

THE BIG TEN

LESSONS LEARNT FROM 2018

- 1** Conserving moisture through summer weed control or fallow significantly improves crop yield as crops were able to draw upon moisture reserves.

When there is no stored water in the soil at sowing, cereals are traditionally more reliable than pulses and brassicas. Too many cereals can cause problems in subsequent seasons.
- 2** Careful consideration is required to balance profitability against the benefits of break crops. Prioritise sowing paddocks based on their soil moisture status, weed pressure, soil type and/or soil constraints.
- 3** Sown (shot/germinated) seeds survived more than six weeks in marginal conditions. Don't panic – re-sowing is the last resort, good seeder set-up proved vital in a dry start.
- 4** It is important to be vigilant with mouse baiting, particularly at sowing time in years after a high grain yields, at sowing mouse numbers certainly warranted control.

Frost caused damage in the Wimmera and west Wimmera prompting growers to cut crops for hay. Taking the time to measure soil moisture and frost damage can take the reactivity out of the equation. Canola hay appeared to be a winner in the Mallee, experience gained from previous seasons ensured the production of high-quality hay, albeit lower yields than calculated/expected.
- 5** Timeliness of operations is crucial to maximise yield potential, and the benefits are exacerbated in a dry season. This was evident in summer weed control timing, sowing time and depth.
- 6** Investment in effective seed dressings (Gaucho®) paid dividends yet again as aphids were prevalent.
- 7** Climate forecasts were consistently unfavorable. Delaying inputs had little impact on the final yield. This proved sensible in the end as many were not required (eg. fungicide in cereals).
- 8** Having sheep in the mix can generate invaluable income in dry years. However, producers that are getting back into sheep, or opportunistically buy stock in, may have been affected by cash flow issues.
- 9** Weather stations and the use of paddock monitoring technology allows information sharing and greater understanding of what is going on in the region. This technology is becoming invaluable to help with on-farm decision making.

Compiled by Claire Browne, Simon Craig, Tim McClelland and Kelly Angel.