



Newsletter

JUNE 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
GPO Box 1108 Sydney NSW 2001
Website: www.nswfarmwriters.org

Is the Murray-Darling Basin in crisis, or is it just dry?

DESPITE much-welcomed autumn rain across most of eastern Australia, crop production in the Murray-Darling Basin, the country's most important agricultural region, remains under threat.

If significant follow-up rains don't come soon farmers in the Basin face having no irrigation allocations for the first time ever.

On a daily basis the headlines tell us the Murray-Darling Basin is in crisis – but what does that mean? Are our river systems in crisis, or has it just been a dry period when inland rivers typically stop flowing? Will 'normal' conditions resume, or is Australia permanently in a new dry phase?

Farm Writers' members and guests are invited to the 29 June luncheon to hear Dr Wendy Craik AM address climate change in the context of the Murray-Darling Basin.

Dr Craik has first-hand experience dealing with the Murray-Darling river system, as the Chief Executive of the Murray-Darling Basin Commission (MDBC) – the body charged with administering Australia's largest inland river basin.

Dr Craik will discuss the current drought in the context of previous dry

periods. She will consider the impact of climate change and other risks to future water availability as well as the Basin's environmental health.

Importantly, Dr Craik will outline the MDBC's strategy to address these issues.

Prior to taking up her position with the MDBC almost three years ago, Dr Craik was President of the National Competition Council, Chair of the Australian Fisheries Management Authority and Chair of the National Rural Advisory Council. Other former positions include Chief Executive Officer of Earth Sanctuaries Ltd, a publicly listed company specialising in conservation and eco tourism, Executive Director of the National Farmers Federation, and Executive Officer of the Great Barrier Reef Marine Park Authority. She has also worked as a consultant for AcilTasman Consulting.

Dr Craik is a member of the Board of the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal and has been a member of a variety of other Boards and advisory councils.

She was awarded an AM in 2007 for her contribution to natural resource management and rural policy.



Dr Wendy Craik will address the question 'is the Murray-Darling Basin in crisis or is it just dry?'

Join Corporate Members of the Month **PPB** and **ANZ** on Friday, 29 June to hear Dr Craik discuss the current state of the Murray-Darling Basin and plans for protecting its future.

📅 To book your place for lunch on Friday 29 June go to our website: www.nswfarmwriters.org/BOOKINGS.htm

Register early and online for the Friday, 29 June lunch to hear Dr Wendy Craik on the Murray-Darling Basin

Corporate Members of the Month: PPB and ANZ

Venue: The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington Street, Sydney

When: **Friday, 29 June at 12pm for 12:30pm**

Cost: \$60 per head, or voucher, for members. \$70 per head for all non-members

Register: **BEFORE 5:00pm on Wednesday, 27 June 2007**

online: www.nswfarmwriters.org, email: bookings@nswfarmwriters.org, ph: **Stuart Hutton, (02) 9338 2626**

Reminder: If bookings are not cancelled by the deadline, the person making the booking will be invoiced. We will do our best to accommodate late bookings and cancellations – please phone **Stuart Hutton, (02) 9338 2626**.

Norway berry production expands

By Neil Lyon, *The Land*

Editor's Note: This article is another by *The Land* journalist Neil Lyon about Norway's agricultural industries written as part of his 2006 Star Prize winning trip to the International Federation of Agricultural Journalists Congress in Norway.

AT MORE than 60 degrees North, the horticultural districts that hug the edges of the fjords along Norway's south-west coast are the furthest fruit is grown from the equator anywhere in the world.

The equivalent latitude in the Southern Hemisphere is more than half way between Macquarie Island and Antarctica.

In spite of being so far north, Norway's western coastal regions enjoy a relatively mild climate tempered by the Gulf Stream - an Atlantic Ocean current that originates in the Gulf of Mexico and flows to northern Europe where it makes the climate warmer than it otherwise would be.

Fruit grower and horticultural consultant, Nils Eldar Linge, oversees a small group of growers near Valldal east of Alesund in one of the northern-most horticulture areas at 62 degrees North.

Fruit and berry growing farms in the area average five hectares and predominantly produce apples, cherries and berries.

About one-third of local production is sold direct into the fresh fruit market and the remainder goes into the processing industry for jam production.

Mr Linge said winters were relatively mild with average temperatures above zero degrees Celsius all year round, and there was no need to protect the trees and vines from frost.

But surprisingly for a country renowned for its abundance of lakes and streams, water is the most limiting factor to production.

"All our fruit growing is dependent on irrigation because it doesn't rain here in the summer," he said.

"We have an annual rainfall average of 1200 millimetres but most of it comes in the winter."

Mr Linge said fruit production in the area was steadily declining, but there had been a dramatic expansion of strawberry production.

One of the main marketing constraints in Norway is the rugged topography and the harsh winter conditions in the mountains which make transporting produce to markets costly and a logistical challenge.



Horticultural consultant, Nils Eldar Linge, with some of the produce from Norway's Valldal district, the northernmost fruit-growing area in the world.

Farm Writers' membership renewals due end July

TO ensure you stay plugged into the agribusiness network across NSW, renew your Farm Writers' membership before 31 July 2007.

Fortunately, the Association is able to offer subscription fees at their current low levels for the ninth year in succession.

Member benefits include the opportunity to purchase seminar vouchers at the discounted members' rate and to receive this newsletter and priority email notice of coming events.

Emails will be sent to each member with more information and a renewal form, or you can visit www.nswfarmwriters.org to download a membership form.

National rural writing awards announced

THE competition was tough but it was journalists from other states who took out the national titles in the Alltech Young Leaders in Rural Journalism and Australian Star Prize for Rural Writing competitions.

The Alltech national title went to Paul Hooper, the wool, business and transport writer for Rural Press' *Farm Weekly* in Western Australia. Congratulations to the NSW candidate, Lucy Skuthorp (Rural Press Canberra), for her win at the State level.

The Australian Star Prize winner is Aimee Pedler, a senior journalist with another Rural Press weekly, the *Stock Journal* in South Australia. Congratulations to Matt Cawood (*The Land*) for winning the NSW title. We wish Matt well on his trip to the IFAJ Congress in September and look forward to his stories from Japan.

June 2007

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc

President:

Bev Jordan

bevjordan@msn.com.au

Secretary:

Emily Ray

eray@hassall.com.au

Newsletter:

Sally Edgar

sally@oneprofile.com.au

Website sponsored by Telstra Country Wide