

Week 15 – plans

25 October

As another difficult season comes to an end, so too does the *Over the Fence* series for 2006. In the final edition, BCG asked three Wimmera Mallee farmers the following question:

What are your plans for the next few months?



Anthony Schache – Hopetoun

Anthony Schache farms with his wife, Vicki, and father, Phil, 12km north of Hopetoun. They have 1600ha of heavy grey clay to reclaimed sand hills, with a third in wheat, a third in barley and triticale and a third in fallow, legumes and canola.

Plans: “Priorities on our farm for the next few months – at the moment it is brome grass. This is our most troublesome weed. I am spray-topping fallows, pastures, legume crops and cereals anywhere it raises its ugly head.

Harvest (what there will be) is approaching quickly and even though the heavy country won’t be stripped, the lighter country has once again produced business-saving grain. This must be harvested in a timely manner.

After the header has been cleaned and returned to the shed, I will do my bit to keep the chemical companies happy, making sure summer weeds are kept under control.

Summer time for the Schaches has traditionally included holidays (Adelaide this year), water skiing, sports and time spent with friends.

These activities are more important in tougher years.

Farming is my livelihood, but family and friends must be the priority.”



Greg Plant – Manangatang

Greg and Bev Plant and their son, Dallas, and daughter-in-law, Suzie, have a mixed property on sandy loam soils 17km north of Manangatang. They are growing 2200ha of wheat, 400ha of barley and 100ha of oats cut for hay.

Plans: “We are currently carting hay into storage with some to be sold out of paddock.

Carry-over lambs will be shorn with a punt on better markets in the New Year.

Most plans will evolve around the up-coming harvest with marketing decisions vital to maximise returns.

Crops are extremely variable, with the better crops on the earlier sown lighter ground.

With under 100mm of growing season rainfall (April – October), it is surprising that crops are still filling but have some concerns with frost damage and grain quality.

Fallow maintenance and summer weed control will be important to maximise 2007 crop potential – maybe it WILL rain.

After Christmas, no definite holiday plans, perhaps a bit of fishing!”



Alwyn Dyer – Kaniva

Alwyn and Kerry Dyer farm in the Kaniva district with Alwyn's brother, Eric, and his wife, Olena. They have 2200ha of mainly Wimmera clays, with a small area of lighter Mallee soils. The Dyers predominantly produce grain and fatten some lambs on grain legume stubbles. They have about half of land in wheat, and a quarter in each of canola and grain legumes, with a small percentage as green manure.

Plans: "I am currently involved in a local committee planning a Community Drought Forum for the Kaniva district to be held on Friday 3 November. Topics to be covered include agronomy and planning for next year, finance and welfare issues with a free BBQ tea. We are hoping the whole community will attend to help us get through the next very difficult 12 months.

I haven't spoken to one older person in the district who has ever seen a drought year worse than the current one. In the 1967 drought year, our district received 8-9 inches. In 2006 we received 5-6 inches.

On our clay soils you can't grow crops on less than 10 inches!

Of most concern is sourcing good seed for next season, with most crops in the district totally failing.

Plans for the next few months are to try and not waste time, but to use it wisely to catch up on some maintenance jobs, like renewing some boundary fencing and putting in poly pipe and water troughs so we can graze failed crops.

The Kaniva district is fortunate in that we have good bore water. We need to renew an old overhead tankstand on one property, before it falls down, for crop spraying and stock water.

Also do some "long put off" machinery maintenance in the workshop!

And if I still run out of things to do? Start on the list of things to do around the house that my wife has been patiently waiting for me to do for years."