

Grains Research Foundation Limited

Chairman's Report to 2007 AGM

It gives me great pleasure to present the inaugural Chairman's Report for the Grains Research Foundation Limited. The Foundation came into being as an unlisted Not for Profit Company limited by guarantee on 7th December 2006. The assets and liabilities of the Grain Research Foundation were transferred to it on 1st January 2007.

GRFL will consist of members who have an interest in the grains industry and in particular we would like to make it a 'haven' for grain growers who are ***firmly about the future.***

At the moment the grains industry in Australia is in a very turbulent and un-coordinated state. It is being confronted by forces that are entirely new and challenging to a very old paradigm. There is reluctance from the conventional grower groups to confront and adapt to these changes.

It is the goal of the GRFL to take forward the progressive views which emanate from its growing membership. The Foundation can be truly considered to be in its infancy. This infancy will grow rapidly with the input from the talent, youth and enthusiasm of the new Board. It will not be long before our considered thinking 'splashes' into the main stream grains conversation.

At the heart of the GRFL are the four Research Advisory Committees (RAC) in Queensland and the influence of six similar committees in New South Wales. It will be our ambition over time to bring these groups closer together and to better articulate and promote their aspirations and concerns.

The RAC's have an impressive track record of prioritising research in the grains industry. In part some of the success can be attributed to the youthful blend of enthusiasm and the wisdom of the established operators. It is crucial that we continue to audit and develop talented young growers and place them in positions of influence within the Research and Development & Extension Industry.

In fact, the GRFL should demand of the grains industry in general, nothing less than to expand the invitation to this talented group. It should do this in a way that excludes the archaic politics that tends to reside in many of these organisations.

There is a paradigm shift upon us where the perception of grain as 'food only' is no longer. Increasing worldwide consumer acceptance, that grain now provides a vast opportunity to supply energy through various renewable fuels options demands a change in our thinking. So it is that grain now equals energy and food becomes only part of the equation. The price of grain in future will relate to the cost of energy. This introduces a requirement for a complete 'shift' in research and development thinking in the grains industry.

This shift, combined with climate change and carbon sequestration opportunities, introduces a new requirement for a dynamic approach which will have significant environmental benefits. The flow-on effects for research are enormous.

The Foundation intends to introduce the grains industry into many conversations. 'It may feel uncomfortable.' These conversations are already advanced with many national and international policy makers. It is the duty of the Foundation to bring growers up to date so that it can make equal contribution to these policies before they become set.

GRFL intends to engage with policy makers where grains research and development are involved. GRFL has written to DPI Queensland expressing an interest in its wheat breeding privatisation. We believe that the changed privatisation process is not in the interest of growers.

The grains industry has the potential to return to serious profitability. How quickly it does this will be determined by the research and development priorities and the vision that growers share and establish in the nation's conscience. There exists a great opportunity for the grains industry to reconnect to mainstream Australia as its environmental ally.

Damien Scanlan
Chairman