

ISSUE 1, February 2023

SUSTAIN-A-BULLETIN

FITZGERALD BIOSPHERE GROUP



Summertime and the estuary birdlife is busy

As is usual for Bremer Bay over the summer holidays, it's been busy, busy, busy everywhere. The busyness though is not only on the part of people. This summer we've had the chance to change perspective slightly and focus on the activities of the birds living on Wellstead Estuary and Main Beach.

They too have been busy. With guidance from two of our local birding experts, Anne Gadsby and Steve Elson, we've learned to interpret the routines of some of our most well-known residents and frequent visitors. These have included our Ospreys and Sea Eagles, Pied and Sooty Oystercatchers, Pelicans and Pacific Gulls, Red-capped and Hooded Plovers, Grey and Chestnut Teal, White Ibis, Yellow Spoonbills and White-faced Herons, Caspian and Crested Terns, and of course, the ubiquitous seagull.

The Ospreys, famed for repurposing the Telstra Tower near the general store and making it their permanent nesting site, were quite obliging on each of our morning walks with Anne. The first morning they put on quite the display of their fishing expertise, enabling Anne to point out the distinctions between Osprey and Sea Eagle (which also made an appearance) – their different fishing styles, wing profiles in flight, favourite perching sites and territories.

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On our second walk, an Osprey very obligingly had a vigorous and thorough wash in the estuary – an activity captured beautifully through the lens of our telescope.

The Pied Oystercatcher pair that nested near the dunes at the mouth of the estuary in November successfully fledged two chicks on the sand islands near the fish cleaning station. They were the definition of busy. We watched them search endlessly for cockles in the shallows, then expertly extract the soft bodies before taking them back to their chicks, hidden amongst the vegetation on the sand islands. The whole family is still in residence and has been joined by another four adults.

Their close relatives, Sooty Oystercatchers, breed on islands or rocky headlands. At one of Steve's workshops we saw a solitary Sooty repeatedly fishing in the estuary and flying back across the bay, over the heads of surfers catching waves where the estuary meets the ocean and kids doing their VacSwim lessons, then around the headland with its catch. This behaviour is an indicator of breeding – the apparently solitary bird taking food back to its incubating partner. We watched Crested Terns, who nest in similar places to Sooty Oystercatchers, doing the same thing.

Although we were treated to the sight of a Fairy Tern nesting colony – a demonstration set up by Steve and his partner Jen – we didn't see Fairy Terns.

In early December Anne sighted a pair fishing in the estuary and Steve heard reports of about 30 conducting their courtship on the wing above Fisheries Boat Harbour but we've not seen any nesting colonies here this year. In past years a small colony has tried to nest on the sandbar in the estuary but failed every time.

As the name suggests, Fairy Terns are the smallest of the terns and migrate south each year from northern Western Australia to breed. They are listed as vulnerable in WA, and Steve showed why with his demonstration colony. They nest very close together in scrapes in the sand in the middle of summer. Their eggs are very well camouflaged and the adults take flight at the slightest disturbance. In the harsh summer heat, the eggs or chicks die very quickly without protection from their parents.

Unintentionally park your car too close to a breeding colony and the entire colony can be lost very quickly. A hint from Steve, if you've got birds doing fly-bys and dumping regurgitated fish on you, it's a desperate Fairy Tern's way of saying, hey, mate, those are my eggs you're parked over. Move on.

Pronto! Or they (and we) are cactus.

A pair of Hooded Plovers have been sighted throughout January on the estuary flats, though not on our early morning bird walks. Unfortunately, we have seen no evidence of breeding – yet.

People will have noticed that the Pelican pod has increased to about 30. Harder to see, but worth the effort to find, are a flock of Red-capped Plovers. They're the smallest shorebird out there at the moment – tiny compared to the Pelicans, loafing while the Red-caps busily search the water's edge around them for food.

A single Red-capped Plover chick was sighted in early January on a sand island and this had us hoping they might successfully breed, but we've not seen it or any other runners since.

Chestnut Teal and Grey Teal have a preference for the estuary shoreline closest to the townsite and we've seen them loafing and feeding there often. There's a mob of about 50 intermingled. It's really hard to pick a female Chestnut Teal from a Grey Teal so just enjoy the splendid plumage of the male Chestnut Teal and detailed feather patterning of the females and Grey Teal.

We've seen little of our migratory birds so far this summer. The Bar-tailed Godwits and small groups of Great Knots and Red-necked Stints that were feeding on the estuary throughout October and November have gone elsewhere, and a semi-resident Whimbrel has only appeared sporadically. In the months ahead, as inland waterways continue to dry out, we may see greater concentrations of these and other shorebirds as they seek refuge on the Wellstead Estuary.

Many thanks to Anne Gadsby and Steve Elson for leading our birding workshops throughout January. They have provided tremendous insights into the lives of the birds we share the estuary and our beaches with.

Thanks to everyone who has kept off the estuary and given shorebirds plenty of room over the summer. It may not seem like much, but every person who gives a feeding Red-capped Plover, a breeding Hoodie or a Fairy Tern colony a wide berth, is increasing that species chances of survival.

Leonie McMahon

Bremer Projects Division, FBG

This project is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program.



natural resource
management program



From the EO's desk

Hello everyone, and welcome to the first edition of Sustain-A-Bulletin for 2023. I hope you have all recovered from what was for many a pretty challenging and lengthy harvest (putting it mildly I'm sure!).

With a bumper harvest now wrapped up around the State and a whopping 22.7 million tonnes delivered, we now look towards the 2023 season. While mice have been a pest to be mindful of in recent seasons, for some of our growers, snails are a present and growing concern, particularly off the back of recent favourable seasonal conditions. Kyran Brooks, Brooks Ag/Nutrien Ag Solution (Foreman Rural) hosted an information session with Svetlana Micic, DPIRD, at the Iffla's farm in Bremer Bay on Wednesday 22nd February. Please get in touch with Kyran for more information if you missed this event.

While recent seasons have left on-farm water storages in good supply, we are busy looking at several demonstration sites under Drought Hub WaterSmart Dams project. At one of these sites met a team of people led by Tracey Calvert at DWER, and members of WaterSmart Dams team from UWA (led by Nik Callow), reps from DPIRD, local earthmoving contractor Murray Hobbs, Alora Ag (formerly DayBreak Cropping) farm manager, Richard, as well as FBG team members Carrie Taylor and myself at Mark Lester's farm to discuss option for the Jacup Community Dam catchment. DWER have been very keen to investigate using used CBH tarp to line catchments and to calculate its viability as an option. One of those solutions often discussed (along with used silo bag plastic), this site aims to ascertain whether this approach is one that could be rolled out more widely – both in terms of maximising water capture, but also in using recycled materials and minimising that cost. There are a range of constraints and challenges to be overcome, but it

looks to be an interesting site, so we look forward to updating you all on its developments.

Further to this site, we will be working with Dave Turner at Needilup looking at some water quality solutions, as well as Alex Jones at Gairdner where we will examine dam design and expansion, and then evaporation suppression options thereafter. Stay tuned for updates as the project really cranks up. To follow along, be sure to join the follower list – some great industry resources are being compiled.

On the natural resource management front, FBG has been working with many stakeholders along the South Coast to provide feedback to South Coast NRM as they prepare a tender on behalf of our region for the Federal Governments' Approach to Market (aka next round of Landcare-type funding). The Fitz-Stirling region has been identified as a 'Priority Place' in the Australian Government's 2022-23 *Threatened Species Action Plan*. This plan recognises some very important natural places around Australia, with 20 locations named. This approach recognises that some threatened species share the same habitat and that place-based actions can support both protection and recovery of more than one species (this effectively means that we have a range of threatened species in our backyard that need heightened attention). In coming months, we will learn exactly what this means for on-the-ground works and support for local landholders and communities.

Lastly for now, this Friday night is our annual Fitzy Fox Shoot, followed by breakkie the next morning at either Needilup or Bremer Bay. This year, we again compete with our friends at North Stirlings Pallinup Natural Resources, who held their shoots last Friday night. They beat us last year, so come on, let's even it up this year!

Maddy Wylie



WaterSmart Dams Project

Socials/Site/Follow

Twitter Tags	Project Webpage	Project Hashtag	Follower List
@GGA_WA @DPIRDbroadacre @HydroFire60 @NikCallow @DeptAgNews		#smartdams #FutureDroughtFund #drought #AusGov #AusAg	

 Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Water and the Environment	 Future Drought Fund
 GROWER GROUP ALLIANCE Together we grow	 South-West WA Drought Resilience Adoption and Innovation Hub
 Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development	 THE UNIVERSITY OF WESTERN AUSTRALIA
 COMPASS AGRICULTURAL ALLIANCE	 MAD FIG MERREDIN + DISTRICTS FARM IMPROVEMENT GROUP
 Southern Dirt	 FBG FITZGERALD BIOSPHERE GROUP

Commodity insight – Safflower

As many of you may be aware, in 2022, FBG hosted a site as part of the GRDC-invested late seeding trial (led by Stirlings to Coast, trial managed by Brad Westphal, Nutrien Ag Solutions). Final results from this trial are still being compiled, but as an aside, as part of this trial, host farmer Dave Turner also arranged for a strip of safflower to be planted.

Safflower (*Carthamus tinctorius*) has been quietly been building its area in recent years, with around 12,000ha under crop in 2022, around 3,000ha of that in Western Australia. This demand for Australia's genetically modified high oleic acid safflower oil has been driven by its use in industrial products such as lubricants and transformer oils (and as an alternative to palm and crude oils). In 2022, the increasing demand for substitutes, as well as the war in Ukraine, left a gap in the market for specialist oils (Ukraine typically being one of the world's largest producers of high oleic sunflower oil).

Super high oleic safflower oil was developed as part of the Crop Biofactories Initiative between CSIRO and GRDC to assist Australian grower to access emerging global markets for oilseed crops with industrial applications. This technology was then licenced to a company known as GO Resources which is a "clean technology" business which focuses on the sustainable production and supply of renewable and biodegradable raw materials. An interesting space to watch.

References:

<https://groundcover.grdc.com.au/innovation/industry-insights/australias-gm-safflower-demand-on-the-rise> and <https://www.go-resources.com.au/about>



Nutrien
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Stripper front comparison trial

FBG is currently working with Nathan Brown on a stripper front demonstration site in Needilup. The aim of this demonstration is to compare stubbles left by a stripper front versus a draper front, and any consequent effects on harvestability, grazing, spray efficacy, and crop establishment the subsequent year (canola in this case). Funded through South Coast NRM, this site forms part of a Future Drought Fund project entitled 'Drought Resilient Soils and Landscapes'. For Nathan's system, the move to a stripper front was driven by the more dominant sheep enterprise run in their business. However, Nathan was also interested in gathering more data behind the two systems and 2022 represented a good opportunity to investigate further, particularly as they also ended up using a draper front alongside their stripper front (needs must!).

Initial findings show lower harvest losses from the stripper system, as well as higher harvest capacity. Next we will be looking at whether there is a difference in spraying efficacy between the two systems with other growers welcome to come along for a look when this occurs – stay tuned for details on a quick pop-up field walk in coming weeks.

Change to research has been growing in this space in recent years, with grower-led trials being facilitated by PlanFarm around Three Springs, and GRDC then moving in with investments in recent years, closest to home at the Frankland River. There are also quite a few resources available via the GRDC website for some background reading:

https://grdc.com.au/resources-and-publications/groundcover/groundcover-137-november-december-2018/the-economics-of-draper-and-stripper-frontMautm_source=groundcover&utm_medium=web&utm_campaign=137&utm_content=web-article-footer-next-button

Maddy Wylie



Need for seed

Integrating conservation and agriculture within the Fitzgerald Biosphere transition zone

As seed pods continue to crack open, we crack on with collecting their contents for salt land rehabilitation. This activity forms part of our State NRM project 'Regenerating saline land; a new approach to an old problem.' The revegetation element of this project began in 2021, with local farmers responding to advertised funding opportunities around saltland remediation to restore aesthetic and biodiversity values to salt-affected land while ensuring continued productivity of surrounding crops and pastures. Since November, following invaluable guidance from local landscape ecologist Nathan McQuoid, FBG staff have joined the Nowanup Ranger team on a mission to procure seed from salt tolerant local provenance species for two revegetation sites. One site, in Needilup, comprises a saline drainage line and a Yate woodland which, while degraded, still offers some highly valuable habitat and ecosystem services. The second site, in Gairdner, will undergo revegetation along a cleared salty creek line. Seed has been collected from neighbouring remnant bushland at each site to emulate the former vegetation structure and composition of these areas as closely as possible. Species such as *Melaleuca cuticularis*, *Melaleuca brevifolia*, *Eucalyptus macrandra*, *Eucalyptus occidentalis*, *Casurina obesa*, *Allocasuarina huegeliana*, *Melaleuca elliptica*, *Melaleuca acuminata*, *Acacia saligna*, and *Acacia cyclops* are present in and will be returned to these

systems. The initial assessments of these sites included determining the state of the existing/former vegetation systems, proximity to local provenance, salt tolerant species with seed available, suitable revegetation methods, and linkages to significant remnant vegetation and waterways to promote connectivity conservation methods.

The Nowanup Caretakers (Rangers) form a vital part of this project; working to heal Noongar Boodja while building their own capacity to further implement similar restoration works across the region. Across all sessions, we've been joined by Rob, Connor, Errol, Marlin, Tyrone, Tamara, Damien, and coordinator, Jim. There is a myriad of experience across the team; some with years of seed collection under their belt, others just starting out. My seed collection experience was non-existent prior to commencing this project, and the knowledge the Rangers, Jim, and Nathan have extended has been invaluable. The Rangers have offered direction on cutting techniques, identifying which seeds are or aren't ready for collection, tips for storing to ensure mice/insects/wind don't cause losses, and insight into methods that speed up the process. Seed collection will continue to be staggered over the next few weeks, taking in seeding cycles of various species, and including the collection of branches for brush matting. Our stores, once processed and cleaned, will be direct seeded come Winter, and we can't wait to see the results!

Stay tuned for updates as this process continues to unfold.

Carrie Taylor & Annie Leitch

This project is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government state NRM Program



natural resource management program



Collaborating near and far UNESCO, MAB and where we sit both in context and time

The Fitzgerald Biosphere, Man and Biosphere program (MAB) and the United Nations Education Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). How did it all come about? Forming in the aftermath of World War II (1945) within United Nations frameworks, UNESCO was established with the goal of promoting peace through education, science and culture. In the early 70's, the post-war economic boom was consuming large amounts of non-renewable resources whilst producing higher levels of pollution threatening environmental habitats. Some 4,000 scientists from around the world warned there were already far too many people on Earth in proportion to the available resources, hence UNESCO launched the Man and Biosphere Programme (MAB) in 1971. At the time, a revolutionary approach to nature conservation, stating;

'the preservation of nature did not (have to) mean the creation of pristine isolated parks and reserves, but the development and promotion of sustainable ways to manage resources and live in harmony with nature.'

Biosphere reserves integrate three functions: conservation of biodiversity and cultural diversity;

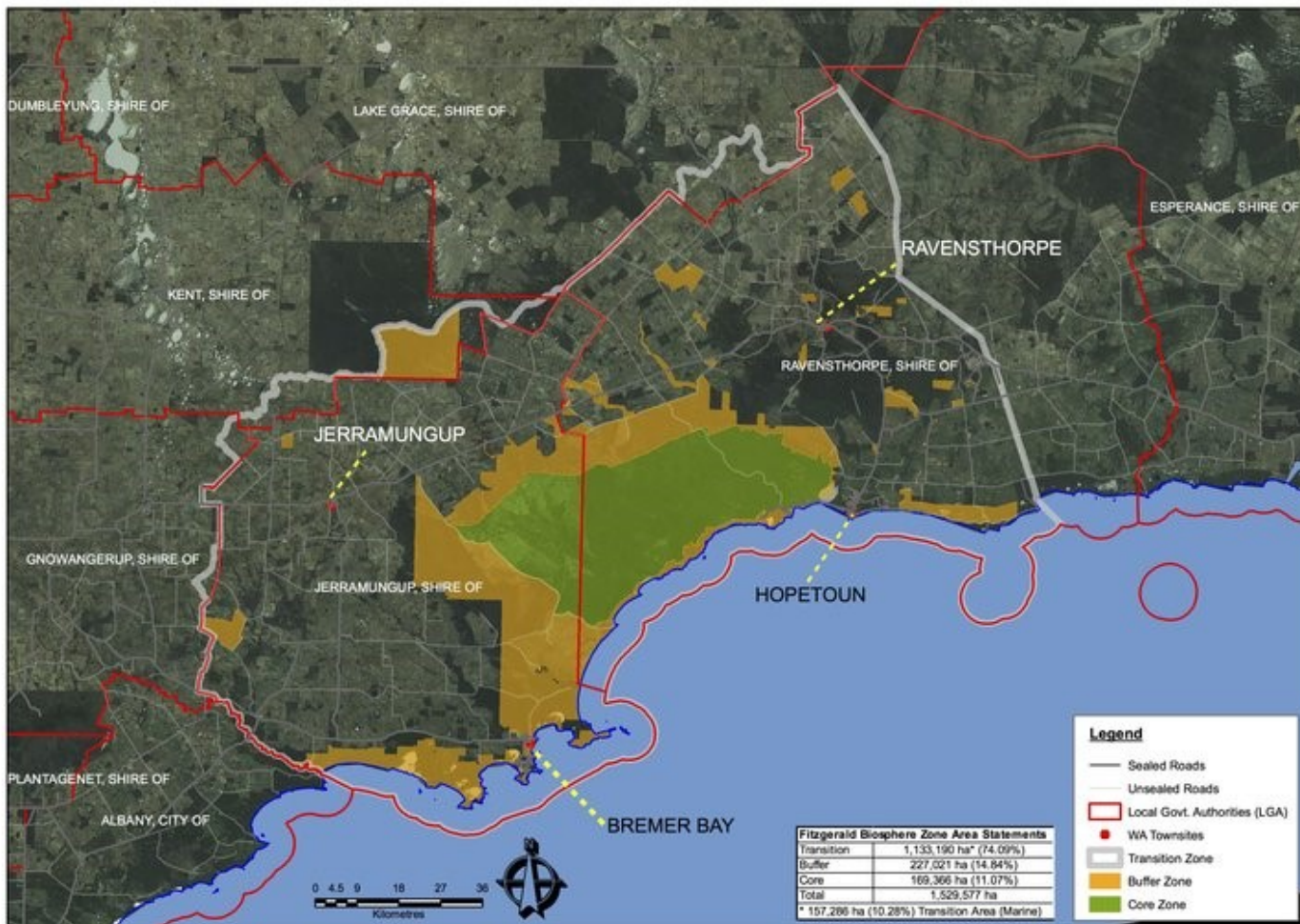
economic development that is socio-culturally and environmentally sustainable; and logistic support underpinning development through research, monitoring, education and training. They pursue these functions through Core, Buffer and Transition zones.

Having been granted MAB status in 1978, the Fitzgerald Biosphere (FB) has seen change climatically, socially, economically and politically. Collaboration began with the task of unravelling 'sustainable development' from the oxymoron and reconciling differences for agricultural production with *'Development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'*

'European intellectuals, cultural figures and scientists had understood that cooperation was a key tool for the reconstruction of peace. It was necessary to bring together European researchers from countries that had been fighting each other just a few years earlier around the same project.'



Collaboration for sustainable communities, environments and industries.



FB needed to traverse multiple tenure, Catchment, Landcare and community groups, LGA's and other government departments to fulfill its sustainable, economic, cultural and logistic responsibilities to maintain its position within MAB. Stakeholder groups, key community members and agencies with interest in the future of the Fitzgerald Biosphere formed the Biosphere Implementation Group (BIG), successfully renominated the Fitzgerald Biosphere Reserve in 2017 for an expanded zonation, later evolving into what we now know as the Fitzgerald Biosphere Community Collective (FBCC). The FBCC acts as the representative body that provides input and direction for the future of the Fitzgerald Biosphere region locally, on behalf of UNESCO frameworks.

Today, 40 years on, international, regional, sub-regional and ecosystem-specific collaboration has been promoted as a key feature of the MAB programme. Fitzgerald, Western Port, Great Sandy Plain, Noosa and Sunshine Coast Biospheres have formed the Australian Biosphere Alliance in addition to contributing to the World Network of Island and Coastal Biosphere Reserves (WNICBR).

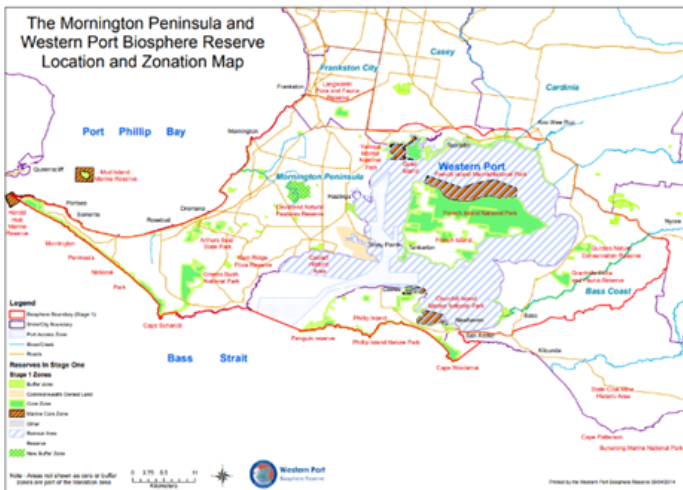


Technically, Biosphere Reserves allow for networking to share information across 738 biosphere reserves in 134 countries, including 22 transboundary sites around the world, where 260 million people call their biosphere reserves their home.

By promoting 'Peace through Education, Science and Culture', UNESCO has promoted and campaigned for collaboration, period. It has been progressive, bespoke, at times unprecedented and most likely challenging, but its concepts have made it all the way to a 1.5 million ha patch on the South West coast of Australia where a group of dedicated individuals felt they could use the MAB concept to cooperate in order to keep it vibrant for generations to come.

<https://www.un.org/en/academic-impact/sustainability>

Annie Leitch



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FBG FUNDED NRM OPPORTUNITIES

for Jerramungup Shire landholders

What?

Weed Control

(i.e spraying of agricultural weeds or handpulling/spraying/mechanical removal of environmental weeds)

Where?

Farm/bushland in areas surrounding Lake Magenta, Fitzgerald River, and/or Fitzgerald River National Park.

What?

Pest Control

(i.e contract shooting, baiting, trapping)

Where?

Farm/bushland in areas surrounding Lake Magenta, Fitzgerald River, and/or Fitzgerald River National Park.

What?

Environmental Restoration (i.e revegetation, fencing, weed removal)

Where?

Areas presenting significant environmental values i.e ecological linkages, black cockatoo foraging habitat, TEC.

Preference given to Fitzgerald Biosphere Group members
Call 0459454713 to enquire



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natural resource management program



SOUTHCOAST



Australian Government

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For further details contact Gillamii at admin@gillamii.org.au or 0427500374

This forum is supported by funding from the Western Australian Government's State NRM Program, South Coast Natural Resource Management and the Australian Government's National Landcare Programme

WELLSTEAD RURAL SEASONAL REVIEW & CROP UPDATES

GAIRDNER HALL



WEDNESDAY
MARCH 8



TIME
2:30PM- 6:30PM

Canola gains from soybeans' loss

China's consumption of stock feed is set to rise to 486 million tonnes in 2025 and 523 million tonnes by 2030, driven by continued growth in animal protein production, according to recent Rabobank estimates. But, Rabobank agriculture analyst Dennis Voznesenski said while feed demand is projected to grow over this period, the feed mix itself and import dynamics are expected to see substantial change.

Mr Voznesenski said the Chinese government has launched a soymeal reduction campaign aimed at lowering the country's dependence on imported soybeans to ensure food security. "The campaign started in 2021 when the Chinese ministry for agriculture and rural affairs issued guidelines to promote the reduction of soymeal use without consideration for animal growth rates and productivity," he said.

The government was looking to do this in two main ways, Mr Voznesenski said. "Firstly, by reducing the ratio of soymeal in feed from 15.3 per cent in 2021 to 12 per cent by 2030. Secondly, as part of China's 14th Five-year Plan, the government set a target to increase domestic soybean production to 23 million tonnes by 2025 compared with 19.5 million tonnes in 2022. Domestic soybean acreage is projected to rise as a result. An extra 3.5 million tonnes of domestically-grown soybeans will be helpful, but unlikely to fill the void left by reducing soybean meal imports from almost 70 million tonnes to the low 60 million tonnes mark."

Mr Voznesenski said in order to fill the gap created by reduced soymeal use and satiate increased overall feed demand by 2030, feed mills will need to seek alternative protein sources or have a lower protein feed ratio. "Traditional substitutes include rapeseed meal, cottonseed meal, peanut meal and sunflower meal," he said.

"The possibility of gradually-increasing Chinese canola demand by 2030 comes at the same time two other large global forces are expected to increase their demand for canola."

The Rabobank analyst said Canada, the world's largest canola exporter – shipping on average 10 million tonnes of canola annually – is set to complete construction of 3.6 million tonnes of domestic crushing capacity by early 2024 to support its own growing government-policy-driven biofuel sector. "As a result, a similar volume of canola is expected to be removed from Canada's export program from that point onward, assuming no construction delays, leaving a larger market share for Australian canola," he said.

"Meanwhile, Europe – Australia's largest canola export market – is locked in to phase out palm oil as a feedstock in biodiesel by 2030. In 2022, palm oil accounted for almost 40 per cent of feedstock used in Europe for biodiesel production. In order to continue producing biodiesel, alternative inputs need to be sourced, from used cooking oil to more canola."

Mr Voznesenski said for Australia's canola sector, this combination of increased Chinese feed demand, reduced Canadian exports and increased European biodiesel sector demand all act as a positive moving to 2030.



"However, markets should keep a close eye on a recent announcement from the German environment minister that a proposal will be sent to German cabinet to remove crops as a feedstock from biodiesel all together." Mr Voznesenski said "Between 2017 and 2021, approximately 30 per cent of Australian canola was exported to Germany and a loss of this market would likely mean a reduced local price over the longer term. While the proposal is by no means guaranteed to pass into law, it is definitely important to watch."

To find out more about other Rabobank research, contact Rabobank's local team in Albany on (08) 9844 5600 or subscribe to **RaboResearch Food & Agribusiness Australia & New Zealand** on your podcast app.



Dennis Voznesenski

Input Management Workshop

After two turbulent years for input prices, we want to offer you the opportunity to hear from the best in the business when it comes to managing your inputs in a profitable and sustainable manner.

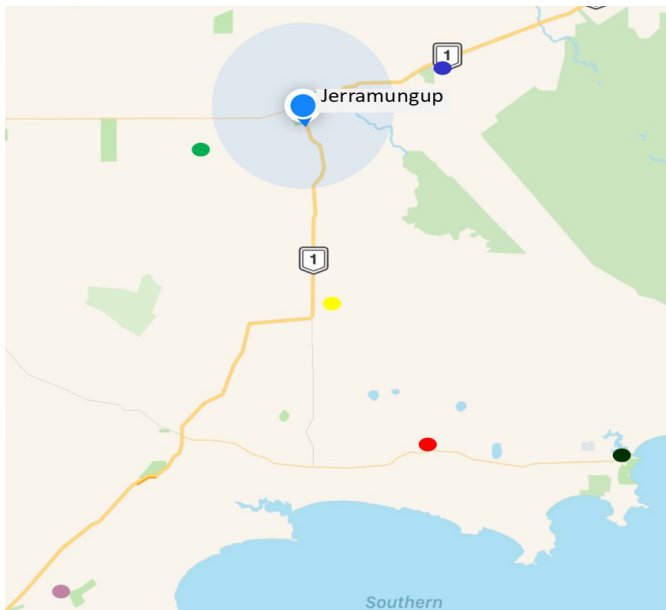
Maybe you're after guidance on transitioning to fewer inputs, or suggestions on how best to target your current inputs.

Get in touch with us on 0459454713 with any suggestions for content and/or presenters!

→ **march 2023**



Jerramungup district rainfall



Location		Nov	Dec	2022 Total	Jan	Total
Jerramungup		50.6	13.6	430.2	4.0	4.0
Needilup Nth		24.5	00.0	392.5	2.0	2.0
Needilup Sth		33.5	16.5	478.5	4.0	4.0
Jacup		54.2	15.4	618.2	6.0	6.0
Bremer Rd		65.0	23.5	710.0	4.0	4.0
Gairdner		66.4	26.2	607.4	5.0	5.0
Boxwood (Chillinup)		51.9	15.0	506.1	1.4	1.4
Mettler		90.5	28.8	754.7	5.6	5.6

UPCOMING EVENTS

- 24-25th Feb – Fitzy Fox Shoot and breakfast, Needilup and Bremer Bay
- 27-28th Feb – GRDC Grains Research Updates, Perth
- 6th March – WA Labour Day Public Holiday
- 20th March – GRDC Grains Research Update, Albany Port Zone, Albany
- Mid-late March – Input Management Workshop
- 28th March – MLA Meat Up Forum, Albany
- 4-5th April – Rural Edge 'Inspire' Conference, Perth
- 7-10th April – Easter Long Weekend

Contact FBG for more details ph. 0499 346 233

Email: admin@fbg.org.au

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