



Tuesday, September 3, 2013

## SABAC seeks grower comment on barley guidelines

THE SOUTH Australian Barley Advisory Committee is seeking feedback from growers on whether guidelines for variety choice will help them narrow down which barley cultivars are best suited to each cropping region.

SABAC chairman Greg Schulz, Maitland, says with a deregulated market and multiple breeding companies, the release of many new varieties is putting pressure on South Australia's storage system, which may be exacerbated with a large harvest likely this year.

"Segregating by variety and quality is becoming increasingly difficult in each region because of the sheer number of varieties available to growers," he said.

"It is becoming confusing for growers on what is best to grow agronomically, what is required by end users and consumers and what segregations will be available at their nearest receival centre. Also, some older varieties might need to be reconsidered because they are not achieving the same financial return as newer varieties."

Mr Schulz says while the committee will not make specific recommendations on what to grow, it is seeking feedback on whether principles on variety selection will be valuable to farmers.

"This could include information on variety specific agronomy through to demand for variety and quality requirements of end users and consumers. Growers could then use this information to make more informed decisions around rotations on their properties.

"Barley growers can contact Grain Producers SA if they do have a view on provision of this kind of information."

The issue was discussed at SABAC's biannual meeting on Friday, held at Coopers Brewery. While the committee has met on behalf of the industry for many years, an operational review was conducted 12 months ago which concluded the most efficient future model was for SABAC to operate as a sub-committee of GPSA.

Committee members include growers, grain buyers, brewers, maltsters, breeders, marketers, bulk handlers, researchers and retailers. Each pays a membership fee while GPSA provides funding and administrative support for grower involvement.

The group meets twice a year in August and April where members provide updates on new and potential varieties, research, market and consumer requirements, topical seasonal issues such as agronomy and storage and handling logistics.

Another key issue raised at the meeting was the decline in the area sown to barley over recent years.

GPSA chief executive Darren Arney says according to PIRSA data, the total area cropped in SA had increased from just more than 3 million hectares in 1996 to 4.04mha in 2013 with big lifts in wheat, canola and lentils.



However the area sown to barley had declined by more than 100,000ha during the same period, even though barley yields had been higher than wheat or canola.

“Barley is not keeping pace with the increases in area seen in other crops. Is it purely agronomic or are there more marketing options with wheat?”

“We’d like to see good competition between all crops to lift profitability for all primary producers.”

University of Adelaide barley program leader Jason Eglinton says part of the explanation of why barley area had declined may be the perception that it is not as profitable as other crops.

He reviewed data from a recent Hart Field Site trial and found that across seasonal conditions, Commander, for example, was yielding 30 per cent more on average at Hart than Mace wheat. At \$240 per tonne for malt barley at Port Adelaide, and H1 for wheat at \$280/t, Commander was several hundred dollars higher in gross margins than the Mace crop in the trial.

“Our two most dominant malting varieties Buloke and Commander are 10 to 15pc higher yielding than the varieties growers were used to seven to eight years ago. They have matured in the marketplace to the point where there are broad marketing options, there are segregations in most places,” he said.

“The question the committee discussed is whether we are properly benchmarking the relative profitability of current leading malt varieties against wheat. Perhaps it is opportune for some growers to be recalibrating their thinking given how much higher yielding the current malting varieties are compared with their predecessors.”

- **More information ...**

Barley growers can provide comment to GPSA by contacting Belinda Ryan on 08 8391 6621 or email [info@grainproducerssa.com.au](mailto:info@grainproducerssa.com.au)

**ENDS**

**For interviews contact SA Barley Advisory Committee chairman Greg Schulz on 0418 859 612.**

**PHOTO CAPTION:**

The SA Barley Advisory Committee represents the entire value chain of the barley industry. Pictured at the meeting on Friday are (from left) chairman Greg Schulz, deputy chairman Mark Modra, Grain Producers SA business manager Belinda Ryan, Joe White Malting’s Doug Stewart, SARDI’s Rob Wheeler, Coopers’ Nick Sterenberg and University of Adelaide barley program leader Jason Eglinton.

