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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

## BCG trials commence!

Research into the most effective ways to conserve moisture during summer is first on the agenda for Birchip Cropping Group's (BCG) trial work this year. The 2008 trial program is underway at the Main Research and Demonstration site on Peter and Brenda Doran's property, 25km North West of Birchip, on the Sunraysia Highway, with a summer moisture conservation demonstration. The Mallee Research and Demonstration site has also been selected on Brian Barry's farm, 10km south of Manangatang in the State's north.

Conserving soil moisture over summer, and creating a soil water reserve, has proven very important to ensure that yield potential is increased during the subsequent growing season. Recent summer rainfall has once again created interest in whether cultivation or spraying is more effective at conserving soil moisture, controlling weeds over summer as well as which practice is more cost effective. This debate has been heightened by an increase in the price of Roundup (glyphosate) and diesel.

In response, BCG has set up a demonstration looking at cultivation versus spraying on both standing stubble and bare ground situation (see table 1).

Table 1. Conserving soil moisture

Treatments	Timings
Control (standing stubble)	No weed control
Cultivation	As required
Chemical Knockdown (standing stubble)	As required
Chemical Knockdown (slashed stubble)	As required
Cultivation (standing stubble)	After rain (>10mm)
Control (bare ground)	No weed control
Chemical Knockdown (bare ground)	As required
Cultivation (bare ground)	As required
Cultivation (bare ground)	After Rain (>10mm)

Assessments before the first treatment application recorded that heliotrope was flowering in the stubble area and the plants were 5-25cm in height while heliotrope and melons were just emerging in the bare ground area. Soil moisture sampling will occur in January, April and October at 0-10cm, 10-40cm, 40-70cm, 70-100cm to determine the differences in stored soil moisture between the treatments. The final assessment will be grain yield.

The chemical knockdown consists of Roundup PowerMax (1.5L/ha), Ally (5g/ha) and Ammonium Sulphate (0.8kg/100L).

Due to the previous series of dry years, the farm budget is tight, and growers are looking for any advantage to increase their yields and profits. Both practices require a certain amount of inputs and each have their advantages and disadvantages. BCG will keep farmers up to date as moisture readings from each treatment are measured.

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