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**28 November 2024**

## **WA students lead the way in climate-smart agricultural innovation**

Three Western Australian Colleges of Agriculture – Denmark, Cunderdin, and Harvey – participated in the 2024 Climate-Smart Innovation Challenge, an initiative led by the South-West WA Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (SW WA Hub).

The program engaged 70 students who developed innovative solutions to real-world agricultural challenges posed by climate change.

Winning submissions tackled locally relevant issues, such as reversing desertification, improving soil health, enhancing water management, and reducing methane emissions. The challenge inspired students to apply creative thinking and cutting-edge research to address the unique demands of farming in a hotter, drier climate.

Cunderdin teacher Kate Strong noted the transformative impact of the challenge on her students.

“The Climate-Smart Innovation Challenge broadened students’ understanding of the broader impacts of climate change on agriculture,” Ms Strong said.

“They drew inspiration from local and international strategies to create unique solutions, integrating these insights into their coursework for Systems Ecology and Sustainability.”

Denmark teacher Brenton Stone highlighted the alignment with curriculum goals.

“This challenge perfectly complemented the Year 12 ATAR Plant Production Systems curriculum, addressing climate change impacts and planning for sustainability,” Mr Stone said.

“It encouraged students to independently tackle real-world problems and consider the adoption of innovative farming solutions in their local context.”

Harvey teacher Patrick Swallow has integrated the Climate-Smart Innovation Challenge as part of the Certificate III in Agriculture program for the school’s Year 12 students.

“Through their participation, students gained valuable insights into sustainable practices in agriculture, fostering a deeper understanding of the environmental impacts of farming,” Mr Swallow said.

“They have also developed critical thinking skills related to sustainable innovation, which they can apply to their future careers in the agricultural sector.”

SW WA Hub Knowledge Broker Tanya Kilminster praised the students’ efforts.

“It’s inspiring to see how these young minds tackled complex problems with creativity and determination,” Ms Kilminster said.

“The Climate-Smart Innovation Challenge has demonstrated that the next generation of agricultural leaders is already thinking critically about sustainability and resilience in the face of climate change.”

The SW WA Hub is led by the Grower Group Alliance and receives funding from the Australian Government’s Future Drought Fund. The SW WA Hub is committed to fostering agricultural

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innovation and collaboration, bringing together industry, researchers, and government to address the impacts of a changing climate. By integrating programs like this challenge into schools, the SW WA Hub is empowering future agricultural professionals with the tools and knowledge to build resilience and sustainability in agriculture.

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For further information, please contact:

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**Caption:** Challenge winners from the Western Australian College of Agriculture Cunderdin with teacher Kate Strong (left) and SW WA Hub Knowledge Broker Tanya Kilminster (right).



**Caption:** Challenge winners from the Western Australian College of Agriculture Denmark with SW WA Hub Project Manager Kellie-Jane Pritchard.

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**Caption:** SW WA Hub Adoption Manager Julianne Hill with Kendall Heliams, first-prize winner from the Western Australian College of Agriculture Harvey.



**Caption:** SW WA Hub Adoption Manager Julianne Hill with Nikita Crombie, second-prize winner from the Western Australian College of Agriculture Harvey.



**Caption:** SW WA Hub Adoption Manager Julianne Hill with Sean Walker, third-prize winner from the Western Australian College of Agriculture Harvey.

### **Background information**

The Grower Group Alliance (GGA) is a not-for-profit group, established in 2002 to develop the capacity of groups and stronger connections between Western Australian grower groups, researchers, funding bodies and industry.



South-West WA  
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Today the GGA is a thriving state-wide network of over 90 member groups from across Western Australia, with a collective membership exceeding 4,000 farm enterprises.

The South-West WA Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub (SW WA Hub) was established in 2021, as one of eight Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hubs nationwide that form part of the extensive initiatives delivered via the federal Future Drought Fund aiming to help Australian farms and communities prepare for the impacts of drought.

As a major GGA-led project, the SW WA Hub leverages the power of the GGA network 'hub and spoke' model to enhance drought resilient practices and accelerate innovation and adoption from 'the ground up'.

Grower groups are among the hub's more than 50 Consortium Partners, which represent all sectors of the WA agricultural supply chain and are providing cash and in-kind co-contributions to bring the project to life.

For full details visit the [Hub project page](#).