

**F**OR the past decade Australian grain growers have, on average, harvested around 39 million tonnes (mt) of winter grains and oilseeds from a touch over 21 million hectares planted. Our official government forecaster, ABARES, has recently weighed-in with the national production estimates for the 2020–21 winter crop just harvested – and the 10-year average production number has been hit out of the paddock.



Over the past summer an estimated 55.2 mt of winter grain has been harvested across the national grainbelt – which is more than 40 per cent above the previous 10-year average – and our second biggest crop ever. The bumper 2016–17 season – at 56.7 mt of winter crop – still retains the honour, but for how long?

The national area planted to winter crops last season was 22.7 million hectares which was only about a seven per cent bigger area than the 10 year average. But thousands of very skillful and efficient grain growers managed to extract about 2.4 tonnes of grain for every hectare planted. Again, the previous 10 year average yield of winter grain crops, of around 1.8 tonnes per hectare, has been smashed.

There's no doubt about it, the growing season could not have been much better in NSW and much of Victoria. But South and Western Australia battled with hand to mouth rainfall events – and we can pretty much forget about Queensland where its farmers endured one of their toughest years ever.

The point is, growers generally had their farms very well set-up to cope with – and more importantly, take maximum advantage of whatever Mother Nature threw their way. This is a sign of very good management – mixed with a little bit of good fortune.

We may well be entering a grain production era where 50 million tonne plus winter crops are more the norm rather than the exception.

### Revamped Australian Grain website

There's nothing quite like a global pandemic to clip your wings and keep you a lot closer to home for a while. Here at *Australian Grain* we reckon we've used this time productively by revamping our website ([www.ausgrain.com.au](http://www.ausgrain.com.au)). You're all invited to free (for a while at least) and open access to what we think is a pretty snappy online version of our much-loved hard copy magazine.

*Australian Grain* will continue to turn up in your (real) mailbox every two months full of well-researched and thorough articles. The new online version gives you an easily navigated 'flipbook' of not just the current issue but back issues as well. We have also created an interactive section (*Over The Back Fence*) where time-sensitive, topical and general interest news pieces have a much more effective broadcasting home than what is possible within the bi-monthly printed magazine cycle.

Here's hoping the widespread rain that fell across much of the eastern state's grainbelt in mid March, and particularly through Central and southern Queensland, is a sign of things to come for this season. Let's bin another national winter crop north of 50 million tonnes!

## In this issue...

### Farmer sown and harvested replicated fertiliser trials

Small scale replicated trials are the backbone of scientific based evidence in agricultural research. But technology is now available to enable farmers to sow/harvest/analyse replicated large-scale trials with their own machinery.



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### The birth of the tractor

We of today tend to adopt the somewhat presumptuous philosophy that, because our generation discovered the virtues of the silicon chip, we are more intelligent than those who preceded us.



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### Structure seeding programs to minimise frost risk

Grain growers in frost-prone areas are advised to structure their seeding programs carefully to help minimise the risk of frost damage to crops in spring. The message to growers is not to avoid sowing crops early, but rather to assess the frost risk of different areas of their farms and to tailor crop species, varieties and sowing times accordingly.



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### Barley or bust: New King Island distillers go with the grain

It was a relaxed night in spring a few years ago and King Island farmer Thomas Shaw was having a beer and chatting with neighbour Vaughan O'Connor when Vaughan announced the island needed a distillery.



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### Herbicide mixing strategies for winter crops

Mixing pre-emergent herbicide groups is known to extend the effective life of all the mixing partners, and is even more important than simply rotating herbicide modes of action. Mixing can even breathe new life into herbicides that appear to have 'run out of puff'.



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