

COMMUNICATING CLIMATE

A structured approach to closing the loop between research outcomes and adoption is being taken for the portfolio of climate research *By Jenni Metcalfe*

A MIX OF TOOLS is being used to communicate effectively with farmers and advisers about the latest developments and adaptations to climate change.

Science communication company Econnect Communication is implementing the GRDC's Climate Change Communication strategy and providing ongoing communication support to the Managing Climate Variability (MCV) program.

The strategy covers communicating information from investments by the GRDC and collaborators in MCV on climate change impacts, greenhouse gas emissions, forecasting, on-farm adaptation and climate management strategies.

Thirty-four Australian farmers are participating in the Climate Champion program, including grain, meat and livestock, wool, sugar, wine, honey and rice producers. Participants in the Climate Champion program are keen to understand how increased climate variability will play out in their respective regions and how they can adapt to the changes while continuing to run a sustainable and financially viable farm business.

Selected through an open nomination process, the Climate Champions want to share this information with other farmers in their regions and industries.

Participants in the Climate Champion program value the opportunity to gain early access to research and provide feedback to researchers about climate tools. For more information see www.climatekelpie.com.au/ask-a-champion/climate-champion-program.

The Climate Champion program is part of both the GRDC's climate change and MCV's communication strategies, currently being implemented across Australia.

The GRDC strategy also includes a network of grower advisers – agribusiness representatives, grower groups, consultants and government extension officers – who are working with the GRDC's researchers and communicators to:

- gather the climate information they need to help in their own communication with growers;
- produce fact sheets about climate change research available to growers;
- participate in regional meetings and seminars about research outcomes; and
- provide feedback on draft research tools, such as new seasonal forecasting tools.

Advisers are invited to join this network by completing a form at www.climateadvisers.net.au.

The Climate Change Communication strategy includes developing and distributing a series of 24 fact sheets called *Top Paddock*, which focus on the

effects of climate change, reducing greenhouse gas emissions, adapting to climate change and using forecasts for better decision-making on farm. The draft *Top Paddock* fact sheets will be pre-tested by participants in the Climate Champion program and the advisers network before they are finalised and made available on the web and in hard copy through advisers and grower groups over the next 12 months.

Climate Kelpie (www.climatekelpie.com.au) is one of the websites where *Top Paddock* will be available. This site has been developed by the MCV program to give Australian farmers and rural advisers easy access to tools and information about the weather and climate. Profiles of the participants in the Climate Champion program are regularly added to the website and a moderated discussion forum for farmers and advisers is being planned. Climate Kelpie allows users to filter their information needs according to their region and the commodity of most interest.

Outcomes from GRDC and MCV research will be added to Climate Kelpie as they become available. □

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Econnect editor and publications manager Mary O'Callaghan discusses climate issues with Western Australian grain grower and Climate Champion Mike Kerkmans.



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