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## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

### Dry sowing.

Grain growers routinely face tough decisions and one of the toughest of recent years has been whether to start sowing by the calendar or by the weather. Early May is often spent anxiously looking to the sky for any sign of rain, debating whether to sow dry or wait for another rain after which a good weed kill can be achieved, there is guaranteed moisture available for seed germination and when there is still some flexibility in crop choice.

The last few seasons have provided invaluable experience for a late break. BCG suggests some management strategies that might help farmers when faced with sowing crops dry.

Dry sowing is most likely to be successful in paddocks that have low weed burdens (especially brome and ryegrass) or where weeds can be controlled in crop (e.g. IT wheat and canola). Clean fallow paddocks should be prioritised and dry sown before paddocks with higher weed burdens.

If paddocks with higher weed burdens are sown dry, it is very important that crop monitoring start immediately as these paddocks may require a very early pre-emergent herbicide to prevent yield loss from weed competition.

Once a crop is sown, false starts, 3 to 5mm of rain without follow up rain, can cause the seed to swell but not germinate and therefore turn mouldy – although experience has been that the chances of seed turning mouldy are very remote and is rarely seen. However to minimise the risk of mouldy grain from false starts, growers should dry sow slightly shallower because at depth the temperatures are cooler and seedling may struggle to emerge.

Dry sowing maximises the length of the growing season available to crops, reducing yield penalties associated with shorter growing seasons and it allows the plant to take advantage of warmer soil conditions improving crop establishment and early growth. Often after the break, it can take a week or more before sowing can commence. Compared to dry sown crops, crops sown after the rain can be slow to emerge due to colder soil temperatures and crops already in the ground will have a two/three week advantage over later sown crops. The closer to recommended times crops are sown, the greater the chance of achieving maximum economic yields.

An additional benefit of dry sowing some of the planned cropped area is reducing seeding time when rain does eventuate. Machinery and labour can be used more efficiently, which can decrease stress levels.

While there is risk associated with dry sowing, it has been BCG experience that up to 1/3 of planned crop area, if carefully chosen, can be sown dry. After this 1/3 threshold has been reached, a more conservative approach is recommended until a decent rain has occurred.

For more information call BCG on 03 54922787 or check the website [www.bcg.org.au](http://www.bcg.org.au)