

# SUSTAIN-A-BULLETIN

FITZGERALD BIOSPHERE GROUP



## Perennial fodder shrubs fill feed gap.

Trip to Pingelly farmer - Garry Page

Garry Page and his family run a mixed farming system (sheep and cropping) on 1200 ha in West Pingelly. Seven FBG members recently visited Garry to see how he uses native fodder shrubs in conjunction with annual pasture species to graze his sheep on during the feed gap. The approach Garry took is based on a nine-year CSIRO research program called the Enrich project: When Garry became aware of the project he saw the potential it had to reduce both the cost of supplementary stockfeed and the time spent hand feeding. He also recognised it as a streamlined system that would fit well with the way he runs his farm.

Garry received funding through South West Catchment Council to trial the findings of the Enrich project and planting began in 2015. About 10% of the property has been planted to a mix of 12 perennial shrub species with an annual pasture inter-row.

Garry said they chose poor performing pockets of land: the valley floors, rocky ridges, under-performing areas or hard to access arable areas. They waited until they had good soil moisture before planting and mixed the species up so that there weren't blocks of single species. This was important to educate the sheep to graze across the whole range of species on offer. He said the annual pasture inter-row is a key part of the system. He has used plantain, chicory, yellow (Santorini) and pink serradella (Margurita), bladder clover, prima gland clover and sub clover.

The farm's contribution to the overall establishment costs was more than 1:1 but Garry said he noticed production benefits within a year of establishment.

Turning sheep onto the Enrich plantings during the first feed gap after establishment, he

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# Farewell Reaghan

In the last edition of the newsletter we alluded to the fact that our NRM Project Officer, Reaghan Shalders would be leaving the FBG at the start of 2021. Reaghan and her husband Richard have subsequently bought a property in Boyup Brook and have now moved west.

Reaghan started with the FBG in 2017 doing field work for us on a DPIRD research contract. Later that same year she helped with the laborious role of cataloguing the FBG's historical records and in early 2018 she took on the NRM Project Officer's role. We've been incredibly fortunate to have someone as capable and resourceful, adaptable and efficient as Reaghan working for us.

Both Reaghan and Richard have been very supportive members of the FBG and while we will miss them both terribly, we know they are excited about their future plans and we wish them all the very best in the years ahead.

Reaghan is currently working from afar to keep the RLP project ticking over. We are in the process of recruiting a new NRM Project Officer whose role will include coordinating our new salinity project.



## Salinity in Jerramungup Shire the focus of new project

The FBG has been awarded a State NRM grant to help address dryland salinity in the Jerramungup Shire. We are currently working through the contracting process with State NRM and this project should start in March 2021.

In the first year the emphasis will be on working closely with Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development (DPIRD) staff and farmers to identify the current extent of salinity and collate up-to-date data and management tools. Priority areas for reclamation will be identified during this time. We propose to pick up on the momentum started with the Salinity Masterclass held in Jerramungup in September 2020. At the end of year 1, and in years 2 and 3, the focus will switch to on-ground works (biodiversity revegetation and fencing) with a particular focus on practices that improve soil health.

We have combined the coordination of this project with Reaghan's NRM role to create a 0.8 FTE (four day per week) position. We are in the process of recruiting now and hope to have someone starting in the coming weeks.

Another of our projects, Reclaiming the margins - turning unproductive land into sustainable grazing assets using the Enrich Project model, also targets marginal land, including saline land. We are currently waiting to hear the outcome of a third proposal that provides support to farmers wanting to trial different ways of increasing groundcover.

## Community Water Supply Update

The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation (DWER) are currently reviewing water carting under the existing Water Deficiency Declaration in Jerramungup. At this stage, water carting will only resume when on and off-farm supplies are exhausted or not keeping up with demand.

Currently, there are supplies available for agricultural and fire-fighting purposes from Devils Creek Bore and the Millers Point Road bore. Cowalellup bore is currently being repaired. A new bore and tank installed 3km north of the Gairdner Dam on the South Coast Hwy will be available shortly. There are supplies available in Houston Dam.

A map of these water supplies is on your Shire website or link below.

<https://www.jerramungup.wa.gov.au/services/community-services/shire-strategic-community-water-supplies-scws.aspx>

### National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme

The Western Australian Government has reached an agreement with the Federal Government to provide funding to farmers who applied for water infrastructure through the National On-Farm Emergency Water Infrastructure Rebate Scheme. Due to significant demand the scheme was oversubscribed, and the previous funding was fully allocated. The additional funding provided through this agreement will see a further 511 farmers with applications already submitted receive a rebate for water infrastructure installed on their farm. The Department of Water and Environmental Regulation is working with the Federal Government on the formal funding agreement, and when in place, the department will contact the affected farmers directly to provide further information on the assessment and payment of grants. No further applications are being accepted by the department at this time.

For further information please contact the Rural Water Planning Team via email or on (08) 9841 0100.



natural resource  
management program





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reduced his supplementary feed costs by about 25 percent, the sheep held or improved their condition and he saw an increase in the size of his wool clip. Some of the species used, particularly *Rhagodia candolleana* (seaberry saltbush) help control parasitic worms.

During the course of any given year, Garry grazes sheep in the Enrich areas for a total of between one to two months; anywhere from between a few days to a few weeks at a time. He says the pay-back time for the up-front investment is short. The plantings are an invaluable part of his system in any year but they are essential during poor seasons.

We visited on a (very hot) February day and were able to see the grazing system in action. Garry also showed us other work he's done, including how he has successfully reclaimed about 120 hectares of saline land using the 'leaky weir' approach to control surface water in conjunction with fodder shrubs and other perennial plantings.

#### Saltbush Species list at Pingelly

- *Atriplex nummularia* (Old man saltbush, Anameka),
- *Atriplex Amnicola* (River saltbush)
- *Eremophila glabra* (Tar bush),
- *Rhagodia preissii* (Mallee Saltbush),
- *Rhagodia spinescens* (Thorny Saltbush)
- *Rhagodia candolleana* (Seaberry Saltbush)
- *Maireana Tomentosa* (Felted bluebush)
- Bluebush



## Gourmet Saltbush

Forget the sheep, people eat saltbush too

On our return trip we dropped in on David Thompson of Badgebup, east of Katanning, to check out his fledgling business selling saltbush for human consumption. David and his family run a mixed farming enterprise, including the Moojepin Merino Stud. Dryland salinity affects about 800 hectares of their property and they plant saltbush to control its encroachment onto arable land. David has partnered with Lance McLeod to form Moojepin Foods. In 2015 they started selling edible plants that grown on saline soils to chefs in Perth. They went on to establish a supply chain into the Sydney restaurant market and hope to move in to the Singaporean market in the future.

On the farm, David has spent years trialling different species for their suitability to the market and to the saline conditions. We spent a happy hour educating our palates on the many and varied salty species he grows including Karalla, seekiss saltbush, samphire, sea purslane and heartleaf iceplant. To find out more go to [www.moojepinfoods.com](http://www.moojepinfoods.com) Many thanks to both Garry and David for giving us so much time and information during our visit. We really appreciated and enjoyed it.

This trip was made as part of an FBG project called *Reclaiming the margins - turning unproductive land into sustainable grazing assets using the Enrich Project model*. The next stage in this project is get interested farmers together with native plant agronomist Geoff Woodall to investigate the opportunities for using the Enrich model on their own properties.

If you are interested in learning more please let us know.

Contact Jess Brown or Leonie McMahon

With thanks to the Federal Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment Smart Farms Program, through whom this project is funded.

#### Leonie McMahon



## The Enrich Project – at a glance

**Purpose:** to investigate a way of producing year-round stock feed at minimal risk to a farming system, using perennial plants already adapted to Australia's difficult and variable climate (native species)

About 96 native species were tested for nutritional benefits, palatability and other health benefits.

The shortlisted species were then used to develop a grazing system that integrates into existing farm operations. A high number of these species are saltbush. The research showed that planting 10-15% of a property into a mixed perennial system with an annual pasture inter-row had multiple benefits.

Two major benefits were:

- A significant reduction in supplementary hand feeding during the feed gap.
- A financial return from deferred grazing of annual pastures that are considerably more productive for the rest of the year as a result.



FITZGERALD BIOSPHERE GROUP  
**GRAZING FIELD DAY & WORKSHOP**



GRAZING NATURALLY  
 Australian Government National Landcare Programme  
 FBG FITZGERALD BIOSPHERE GROUP

DICK RICHARDSON PRESENTS

**GRAZING NATURALLY**

A Field day & 2 day workshop on grazing methods to improve soil health, water retention, increased biodiversity and animal production

INTRODUCTORY FIELD DAY  
 - THURSDAY 4TH MARCH 2021

2 DAY GRAZING PLANNING WORKSHOP  
 - MONDAY 8TH & TUESDAY 9TH MARCH

\*Please note date subject to change dependant on Covid19 Travel Restrictions

"The benefits of Grazing Naturally are good animal performance while the ecosystem develops into a grazing oriented community with deeper and more mature soils." - Grazing Naturally Website  
[www.grazingnaturally.com.au](http://www.grazingnaturally.com.au)



**FREE Pre-Seeding Frost Workshop**

Farmers and advisors are invited to a hands on workshop to hear the latest frost research findings and strategies to minimise the impact of frost on profit. Farmers attending have the opportunity to develop a personal frost management plan with input and guidance from the experts in the room.

Presenters will include the State's leading frost researcher, frost strategies consultant, grower group executive officer, a grower sharing their experiences and local agronomists. Farmers attending are encouraged to bring your Yield & Elevation maps and 2021 Paddock Plans. Using the new information presented on the day, along with input from the experts in the room, participants will leave the workshop with a plan employing the latest tools to reduce the impact of frost on their profitability.

Workshop Instructors:  
 Ben Biddulph - Leader, GRDC National Frost Initiative "Management Node"  
 Garren Knell - Consult Ag Frost Management Strategies  
 Ashton Gray - frost experiences & implementation strategies  
 Facilitator - Jordy Medlin (ConsultAG)



Fitzgerald Biosphere Group

March 9th 2021

7.30am- 12.00pm

Quick breakfast provided  
 Location: Needilup Pavilion

RSVP: Maddy Whyllie  
[soilprojects@fbg.org.au](mailto:soilprojects@fbg.org.au)  
 0421 645 410

**SAVE THE DATE**

**2021 FITZY FOX SHOOT**

FRIDAY 19TH MARCH

Registrations now open  
<https://www.fbg.org.au/fitzy-fox-shoot-out>

Our 2021 Fitzy Fox Shoot is fast approaching, due to be held on Friday the 19th of March for Jerramungup and Bremer Bay. Breakfast (Sponsored by Lawson Grains) and tally counts to follow on Saturday morning at 6am sharp.

Tally count locations  
 Jerramungup- Needilup Pavillion (Gnowangerup Jerramungup Road, NEEDILUP 6336)  
 Bremer Bay- 8197 Bremer Bay Road (Anthony Thomas's property)

Thank you to all of our amazing sponsors, without your ongoing support events like these would not be possible, thank you!!

Scan the QR code to register your team





# Australian agriculture looking to profitable year ahead – industry outlook



Rabobank

Australia's agricultural sector is set to enjoy an overall profitable year ahead—underpinned by high commodity prices, positive seasonal conditions and low interest rates, and despite expected continuing trade tensions with China—according to a newly-released industry outlook.

In its flagship annual Agribusiness Outlook for 2021, global agribusiness banking specialist Rabobank says a generally profitable 2020/21 season for most Australian farmers will not only kick-start recovery from the recent severe east coast drought, but also put the sector in a stronger position to navigate a number of major transitions it will face in the year ahead – the pandemic recovery, reducing reliance on China and increasing sustainability.

Report lead author, Rabobank head of Food & Agribusiness Research Tim Hunt said despite the turbulent environment facing the world as 2021 gets underway, global demand for food and agribusiness products remained “surprisingly firm”, while weather patterns were also favouring Australia ahead of competitors when it comes to production.

“In a current global environment marked by the pandemic, political tensions and trade wars, demand for food and agri products has remained unexpectedly strong,” he said.

“And despite the punitive actions of China on Australian agriculture, high agricultural commodity prices, low interest rates and positive seasonal conditions are underpinning a positive outlook for most farmers in 2020/21.

” The world is a “turbulent place” as Australia's agricultural sector enters 2021, the Rabobank report says, impacted by factors including the continuing COVID-19 pandemic and lockdowns, the completion of Brexit and the emergence of the US from a tumultuous presidency, as well as continuing trade wars, which are distorting the direction and price of traded goods.

“Market intervention is back in vogue, with grain-exporting countries reconsidering export quota and taxes as they fret over food security, while elsewhere port strikes have impeded trade flows,” the report says.

Demand for agricultural commodities though is being supported, with several major importing countries appearing to be stockpiling to mitigate risk of shortages and by unprecedented support from governments helping to offset the impact of the pandemic on employment and incomes, and therefore spending on food.



**Tim Hunt; Rabobank head of Food & Agribusiness Research**

**Tim Hunt**

## Success with revegetating saline creek lines at Needilup

The FBG and Pete and Jolene Daniel were successful in receiving a State NRM Community Stewardship Grant that ran from 2018 to 2020. The title of the project was Riparian Restoration in the Corackerup Sub-Catchment. The project was to support and build on work delivered by the FBG in previous projects to address salinity and declining soil health

impacting remnant vegetation and surrounding waterways on privately owned and managed land within the Shire. Two saline creek lines were part of the project. In late July 2019, the site was prepared by Pete and Jolene and then native plant agronomist Geoff Woodall sowed a mix of native, endemic plant species with his seeder. Included in the mix were quite a few Acacia and Melaleuca species. There was soil moisture at the time of sowing and germination was slow but very good. The plants have grown well in a very dry spring and dry summer and are now looking great! Acknowledgements to the State NRM Community Stewardship Grant Funding and FBG.

**Jolene Daniel**



natural resource management program





# Bush Heritage Fauna Recovery Project Launch

Bush Heritage Australia held its official launch of the fauna recovery project in the Fitz-Stirling earlier this month at the Michael Tichbon field station. The project incorporates a landscape scale integrated pest management program and focuses on working with private landholders to support and enhance baiting and fauna monitoring efforts conducted by the Department of Biodiversity Conservation and Attractions (DBCA) in the Corackerup and Peniup reserves. By reducing introduced predation pressure from feral cats and foxes, the aim is to promote the recovery of native animals in the area including species such as tammar wallabies, south-western brown bandicoot, chuditch and malleefowl.

The launch was held to acknowledge Lotterywest as the major funding body for this five year project and to engage with local landholders and community groups. Unfortunately, the timing of the event coincided with the WA's Covid-induced 5 day lockdown which impacted on the numbers of attendees. Despite the restrictions nearly 40 people showed their support and were treated to a welcome to country from Noongar elder Eugene Eades (with musical accompaniment), a tour of the field station's superb facilities and BBQ (big thanks to the Wellstead Progress Association for laying on a great spread). Guest speakers included Tim Button from DBCA talking about the Department's Western Shield program in the area and the work being done to help secure the future of the Dibbler; a

carnivorous marsupial listed as endangered. Sarah Comer (DBCA and UWA PhD student) wearing her 'PhD hat' revealed some of the results of her research into feral cat movement and diet. Her findings, which indicated a preference for movement across the landscape along road reserves and drainage lines, have informed much of the bait strategy for the Bush Heritage project. Sarah also put out a request for any feral cat carcasses (or stomachs which she will continue to collect until August), and would also be very happy to receive any collars from cats (see photos). For more information Sarah can be contacted at [sarah.comer@research.uwa.edu.au](mailto:sarah.comer@research.uwa.edu.au) On the subject of carcass collection Susan Campbell from the Department of Primary Industry and Regional Development (DPIRD) explained to attendees that there was a free testing service for RHDV (AKA Calicivirus) if members of the public came across dead rabbits and were happy to help our understanding of the virus and what type, how and where it is transmitted in our region. Bring the carcass into any DPIRD office bagged and labelled. Alternatively you can request a sampling kit by registering for RabbitScan via <https://www.feralscan.org.au/rabbitscan/>. Recipients will receive the kit plus instructions and free return postage and will be notified of the results.

Weaved throughout the launch, the ethos, strategy, timing and operations for our bait plan for 2021 was outlined, as well as exhibiting some of the novel techniques used to monitor foxes and feral cats and how to present toxic baits safely with optimum impact on our target species. Hopefully, the project proves successful and may one day provide a blueprint for similar projects to roll out across multiple tenure in fragmented landscapes across Australia with a model of collaboration and community engagement at its heart. For more information or clarification about any of the above please contact [jeff.pinder@bushheritage.org.au](mailto:jeff.pinder@bushheritage.org.au)

Jeff Pinder



Top and bottom left- launch photos taken by Angela Sanders (BHA), Bottom right- cat with tracking collar, Photo taken by Sarah Comer (DBCA/UWA)





# GRDC Hands On Precision Ag Training Workshop

As part of a national initiative funded by GRDC and led by the Society of Precision Agriculture Australia (SPAA), a series of workshops are being rolled out around the country aimed at upskilling and enabling farmers to better use the precision ag tools at their disposal.

The Grower Group Alliance had the task of coordinating the workshops across nine locations in WA, with Jerramungup included in this tour.

On Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup> February, Farmanco facilitators Alice Butler and Blake O’Meagher led the first of two workshops. This first workshop was less hands on and more about raising awareness of variable rate technology (VRT) and creating discussion about proven technologies and practices currently in use by growers and adviser and included:

- Identifying in-paddock variability;
- Identifying key causes for yield and profit variability;
- Predictive analytics;
- Different mobile device, tablet and computer based platforms



We were joined by 14 local farmers from around the district along with representatives from SPAA, the Grower Group Alliance (GGA) and DPIRD Albany. Mick and Mark Lester were on hand to share their experience of what has worked (or not) in their business. They have been using SMS Basic, but there was also considerable discussion around other software programs such as Precision Ag Technology (PCT), JD Link, Data Farming, Decipher Ag, Laconik among many others to manage variability, allow for trial set up, extract and analyse data, etc.

It was good to see some young faces in the crowd and a range of experiences with PA which allowed for useful conversation on the topic.

The second workshop aims to be held in August/September and will be more practical. The facilitators are seeking input from local farmers as to what would be beneficial to include. With enough lead time, they are open to all suggestions!

Thank you to Anita Martin for catering, to GGA for coordinating, and to Alice Butler and Blake O’Meagher for facilitating the day. Thank you to all participants on the day, and especially Mick and Mark Lester for allowing us to put you on the spot!

Maddy Wylie



## One Paddock Challenge 2020 Comes to an end



We wish to acknowledge the kind support of Viridis Ag and Lawson Grains in the One Paddock Challenge 2020 project.

Through the course of 2020 we looked at a range of farmer trials and undertakings, visiting several as part of the Gairdner-based Spring Field Day. These broadly fell under the topics of precision ag, soil amelioration and legumes. With variable seasonal results, there were also some mixed results, but also some really pleasing outcomes for the farmers involved.

We have are currently finalising the final report which will be shared with our members in the coming weeks. Stay tuned!

Contact: Maddy Wylie 0421 645 410 or [soilprojects@fbg.org.au](mailto:soilprojects@fbg.org.au)



Jeremy Lemon at Mick Swarbricks deep ripping site



Faba Beans



Serradella



Seeding Faba Beans

# Fencing and revegetation funding

## Call for expressions of interest

We are always on the look-out for potential sources of funding to help people fence off remnants, wetlands and waterways, and to revegetate with native plants. If you have areas you want to fence out and revegetate please let us know. Send details to [eo@fbg.org.au](mailto:eo@fbg.org.au).

For each site please include:

- Approximate area to be protected (ha)
- Length of fencing (km)
- Description eg wetland, remnant, corridor between remnants
- Type of vegetation eg yates, banksia woodland

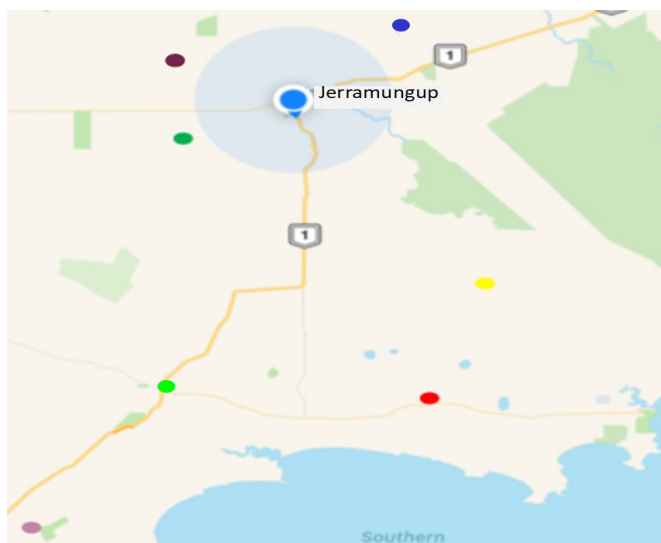
Let us know what level of protection you will consider: eg 10 year landholder agreement, covenant.

Are you interested in learning more about biodiversity plantings for carbon sequestration? There's a lot of buzz around this subject at the moment. We will endeavour to learn more about it in the year ahead. If there are opportunities we think stand up to scrutiny we will let you know about them.

We can't guarantee funding unfortunately but an up-to-date and comprehensive list of sites will make it easier for us to plan for and attract funding and to make the most of opportunities that sometimes unexpectedly present themselves.



## Jerramungup district rainfall



Location		Nov	Dec	2020 total	Jan	Total YTD
Jerramungup	●	51.1	14.0	381.1	3.2	3.2
Needilup Nth	●	48.5	24.5	330.0	0.0	0.0
Needilup Sth	●	71.5	6.0	378.0	0.0	0.0
Jacup	●	38.0	6.0	350.0	0.0	0.0
Bremer Rd	●	55.0	7.0	471.5	0.0	0.0
Gairdner	●	58.0	9.0	360.5	1.0	1.0
Boxwood	●	38.8	3.8	289.2	4.4	4.4
Mettler	●	55.2	14.3	499.2	17.3	17.3

## Upcoming Events

- GRDC Updates, Albany Zone- 3rd March, Albany Entertainment Centre
- Grazing Naturally Introduction Field day– 4th March
- Grazing Naturally Planning workshop- 8th-9th March
- Pre-seeding Frost Workshop– 9th March
  - Fitzy Fox Shoot– 19th March
  - Dancing in the Dirt– 27th March
  - Drainage Workshop- June 2021 (date to be confirmed)

Contact FBG for more details ph. 9835 1127

Email: [admin@fbg.org.au](mailto:admin@fbg.org.au)

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