



Newsletter

June 2008

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

Climate Change in NSW: The Winners and Losers

Our June seminar will be a special event as CSIRO releases its latest analysis of what climate change may mean for agricultural regions across NSW.

CSIRO's top expert on climate change and agriculture and one of the lead co-authors of the analysis, Dr Mark Howden, will draw from CSIRO's latest assessment of climate impacts and adaptation options for Australian agriculture, prepared as part of the yet-to-be published National Climate Change Research Strategy for Primary Industries.

Focusing on industries and geographical regions likely to be 'hot spots' - including rice in the Riverina, grazing in far western NSW, and potential new wine-growing areas - Dr Howden will detail the predicted impacts on vulnerable industries and outline the top priorities for adaptation efforts.

This is one of a series of coordinated events to be held across the country on June 26 and 27 by Rural Press Clubs affiliated to the Australian Council of Agricultural Journalists (ACAJ).

Our sister associations in Brisbane, Adelaide and Perth will be holding similar seminars to hear CSIRO's latest analysis for their states.

To accommodate the state-by-state roll-out of the CSIRO report, NSW Farm Writers will be meeting on **Thursday** (June 26) rather than Friday this month.

To liven up the debate, Farm Writers has asked three leading agribusiness writers to form a panel to lead questions following Dr Howden's presentation.

The panellists are The Sydney Morning Herald's Daniel Lewis, The Australian's Asa Wahlquist and The Land's Matthew Cawood.

Dr Howden, CSIRO Theme Leader for Adaptive Primary Industries, Enterprises and Communities, leads a team of researchers working with community, government and industry stakeholders to enable agriculture, fisheries, forestry, and other primary industries, to prepare for and adapt to the effects of climate change and ongoing climate variability.



CSIRO's Dr Mark Howden

Join our corporate members of the month **Grain Growers Association** and **H&T** to hear Dr Mark Howden on NSW's winners and losers from climate change.

Membership subscriptions now due

Membership subscriptions for the new financial year are due by 31st July.

For the tenth year, we've kept our membership subscription fee at its current low level making Farm Writers the best value agribusiness networking forum in Sydney.

Register early and online for the Thursday, June 26 lunch. Please note the booking deadline of **5pm Friday June 20.**

Corporate members of the month: Grain Growers Association and H&T.

Venue: The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington St, Sydney

When: **Thursday, June 26 2008 at 12.00 pm for 12.30 pm**

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

Register: **BEFORE 5:00pm on Friday June 20 2008**

online: www.nswfarmwriters.org, **email:** bookings@nswfarmwriters.org

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 Nicole Tyzack on 0400 800 704

Gene technology and Australian agriculture

NSW Farm Writers' May 30 seminar heard the next wave of GM crops will bring a range of agronomic and human health traits that will help agriculture meet the challenge of future food demand.

AgriFood Awareness Australia executive director, Paula Fitzgerald, told Farm Writers that a growing world population and increasing consumer affluence means the world's farmers will need to produce 75% more food by 2025 than they do today.

Some of the GM crops in the pipeline include nitrogen-use efficient canola, disease resistant pineapple, more agronomically efficient sugar cane and wheat bred to be salt tolerant and water efficient.

The Victorian Department of Primary Industries hopes to be commercialising a virus-resistant white clover within five years. White clover viruses cost Australian farmers \$110 million a year in reduced forage yield, nitrogen fixing capacity and vegetative persistence.

In terms of human health, CSIRO is developing GM plants that can produce the omega 3 oil, DHA, which is important for human health.

Most Australians consume one tenth of the recommended daily intake of omega 3 oils because we don't eat enough fish.

If these plants become commercially viable, they will provide more varied sources of DHA in the Australian diet.

CSIRO are also pursuing the development of a low GI wheat that is good for bowel health and promotes healthy digestive bacteria.

However, due to the less than encouraging conditions for GM development in Australia, CSIRO will be pursuing conventional breeding options for this technology rather than the quicker GM breeding option.

Paula ran through the factors that led to the imposition of state moratoria on the commercialisation of GM food crops. Moratoriums are still in place in SA, WA and Tasmania, and NSW relies on ministerial approval for commercial plantings of GM food crops.

Paula said the challenges Australian farmers face in gaining access to GM crops was symptomatic of the wider difficulties Australian agriculture faced in managing complex issues.

Australian agriculture faced a number of complex and emotive issues beyond GM crops; climate change, water access, animal welfare, access to labour and quarantine.

The challenge is how to engage in these issues, promote informed debate, engage with the broader community, address activists and ensure science-based decision making.

And the winner is...Matthew Cawood!

Armidale based journalist, Matthew Cawood, has won the 2008 NSW Farm Writers' Association Star Prize for Rural Writing in New South Wales – which includes a trip, worth \$5,000, to the IFAJ Congress in Austria and Slovenia in September 2008.

Matthew's winning story highlighted the risks to Australian agriculture of a research gap and lack of expertise to manage diseases already decimating bee colonies in the rest of the world. Titled 'Attack on pollinators', the article was published in *The Land* newspaper on 10th May 2007.

Matthew Cawood writes for the Rural Press group of publications, and this is the second year he has won this contest.



Matthew Cawood

Farm Writers' President, Bev Jordan, said, "Matthew's article will be entered as the NSW finalist in the national competition to find Australia's representative in the international Star Prize award."

The 2008 Star Prize will be presented at the IFAJ World Congress to be held in Austria and Slovenia during September.

Media release award closes July 31

A reminder that the NSW Farm Writers **Media Release Excellence Award** is now open for entries.

The award carries a \$500 winner-takes-all cash prize and is open to individual or corporate members.

Farm Writers president Bev Jordan said the intention was to recognise and encourage excellence in crafting messages about significant agricultural or rural issues.

"The media release may have been aimed at raising awareness about an issue with urban audiences, or communicating information about science, a product or a service to rural audiences," Bev said.

Details of the award are posted on the Farm Writers website.

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