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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Grazing Cereals

BCG in collaboration with the Rainbow and District Landcare Group are involved in a grazing cereals project focusing on how some of the commercially available cereal varieties grown within the region respond to grazing. Rainbow farmers Jon Fuller, David Stastinowsky, Corey Smith and Rob Robinson have each identified one of their paddocks to be involved in the study. Two of the paddocks have been sown to wheat (Clearfield stiletto) and two paddocks sown to barley (Hindmarsh and Gairdner).

Sowing times have varied across the paddocks from 24 April – 30 May which will provide an interesting perspective on the interaction between sowing time and response to grazing.

Experience in grazing cereals in low rainfall environments is relatively limited, therefore a lot of the rules of thumb that are being used in the project have been developed in the higher rainfall zones. It is suggested that grazing can commence once cereal plants have reached the three leaf stage or are held tightly enough by the soil that plants cannot be removed by firmly pulling plants between your thumb and forefinger. Livestock must be removed before the plant reaches GS30 or before the end of tillering. Exclusion cages set up across the paddock allow farmers to identify when crops have reached critical stages.

In this study, one hectare zones have been fenced off and grazed. The two early sown paddocks look to be responding well after being grazed. The later sown crops have only just been grazed. Again it will be interesting to see how the difference in the timing of grazing in terms of the time of year will affect the crops response after stock are removed.

Crops will be allowed to recover and harvested at the end of season. Dry matter measurements and feed quality tests will be undertaken. Yield Prophet is also being used to help identify when key growth stages will occur.

To support this work BCG has also established a replicated grazing cereal trial at the BCG Main Site north of Watchupga. This trial is comparing seven wheat varieties and two barley varieties all which will be grazed and allowed to recover to grain harvest. Yield penalties, if any, will be determined. This replicated work will help increase our working knowledge of how to successfully graze wheat and barley in the Wimmera Mallee environment.

This work is funded through the Caring for our Country: Landcare—Sustainable Practices and the Mallee Management Catchment Authority.

There will be a field walk in the Rainbow region later in the year and the replicated trial will be showcased at the **BCG Main Field Day on Thursday 10 September**.