

**T**RUE to form, the winter crop 'money months' of August and September have delivered a very mixed bag of seasonal conditions.

After a late break in Western Australia, crops were generally travelling along nicely until, for most regions, the spring rainfall tap turned off. Further east, both the South Australian and Victorian grain producing regions have endured either record low – or very much below average – growing season rainfall. It's not until we track up to central and northern NSW and into Queensland before we find generally good spring rainfall and above average winter crop yield prospects.



By the end of September, harvest was already underway in some parts of Qld while further south and west of the country, the season still had time to play out. But the likely upshot is national winter crop production somewhere around 45 to 50 million tonnes (Mt). Our 10-year average winter crop production sits at 47 Mt. So with a national crystal-ball perspective, it looks something like an average harvest result is on the way

### More research levies to make their way back

On the back of a run of favourable seasons, and generally strong grain prices leading to record levels of RD&E levy revenue, the Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) is awash with money. According to the latest available accounts (2022/23 financial year), levy collections and Federal Government contributions plus other receipts, saw more than \$720 million hit the GRDC bank account over the previous two years. RD&E outgoings over that 2-year period were around \$375 million.

The final equity position at 30 June, 2023 was a touch under \$630 million and I doubt that the 2023/24 accounts, when released, will show a decrease in reserves. In other words – the GRDC is in very good financial shape.

So what to do with this (largely) grower money? An independent review has been triggered by the GRDC to determine what the 'right-size' of RD&E investments should look like. The review will focus on three key areas:

- GRDC's financial position;
- The sector's research and development capacity alongside RD&E opportunities; and,
- GRDC reserves and the grains industry levy.

GRDC Chair John Woods said that on the back of strong cash reserves, for the next five years the GRDC will increase their investment in RD&E from \$180 million annually to \$245 million.

John sees the review as a proactive move to not only ensure GRDC has the 'right-size' and sustainable RD&E investments for growers, but also to have a balanced understanding of R&D capacity and a fair levy that helps to create high-quality and innovative RD&E outcomes.

The very strong financial position of the GRDC, along with the review to find out what the right investment size and balance is, are a fine legacy for John Woods and his team. John has been GRDC Chair since 2016 and on October 1, 2024 he passes the baton to Sharon Starick, a South Australian grower who has been on the GRDC Board as a director since 2018.

Thank-you John for your ongoing service to the industry.



## In this issue...

### Ask An Expert – Can weeds adapt to harvest weed seed control?

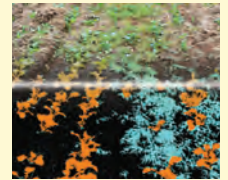
Once weed seed enters the header, there is very little opportunity to escape from harvest weed seed control tools. But, what happens if a few weeds find ways to evade capture in the first place?



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### AHRI Insight – Focus on the crops – spray everything else

What about if we taught the cameras to identify the crop, and tell it to spray any other green plant that isn't the crop? This theory was put to the test by University of Western Australia researcher Michael McKay with help from the AHRI team.



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### Classic Tractor Tales "I wish they had never asked!"

I am frequently and indeed somewhat embarrassingly asked to reveal my Scottish background and the reason for my seeming ability and extensive knowledge on the subject of tractors



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### Study evaluates the carbon footprint of lime

The University of Adelaide is evaluating the carbon footprint of lime applications in southern cropping systems to help grain growers manage their emissions and sustainability credentials in the future.



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### Tough crop for tough conditions

After a challenging 2023/24 summer season in many key soybean growing regions, soybeans have really come through as a reliable choice for growers.



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