



*Working in partnership
with researchers and industry*

Grower Group Alliance Grower and Researcher Annual Forum

19th August 2011

Proceedings



The Grower Group Alliance acknowledges the support of the
Grains Research and Development Corporation

Contents

1. Introduction

The Grower Group Alliance Annual Forum is a unique event with an agenda specifically designed to promote interaction and discussion between researchers, industry and grower groups, with opportunities to develop collaborative partnerships.

At the ninth Annual Forum, held 13th August 2010, the agenda aimed to go 'Back to Basics', exploring the best ways to develop collaborative projects and pave a clear pathway for the best way to engage with grower groups in a rapidly changing environment, ensuring the formation of smooth and successful partnerships across the network.

The GGA considered the pressure on the entire industry to work with groups and the pressure on groups to deliver extension and be part of larger projects. In addition, the number of new groups developing and new people moving throughout the industry calls for a clearer focus on networking opportunities, collaboration and the best ways to do it, and research and development.

The event highlighted some collaboration successes and opportunities, gathered different perspectives from participants on the best ways to engage with grower groups, delved into the value and opportunities for branding, explored regional demographics, looked at all the different ways of carrying out relevant and rigorous research from a panel of young professionals and ended with keynote speaker, Patrick Hollingworth, the third West Australian to climb Mt Everest.

1.1 Purpose of the day

The forum's speakers and activities are intended to inspire and challenge attendees, and provide networking and collaboration opportunities.

The purpose for grower groups is to:

- *gain fresh ideas and skills*
- *learn about current and proposed research and innovations*
- *boost relationships with other groups, researchers and industry.*

The purpose for industry partners is to:

- *meet grower groups from around the state*
- *interact and discuss the best way to engage with grower groups in collaborative projects.*

2. Grower Group Alliance outline

Background

The Grower Group Alliance is a farmer-driven organisation funded by the GRDC which has been forming networks between grower groups, researchers and agribusiness across WA since its inception in 2002.

The formation of farmer group networks began in 2002 with the Grower Group Alliance developed by groups seeking to improve communication and function. It was followed in 2004 with the formation of the Local Farmer Group Network, supporting the smaller groups across the state. These GRDC-funded projects were merged in 2007 to better establish collaborative research and development projects between farmer groups and research providers, irrespective of size, without duplication of resources.

In the past nine years, groups in WA have recognised the advantages of networks and are actively forming partnerships with other farmer groups, researchers and private industry. Networks of farmer groups can provide their partners with opportunities for greater impact, well beyond partnerships with one or two farmer groups.

Role of the GGA

The Grower Group Alliance intends to:

- expand the network of grower groups and their partners to allow the exchange of knowledge, ideas and research results between members;
- enhance the participation of grower groups in collaborative projects developed between grower groups, research providers and industry; and
- support grower groups to work towards becoming more efficient and effective as a group.

Grower groups

The majority of WA farmer groups aim to increase the production and profitability of their farm businesses through the adoption of new production technologies while minimising impact on their environment. Groups are mainly broadacre farmers of the WA grain production zone located from Binu in the north, to Bodallin in the east and Esperance in the south east. The network includes more than 40 grower groups involving about 2500 farmer members, which is about 50 per cent of WA farmers.

GGA major activities

- Grower group operational support
- Coordination of project opportunities
- Annual Grower and Researcher Forum
- Study tours
- Website (www.gga.org.au), fortnightly Calendar of Events, monthly Newswire
- Coordination of field day presenters or workshops

- Regional breakfast meetings
- UWA 4th year student scholarships
- Grower group exchange

3. List of forum participants

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4. GGA Annual Forum agenda, 13th August 2010

Time	Topic	Presenter/Format
8.45	Welcome. Format for the day	Susan Hall
8.50	Collaboration hotspots	
9.10	12 Steps to Engaging with Grower Groups – have your say!	World Cafe
10.20	Morning tea	
10.50	New tables & introductions	
11.00	Building brands – what, why and how?	Cathy Bolt, CBH
11.30	Economics and dynamics affecting regional WA	Prof Matthew Tonts, UWA
12.15	Lunch	
13.20	New tables & introductions	
12.25	GRDC update	Peter Roberts
13.30	The way we do research	Panel session: Professor Kadambot Siddique
14.45	Afternoon tea	
15.15	New tables & introductions	
15.20	Key note speaker	Patrick Hollingworth
16.30	Evaluation & making the most of today's opportunities	Megan Meates
16.45	Close & sundowner	

5. Collaboration Hotspots

Examples of current successful collaborations and opportunities were in the spotlight as a roving microphone shifted around the room, gathering key and current collaborators, looking for others to get involved with their projects. The purpose was to pinpoint different projects with collaborative elements, different roles that partners can play, and draw new partners or spark new ideas into projects.

Collaborators were asked to briefly highlight *what* a project is about; *where* is it taking place (or where is it applicable); *when* are key dates or milestones; *why* is it important; *how* will it roll out; and *who* are current or potential linkages (eg. how can grower groups get involved).

Australian Herbicide Resistance Initiative (AHRI): Lisa Mayer, Centre Manager

A major project of AHRI is the Harrington Seed Destructor Project. Further testing of the efficacy of the HSD is ongoing, with results communicated to grower groups a major outcome. The HSD is available for demonstrations, and on ground results can be seen at various field days where the project is involved.

AHRI is also involved in many fourth year student projects and is eager to connect these projects with grower groups. An example is this year's student, Ashton Gray, working with AHRI and Lakes Information and Farming Technology (LIFT) to gain valuable results communicated to the farming community.

Results from AHRI's most extensive weed survey collection of the WA wheatbelt, including samples from 466 cropping paddocks, will be communicated throughout grower groups soon.

For more information, contact Lisa Mayer, T: 6488 7870; E: lisa.mayer@uwa.edu.au.

Caring For Our Country Soil Acidity Project: Chris Gazey, DAFWA

Following on from the initial Wheatbelt NRM funded Soil Acidity Project which determined the scope and effect of acidity in the region, funding was sought through Caring for Our Country to extend the project to North and South West areas of the WA agriculture region. The project will increase grower awareness, demonstrate best management practice of soil acidity amelioration, and increase grower knowledge of management options through grower group workshops.

The project will work with as many grower groups who are interested. Farmers need only pay for top 10cm of analysis, with the project covering the other 10-20cm and 20-30cm layers. Farmers get a full profile of soil acidity on their farm.

Soil acidity will be mapped on a regional scale throughout, practice change in growers will be monitored and growers will gain knowledge and skills from workshops.

For more information, contact Chris Gazey: T: , E: chris.gazey@agric.wa.gov.au.

Bridging the Yield Gap: Peter White, DAFWA

The Bridging the Yield Gap project is an extension project, focusing on drivers of profitability on individual farms and putting plans into action with other growers and consultants. Based in the high

and medium rainfall areas of the wheatbelt, Bridging the Yield Gap is about engaging with the grains industry and forming partnerships to gain productivity and profitability. It's an extension project, aiming to gather together information already known to avoid unnecessary research. It plans to engage with researchers, consultants and farmers to tackle key constraints to productivity by developing innovation partnerships and developing better communication tools:

1. Innovation Partnerships: A group of farmers, consultants and researchers with a vested interest in a problem in a paddock or business, brought together to try and solve the problem through decision making. The steps being made will be monitored. Where the GGA makes connections among farmer groups, this initiative would be more local and active at providing solutions.
2. Better communication tools to help growers and consultants. The information is there but a better way of delivering it is needed.

Where: High and medium rainfall areas of the wheatbelt.

Milestone 1: develop 3 local innovation partnerships (Sept, Jan 2012, June 2012)

12 groups already - plenty of other opportunities to join local innovation partnerships.

Danielle England, Grain and Graze 2

Planfarm and G&G2 project officer. Grain & Graze 2 is now in its 2nd year of demonstration sites for crop grazing. Completed 1st year of demonstrations and extension. Work with Facey Group, SEPWA, RAIN. Four- year project with— another couple of seasons to run. Meeting the questions that are out there on ground

David Minkey, WANTFA

QANTFA currently partner with SEPWA, MIG, Southern DIRT, Corrigin. Established partners, go to them first for collaboration.

Long term project at Mingenew and Cunderdin – under negotiations with GRDC to continue them.

WANTFA has an open door for new collaborations for next year. Key opportunity is expanding sites to take the organisations research and development statewide.

6. 12 steps to engaging with grower groups - have your say!

With the changing agricultural landscape turning to grower groups as research providers, now more than ever, we need a clear pathway to working with grower groups, and ensure efficiency and effectiveness of RDE rollout.

The GGA, drawing on nine years of experience and in consultation with grower group staff and researchers, have developed a preliminary outline of a 12 step plan for engaging with grower groups. This plan will inform researchers, industry and groups on grower group structure and how best to collaborate.

The purpose of this session is to discuss each step as a stand-alone requirement for engaging with grower groups, gauge the thoughts and reactions of participants, and build a plan endorsed by and reflecting the interests of all stakeholders.

The Country Cafe uses a World Cafe format, a conversational process about questions or topics that matter. These conversations link and build on each other as people move between groups, cross-pollinate ideas, and discover new insights into the questions or issues that are most important in their life, work, or community. As a process, the World Café can evoke the collective intelligence of any group, increasing people's capacity for effective action in pursuit of common aims.

Process: Small groups will sit around a table and have a conversation about a 'step' from the plan, and what is needed to make it work. At the end of each round, the table leader remains at each table as the host, while the others travel to the next table. Table leaders welcome newcomers to their tables and share the key points of that table's conversation so far, and then the conversation continues, deepening as the round progresses.

The conversation will be captured on butchers paper by the table leader, who will then consolidate and summarise the collective intelligence of the groups after the activity is completed, and so everyone can reflect on what has emerged from the discussion.

Step 1: Know what you're looking for.

Step 2: Know what a grower group can offer.

Step 3: Have an offer the grower group can't refuse

Step 4: Select the right group.

Step 5: Develop clear expectations

Step 6: Build a strong relationship with the grower group.

Step 7: Make it a win-win situation.

Step 8: Partnering vs outsourcing?

Step 9: Good communication is essential

Step 10: Use ongoing projects and relationships with grower groups to build future projects.

Step 11: Acknowledge partners and their contributions.

Step 12: Extend the research outcomes to wider research community.

The outcomes of the discussion can be found in **Appendix xxx**

The notes from the discussion were then utilised to develop the 'Five step plan to engaging with grower groups', and can be found in **Appendix xxx**.

7. Building brands - what, why and how?

Cathy Bolt, Communications Manager, CBH Group

What is a brand?

Can be a simple thing that can be overcomplicated, but at the same time, it is a complex thing.

Consider logos, and what they make you think when you look at them. Is it the same as what the company wants you to think? However, a brand is not a logo. For a consumer company – your brand is your product. For a commercial company, a brand includes your product and your service (i.e. do you answer the phone, at field events are there torn banners or if the microphone doesn't work at an event, etc., do you send out material when you say you will, use jargon, website not up to date, your facilities). How does what you have/do/say portray your organisation?

Product oriented vs. market oriented messages e.g. Revlon 'we make cosmetics' versus 'we sell hope', or CBH: 'we store, handle, buy and sell grain' versus 'we create and return value to growers'.

A brand core qualities include: features (what you provide), benefits (what the consumer gets), value (e.g. reliance, trustworthy).

What is the value of a brand? Consider the price premium, or how much more are you willing to pay for a certain brand. There is also a trade-off, as price changes, how do your choices change?

Customer satisfaction or loyalty can be measured by a net promoter score, which is correlated with market share. Customers you have are a lot cheaper to retain than getting new customers.

Make your judgement about where you want your brand to sit – what is it going to make people think? Is it too flash or not flash enough for your business and your image? Uniforms also form part of the brand – what you wear says something about your business. If you took off your logo a publication, would people still recognise that it was from your company?

Brand 'eye' looks at how employees see the company i.e. translates into if your company was a person e.g. operations viewed as a 40-50 year old man, grains 30-40 year old man. What you'd like your brand to be, and what it actually is, can be two very different things. A strong brands has everybody in the company to be 'living the brand'.

Key tips for building and maintaining a strong brand:

- Deliver
- Clarity – single motivating idea preferred
- Alignment with your purpose and strategy
- Point of difference
- Consistency across all channels (police it)
- Avoid off-brand behaviour
- Employee engagement
- Don't take it for granted – monitor/innovate

Grower groups – your brand should:

- Tell growers, farmers why they should be a member and what they should expect when they are
- Tell sponsors why they should support you and what to expect when they do
- Why research organisations should fund you and what to expect if they do
- Tell everyone why you are different

8. Economics and dynamics affecting regional WA

Prof Matthew Tonts, UWA

Now is the time where we have to change the brand of rural Australia – challenging the myth of the rural heartland. Australia became metropolitan in 1947. Rural and metropolitan populations became stable around 1980's/1990's. Since then, populations have been changing but not declining.

The geography of change as seen a growth of resource areas, decline in agricultural areas. Agricultural restructuring means there are fewer smaller farms, and largest third of farms are the most profitable. A firm divide that has emerged. The population change in the grain belt has not been a uniform picture of decline (diverse population dynamic). There has been a growth of sponge towns/communities.

Economic diversity is much higher than people realise, although there is not a strong link between economic diversity and population change. A stronger link exists between diversity and low unemployment and low welfare dependence – the more diverse your economy, the more employment opportunities.

The aging population in Australia is reinforced with the longstanding departure of 15-35 age cohort, rapid growth of 70+ cohort, similar pattern in agricultural regions. This can really be a problem in smaller communities, with significant economic implications, as the 20/30 age group are the biggest spenders. There are also implications for sporting clubs, as losing the younger age group has a significant impact on sporting clubs which are crucial part of the identity of the local community.

There is also an ageing labour force, with the need to recruit a very large labour force in order to replace the workforce that is retiring over the coming decade. Farming is experiences and intergenerational change. Agriculture is being strongly affected by a labour shortage – competition and leaving a vacuum.

Amenity migration:

'Counter-urbanisation' trends that emerged in the 70's have gathered pace, driven by interaction of urban and rural processes. There has been a shift from 'production' to 'consumption' values – a multifunctional countryside?

Modelling has looked at the effect of landscapes, with factors including:

- Altitude and terrain
- Rainfall
- Remoteness
- Water resources
- Beach proximity
- Duration of European settlement
- Employment in tourism and related industries

Consider the community resilience and adaptive capacity i.e. how communities respond to shock, how quickly they bounce back? There is the dependence of industries (how shocks impact this?) - regional 'locking' and 'de-locking', and how is this prevented?

Index of local resilience – based on a range of factors:

- Local economic performance, social factors, etc.
- Variables that seem to matter the most
- Rates of volunteerism
- Social/institutional 'thickness'
- Age structure
- Moderate level of pop stability
- Diversity within the agricultural system (range of different commodities in a certain area)
- Remoteness
- External leadership networks – resources that you could draw on, that otherwise wouldn't be there
- Social diversity (ethnicity, age structures, religion)
- Don't seem to matter (across the board, i.e. not statistically different)
- Level of economic dependence on agriculture
- Level of employment diversity
- Size of community
- Level of formal education
- Political persuasion of the electorate
- Qualitative picture
- High levels of organised group involvement tended to be more prosperous

Time for rebranding of rural areas.

9. GRDC Update

Peter Roberts, Chair, Western Panel

In Australia, \$385 million is invested in RD&E annually, with GRDC contributing xxxxx.

Industry environment is now looking at global food security and market opportunities in Asia. Challenging grains environment, declining productivity growth and terms of trade.

GRDC seeks to create maximum value for growers. Research moved away from being local, to much more national in what research focuses on.

The regional cropping solutions facilitators project acknowledges that different areas of the state have different requirements. It will seek to speed up the RD&E cycle: working towards three channels, quick (responsive trials, funds allocated by panels and working with regional cropping solutions facilitators), medium (delivered through the GRDC investment plan) and long term (major national initiatives).

Investment process to address priorities:

Grower priorities (specific research question) → what research have we done (published, GRDC website) → determine investment strategy → response type (quick, medium, long term) → GRDC gives required output to growers → good adoption with growers

Regional cropping solution networks will provide targeted facilitation/coordination support to help growers and their advisers to better identify farming system priorities and better establish the critical research or commercial questions.

WA will work in the five port zones, with each group made up of a skills-based representative group with good connections and a Western Panel member.

\$250,000 in the first year per group (5)

The project looks to get the GRDC back on the ground and working hard for growers, researchers and the broader grain industry → more simple and transparent investment process.

10. The Way We Do Research

Panel Session facilitated by Prof. Kadambot Siddique

Ashton Gray, UWA 4th Year Honours Student, GGA Scholarship recipient:

Wheatbelt issues (FOO, establishment of perennial legumes in medium and low rainfall region)

Tedera – exotic species from the Canary Islands

High genetic diversity (good from a breeding perspective)

Grazing and drought tolerance

Establishment a major issue (poor early vigour)

Significant outcomes

Valuable out of season feed, etc.

David Turner, UWA 4th Year Honours Student, GGA Scholarship recipient:

Good starting point, gets you in the field, apply what you've learnt in real life

No land should be unproductive

Major problem is salinity in the wheatbelt: Messina (annual pasture legume)

Salinity and waterlogging

Salt landscapes are generally Nitrogen deficient (looking at stress on Messina)

Taking research and applying it back to farm

Dion Nicol, UWA PhD candidate:

“Native plants are blue sky stuff”

Alternative timing of yield

Sodic-alkaline soils (more roots don't equal more water, it depends on where they put them)

2008 secretary of the Pasture Producers Association

Way I do research

Low budget

70% of time and effort is reading

Grower group interactions is outside of my PhD

Sites for field experiments, assist with costs and risks of field experiments (GG/PhD future interaction)

Dr Roger Lawes, CSIRO:

Been in WA for 4 years

Worked with Liebe, SEPWA, Facey

Gives you an opportunity to interact with farmers and work out what they need

Might have an idea of what you think growers want, good to have 'reality'

Revise, update and refine technologies

Collaborative research environment

Researchers tend to come with a longer term view

At the same time, know that these things matter to farmers

Demise of long term experimentation

All need to work together to ensure agriculture is sustainability in WA

Darren Chitty, Landmark product development agronomist:

Current work

- Comparing canola systems (TT vs. RR)
- New seed treatments
- Soil wetters
- Barley grass/Brome grass control
- Input packages in wheat and barley
- New nutritional products

Manage and assist in RD&E in WA

Implement projects

Meet with suppliers regarding key new products

What works?

- Simple protocols that address the aims
- Working with passionate and interested people
- Cooperative farmers
- Good site selection

- Must be replicated

Maree Heenan, Facey Group Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator:

Facey Group operates with four sub-groups: cropping, animal, NRM, women in agriculture.

Developing questions themselves and running trials themselves, and trying to focusing on the bigger picture on farm

Like to have the research in focus, but that growers take more out of it (can play with it a bit)

Being able to share information and wording funding applications so they can get what they want but still get funding

Simon Wallwork, Corrigin Farm Improvement Group, farmer and agronomist:

(Climate Champion) Farmer

Paddock scale trial work

Simple and practical

Soil types

Information beneficial to the farmer involved

Motivations

Profitability

Getting the community involved

Canola variety trial: soil type very fundamental to your results

Canola and barley: yield map by soil type (get more accurate results and a better picture of what was going on)

11. Key Note Speaker – Patrick Hollingworth

Patrick Hollingworth is a normal , everyday person from the flattest state in Australia who had a passion to climb the highest mountain in the World. A ten-year apprenticeship served in the World's greatest mountain ranges in Canada, Alaska, France, Pakistan, Nepal and Tibet saw him gain an impressive resume of climbing experiences which enabled him to fulfill his dream in May 2010. Summitting Mount Everest reinforced Patrick's belief that passion, self-belief and a dogged persistence can empower normal individuals to achieve great things.

His willingness during the climb to openly discuss his previous experiences with depression, and the subsequent raising of awareness for men's health issues, contributed to Patrick's expedition being widely followed in the Western Australian community, where high-altitude mountaineers are a rare breed.

Patrick's enthusiasm for his climbing shines through in his presentations, as does his stunning still and video footage from the summits of the world's highest mountains. During his 10 year journey, Patrick encountered numerous set-backs, including the loss of climbing friends and himself coming close to dying from a severe altitude illness whilst climbing a mountain not far from Everest; as such his presentations include a certain element of rawness. Combined with Patrick's ability to make a genuine connection with people, his talks are likely to leave the audience inspired to tackle their own challenges in life, whatever they may be.

Patrick's talk aims to present a working example of how an ordinary person can achieve extraordinary outcomes by identifying a long-term objective and then achieving it by ticking the necessary boxes. Patrick mapped out a plan when he identified Mount Everest as his goal, and then set about undertaking each of the necessary climbs which gave him more experience to climb progressively higher and more dangerous mountains until he felt completely ready and confident to climb Mount Everest. The setbacks along the way only strengthened his resolve. Attendees of Patrick's talk are likely to walk away with a sound understanding of how planning for success through appropriate preparation can lead anyone to achieve their goals.

12. Evaluation

13. Preceding workshop: Making Connections Workshop with Rachel Green

Grower group representatives were invited to participate in a workshop, focusing on making connections with people with emotional intelligence coach and award-winning communication specialist, Rachel Green.

Who is most important when making connections? The audience!

The first most important point learned when connecting with people was to shift attention from yourself to the audience. Think about:

- What do they need to know?
- What will excite them?
- How can I express what my group is and knows to match with researcher or funding body?
- I know so much about my organisation, can I pick out the essence of what this person needs?

One-on-one connections

It's so easy to give a general typical spiel and miss out on an important connection. Know their interest and try to reach a mutual benefit. When trying to connect with someone one-on-one:

- Find a common bond, eg. a footy team.
 - o People think they must talk work, but Rachel believes building the relationship is more important, then talk work
- Find a shared passion
 - o Easy, positive conversation increases enthusiasm
- Use language they understand
- Use examples that are relevant
- Capture their interest
- Allow for differences, then practice pacing, ie. the more similar the voice, speed and volume, the easier people relate and the more successful the connection.
- Ask open-ended questions
 - o What is your reaction to ...
 - o What kind of things ...
 - o In what ways ...
 - o How does A compare with B ...
 - o If you were ...
- Talk for at least 3 lines worth

Talking to a group

Best speakers are ones who can read the audience, engaging them by starting at where the audience is and then building up, not one who presents the same way every time. They pace the audience's volume and energy levels at all times.

Ask yourself three questions in preparing to engage whole group:

1. What message do I need to get across about the grower group to this audience?

- The one key point to take away
- 2. What do I want the audience to think, feel or do by the end? (eg. “I want to work with that group” or “I feel inspired”)
- 3. What is the best way to get this message across to this audience?

Also consider:

- If discussing a controversial topic, acknowledge their viewpoint/feelings at the beginning. This will bring everyone together with an understanding that they don't have to hang on to their disagreement throughout the presentation.
- Use language they understand
- Use examples relevant to the audience
- Anticipate their needs
- Find a common bond and build on it
- Sound interested and interesting

The connection needs to be made in the first few moments for a chance of success. Examples of how to connect with an audience from the beginning:

- Engage with a 'hands-up' question
- Tell a story
- Share a fascinating statistic
- Ask a crazy question that has a crazy answer
- Jokes can be risky and are not recommended
- Start with the big picture
- Use the phrase 'you' eg. “Do you know what you're missing out on?”

Starting with humour puts the audience's guard down. Often people think they have to start with background, but that can come at anytime during the presentation. Move away from the 'presenter mode'. Nerves will be more manageable by being yourself and relating to the audience. Get the audience to laugh, participate in an activity or make use of props as other tips for lessening nerves.