourne on November 22 and 23. APEN will receive a percentage of the profit from this Forum and we would like to see many of you there. APEN will be holding a meeting of the steering committee and the new regional management committees on the evening of November 21, prior to the ComEx Forum, to allow people to share their ideas and progress and to decide on future actions.



*By Terry Makin  
Chairman Interim Steering  
Committee, APEN*

### FROM THE EDITOR

This issue of the Newsletter has been arranged by John Bourne from South Australia. We wish to thank John for his effort and for showing us the variety of extension activities in his State. What struck me was the emphasis on listening and on participatory approaches.

The November/December issue will concentrate on Landcare. I'd like to see that one followed by an issue dedicated to research activities in extension. Short and sharp articles about research topics and development of methods will be welcome, but complete reports will be returned until we get an Extension Journal going. Extension in Tasmania will feature in March/April, perhaps followed by an issue highlighting extension outside conservation and agriculture. There is a lot of that around!

We'd also like to start a Coming Events section, provided Chapter convenors fax me details of their planned activities.

This is the Newsletter of the Australasia-Pacific Extension Network (INC) incorporated in Victoria.

The Network appreciates the sponsorship from:

**THE QUEENSLAND  
DEPARTMENT OF  
PRIMARY INDUSTRIES  
AGRICULTURE VICTORIA**

For further information, please contact the acting chairpersons of the APEN chapters in your area.

For administrative matters, please contact the Secretariat (see back page).

# Right Rotations: The Farmers' Extension Program



**Trevor Dooley:**  
Land Management Co-ordinator,  
Right Rotations Program, Nuriootpa.

Right Rotations is a self-help crop extension program. In South Australia it is well on the way to achieving its aim - helping farmers lift productivity through crop rotations. The program is owned by the South Australian Advisory Board of Agriculture (ABA), an independent farmer committee established to advise the Minister of Agriculture and govern the Agricultural Bureau of South Australia.

## Getting Started

There are 110 branches of the Agricultural Bureau in broadacre cropping districts of SA. Initially, all branches participated in regional workshops to help formulate the direction that the Right Rotations program should take. The ABA, through its Right Rotations Committee, conducted a detailed written survey of Bureau members. This established baseline data concerning farmer practices at that time and the issues that farmers wanted addressed. The fundamental aim of the program was to increase the productivity and profitability of farmer operations in the cereal districts of SA, while ensuring the long-term sustainability of these operations. Feedback from the survey and the regional meetings confirmed the 'four basic building blocks' of the Right Rotations program - time of sowing, root disease control, weed and stubble management, and crop nutrition. The

'branch workshop' was targeted as the major vehicle for extension, featuring local farmer referees and hands-on activities supported by high quality visual aids. ABA regional representatives and Right Rotations branch representatives took the responsibility for local organisation of these branch workshops. A communications consultant was employed from the start to help tailor the program to the farmers' needs and to co-ordinate and manage activities.

## The Branch Workshops

More than 2000 farmers attended the inaugural branch workshops on root disease. These were followed up with successful branch workshops on leaf disease, sustainability of cropping, and, in 1994, crop nutrition. Most workshops included a paddock segment, or were incorporated into traditional spring field days where Bureau branches assess crops and pastures in their area. Hands-on activities ranged from inspecting and identifying cereal roots and leaves for disease, to monitoring crop nutrition using soil and tissue testing. Feedback on the workshops came from exit surveys, and twice-yearly regional meetings of branch representatives. In addition, a survey to evaluate progress of the whole Right Rotations program was conducted in 1994. Results from this survey are still being compiled.

## Program Support

Financial support from the Grains R&D Corporation (GRDC) to Right Rotations has been on-going since the start of the program. In late 1993, a Land Management Co-ordinator was appointed to the program funded by the National Landcare Program (NLP). As the program has progressed, financial support in the form of sponsorship from

agribusiness has steadily increased, and is now a significant component of the annual budget. Technical and facilitation support comes from a variety of sources. The South Australian Department of Primary Industries (PISA) has fully supported the program since its inception, by helping to formulate and deliver workshop material. Significant support has also come from research organisations (SARDI, CSIRO, CRC) and commercial agribusiness (fertiliser companies, chemical re-sellers, private consultants).

## The Future

A typical 'Right Rotations' year for many Agricultural Bureau branches may include some or all of the following:

**Autumn:** Right Rotations Planning Workshop (held each year at the branch or regional level).

**Winter:** Major Workshop (e.g. nutrition, root disease or sustainability).

**Spring:** Include a Right Rotations component in the branch field walk.

**Plus:** Harvest Round Up activity, seminars, surveys, Agricultural Bureau Conferences.

The autumn workshop includes a summary presentation of data collected from the Harvest Round Up sheets, a planning session where farmers plan the two paddocks they have monitored using these sheets, and an evaluation and planning session of their past and future Right Rotations activities. Future winter workshops being planned include 'The Role of Pastures in a Cropping Rotation' and 'Weed Control'. The Right Rotations Committee believes that their Agricultural Bureau network has worked very successfully as a vehicle for extension, and hopes in the future to expand the network to include more and more non-Bureau members. Right Rotations as the farmers' extension program offers exciting possibilities for future technology adoption.

# GRAIN GAIN: MORE THAN JUST GAINING GRAIN

**Jay Cummins,**  
Senior District Agronomist,  
Primary Industries SA, Lameroo

## What is GRAIN GAIN?

GRAIN GAIN is a crop monitoring and comparative analysis service launched by Primary Industries (SA) in 1994. In its first year of operation, 500 farmers are monitoring some 550 crops across the State. GRAIN GAIN offers farmers the opportunity for improved management. This is achieved by collecting crop data as part of the crop monitoring processes, which in turn allows the factors limiting yield and quality in a paddock to be identified following analysis of data. Individual crop performance can be compared on a local, regional and national basis as part of the comparative analysis process.

## Part of the Nationwide TOP CROP Management Program

GRAIN GAIN builds upon the experiences of numerous crop monitoring and management programs offered interstate. The most recognisable of these are 'MEY Check' (Vic), 'TOP CROP' (NSW and Qld.), 'Crop Check' (WA) and 'Crop Gain' (Tas). These programs, along with GRAIN GAIN, are now co-ordinated under a national Grains R&D Corporation (GRDC) sponsored umbrella known as 'TOP CROP'. The TOP CROP program is responsible for co-ordinating activities between States, management and development of data storage and processing systems, in addition to developing and exchanging technical issues between programs and States. The net result is a consistent approach to crop monitoring.

The contact between State Departments of Agriculture or Primary Industries has provided a tremendous opportunity for exchanging different ideas on the management of monitoring programs, in addition to introducing specific



**A field inspection by a local Grain Gain group at Lameroo in the Southern Mallee.**

extension programs (or aspects of them) across State boundaries. GRAIN GAIN groups are facilitated by PI(SA) District Agronomists, Soils and Land Management staff, and Agribusiness resellers and Agronomists.

## Fitting into Existing Extension Activities in SA

GRAIN GAIN complements a number of existing programs currently running in SA, including the Right Rotations program, Property Management

Planning groups, Landcare groups and existing crop monitoring groups.

The challenge in the management of GRAIN GAIN in the future is to satisfy demand. As a result, it will be necessary to have greater involvement in the facilitation of group-based activities from agribusiness. It will also be necessary to encourage groups to be 'self-sustaining', and to continually improve on 'monitoring packages', in particular packages for new crops.

## POSTGRADUATE COURSES IN SCIENCES COMMUNICATION

Realise your potential by becoming a skilled and articulate communicator. Study at home to complete a Postgraduate Diploma or Master of Sciences Communication.

To provide the best possible service to clients extension workers must be able to utilise the latest technology and information systems. The Postgraduate Diploma and Master of Sciences Communication have been initiated by Central Queensland University specifically to allow science communicators to develop this expertise.

The Postgraduate Diploma and Master of Sciences Communication provides skills in:

- utilising information and communication networks
- evaluating the needs and interests of potential audiences
- communicating effectively through both the written and spoken word
- effective use of the mass media
- establishing personal contacts in the media.

To allow greater flexibility both courses are offered by distance education and in part-time mode. This enables students to study at home and still meet employment commitments.

Any further enquiries in regard to postgraduate courses should be directed to:

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