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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Disc seeding trial at Nhill**

Progression from no-till to zero-till cropping systems is likely to be the next phase in the development of more conservative and sustainable farming systems for the Wimmera Mallee. The current widely adopted no-till system is a highly successful reduced tillage system based on a single cultivation at sowing with knife points and press wheels. This system has revolutionised crop production across southern Australia allowing the retention of stubbles in a reduced tillage system. In comparison to previous systems reliant on cultivation and stubble burning, the no-till system has enabled a more productive and sustainable system due to reduced erosion risks and enhanced moisture conservation. However, there is some soil disturbance and stubble incorporation during sowing in a no-till system. Therefore, there remains an opportunity for the use of even more conservative crop seeding systems.

The adoption of zero-till cropping systems using disc sowing systems to establish crops in standing stubble is being investigated by BCG in collaboration with the Hindmarsh Landcare Network. The advantage of discs over no-till sowing systems is less soil disturbance and increased retention of standing stubbles. Therefore, zero-till cropping systems will potentially lead to further reductions in erosion and increases in moisture conservation. Unfortunately, it is not simply a case of swapping knife points and press wheels for discs. As well as new sowing equipment a complete agronomic package incorporating weed control, pest management, fertiliser inputs, row spacing etc is also required.

Trials comparing disc and no-till sowing systems have recently been established on sandy and clay loam soil types at Nhill. The aim of these trials is to compare the establishment of wheat crops in various disc sowing systems with the conventional no-till system. An additional aim is to assess the interaction between pre-emergent herbicide treatments and sowing systems on wheat establishment. Information collected to date indicates that some soil disturbance – whether in a no-till or disc tillage system – was more conducive to crop establishment than zero till. However, it remains to be seen whether differences in seedling establishment translate into yield differences at harvest. These trials will be featured at a crop walk on Wednesday 29 July from 2 – 4pm following the Nhill GRDC Grains Research Updates.

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