# GRDC VIDEO or PODCAST TRANSCRIPT

**Legume Leaders – Ed Naisbitt: getting the most from your lupin crop**

[00:00:05] **Intro** This is a GRDC podcast.

[00:00:12] **Shannon Beattie** In the Lake Grace area, grower Ed Naisbitt has been growing lupins on the family farm for 40 years. It was a crop initially established by his father, and one that has remained a constant in the rotation as the years have gone by. Ed is a member of a grower group called LIFT - Lakes Information and Farming Technology - and is a part of the cohort of Legume Leaders that has been established by the Grower Group Alliance with investment from GRDC. These leaders are sharing their insights on the various legume crops over a seven-part series throughout 2024. Hello there, I'm Shannon Beattie, and in this episode, Ed tells us about why he has stuck with lupins for four decades and the many benefits they bring to his farming operation.

[00:00:52] **Ed Naisbitt** So I farm in the Lake Grace area, just west of Lake Grace. Our farms span about 70 kilometres from one end to the other. Unfortunately, we don't own all the land in between, we just have little paddocks along the way. So yeah, just on the west side of Lake Grace. I farm along with my wife, we have seasonal employees that help us out and a full-time employee.

[00:01:13] **Shannon Beattie** And tell me a little bit about your rotations, Ed, how do you work things on the farm in terms of what you plant?

[00:01:19] **Ed Naisbitt** We grow mainly barley on our farm, but I'll throw in the other mixes like wheat and then legumes. So peas, we grow field peas on the heavy country and lupins on any other country that's not heavy. Fortunately for us, we don't have a lot of heavy lake bank country, so I'm able to grow lupins across, you know, 4/5s of the farm as far as that goes, so that we don't have to grow the field peas in as many areas.

[00:01:41] **Shannon Beattie** This podcast is all about lupins. So, let's dive into that a little bit. How long have you been growing lupins on the farm for?

[00:01:48] **Ed Naisbitt** I started growing lupins with my father back in 1983. He did the year before, but I came home and harvested them that year, in 82, so I guess I've been growing them for just over 40 years.

[00:02:00] **Shannon Beattie** That's a long time, and I think that definitely qualifies you as a Legume Leader, which is what this podcast is all about. But why was it that you and your father started growing lupins in the first place? What was the rationale behind it?

[00:02:12] **Ed Naisbitt** I think it was the alternative back in my dad's day, it was just the alternative to just growing wheat. Wheat and pastures were the other sort of 50 per cent of the paddock. So, we were wheat and sheep farmers then. So, a good clover base was growing on the part of the farm that had grown to wheat. And then as the sheep started to make a bit of a decline, we were getting less and less clover pastures, and we thought we'd take up that slack with growing lupins to give us the benefits of the lupins.

[00:02:39] **Shannon Beattie** And how was your growing of lupins changed over the years? So, as you say, you've been growing them for about 40 years. Do you plant more of them now than you used to? Is that a constant in the rotation? How does it all fit into the system?

[00:02:53] **Ed Naisbitt** My lupins are certainly a constant in the rotation. Like them or loathe them, the benefits that we get from growing the lupins that makes us continually go back to the Lupin alternative. And particularly with the fact that agronomy is different with lupins, the fertilisers are different. When we're paying a lot of money for our nitrogen, if you were to grow lupins, you're not paying that money for buying the nitrogen to grow the plant. But you might not be getting the price for your lupins as you would for a wheat crop. But then you're getting the benefit of that nitrogen that the lupin speaks for the next year's crop. So, the benefits, if they're not there in year one, they're certainly they're in year two. That's why we've gone that way.

[00:03:31] **Shannon Beattie** And tell me about the, I guess, rotation pattern that you use for your lupins. And I guess just how much of the farms actually planted to do them in general.

[00:03:41] **Ed Naisbitt** Not so much that they've got a fixed pattern like, you know, wheat, barley, barley, lupins or wheat, barley, barley, canola. It's sort of depends a little bit on how the paddocks have gone on the lead up. But if a paddock is starting to look a bit tired or weeds are starting to get away from it, and that's generally after two, three or maybe four years out of lupins, then we'll certainly grow them back in. The other good thing about the lupins is we can put them in early. So, before the main seeding starts, we're able to get the lupins in and out of the road and leave them to their devices.

[00:04:14] **Shannon Beattie** What were the challenges that you faced when you first started growing lupins on the farm? Were there any issues that you had that you've dealt with over the years?

[00:04:23] **Ed Naisbitt** One of the ones that I can remember, I think we had a tight rotation of lupins. So, it was lupins, wheat, followed by lupins. In those days, we didn't understand the diseases that went along with the lupins, and I think we sort of lost a crop to root rot and those types of things. Some of the other issues that we had with lupins when we were sheep farming was we'd lose sheep to lupinosis. They were some of the challenges that we had to overcome. We probably didn't realise the importance of getting your lupins in early and getting them up and growing. So, we would sort of start seeding in May back in those days. We've since found that really you need to have your lupins up and out of the ground, certainly by the first of May, and if you can have them by Anzac Day, it's even better still. For our area, we get pretty cold growing conditions in late June, July and lupins, they almost become bonsai at that time of the year, they just stay pretty short. If that's the time of the year that you're trying to throw your herbicides at them, it can be difficult, but if you can get some early growth, get them in earlier, get them up in a way that seems to do a lot better for us.

[00:05:27] **Shannon Beattie** And what are the benefits of growing lupins, Ed? Why are they such an important rotation for you on the farm?

[00:05:33] **Ed Naisbitt** I think I've touched on it, but agronomically we can use different chemistries. So originally, and I'm sort of harping back a bit, we would grow our wheat crops with the Group B chemicals and that type of thing. So to spell the Group B's you could grow lupins and we could be using Group A chemicals. So that gave us a shot from a different angle on the same weed. Now of course Group As and Group Bs are no more one number nowadays, but still the same sort of thing applies. That's one of the benefits. The other benefit is after you've grown lupins the following year, you've got generally a pretty weed free environment, and you can confidently grow your wheat crop or your barley crop, whatever you chose, or maybe even canola on top of them. And we seem to always be doing quite a lot better growing a crop on the lupin stable as opposed to just any other paddock.

[00:06:21] **Shannon Beattie** Ed, do you think there's something that's going to remain an important rotation for you on the farm? Do you think you'll increase or decrease the amount that you grow, and what factors would lead to that?

[00:06:31] **Ed Naisbitt** Let's say if you were to grow 25 per cent, well for me it's around about 25 per cent of my programming to the broadleaves, whether that be lupins or canola and also field peas. That's quite reasonable. But then if you wanted to push it out a bit more and start to grow 30 per cent, maybe 35, you could be backing yourself into a little bit of a corner there. The prices for lupins have always been the issue that we have. The consistency with the pricing is one thing that sort of frightens us back a little bit. But I find if I was to drop my broad leaf drops down to 20 or 15 per cent, I feel that I'm not setting my farm up in a good way for the following year coming out of that rotation.

[00:07:12] **Shannon Beattie** In a year like we're having at the moment Ed, when things are a little bit drier. Not everyone's had a much rain so far this year. How do lupins fit in a year like this? And I guess, do you have any tips for someone on how to grow them in a year when there isn't as much rain around?

[00:07:31] **Ed Naisbitt** I'm not sure whether we are fortunate or unfortunate, but we have had some early rains, so we've had a germination, and we had some winter weeds that have grown and that type of thing. And our moisture is down two and a half to say three and a half inches below. So, I know there's a little bit of moisture underneath there. I always feel that at this time of the year, you can grow your crop a ways before the rain. It's a lot better than growing it just a few minutes after the rain, if that makes sense. Like once it's rained and you put your cropping, it seems to be trying to chase the moisture down. But if you've already put your crop in the ground, the moisture comes in, your crop seems to germinate. And for us, even though it's only a little bit of moisture that we've got underneath, I think that's enough with the cooler temperatures that'll be upon us. And of course, the season has changed. I'll be confident to go that way.

[00:08:18] **Shannon Beattie** How about in general Ed, when it comes to growing lupins, what are your tips for growers who are maybe thinking of growing them for the first time? They might have dabbled in it before, but how can they make sure they really get the best out of lupins, and I guess grow them as well as possible to set them up for success?

[00:08:35] **Ed Naisbitt** I find lupins, they don't seem to be very hard to grow, but when you do grow them, just give them exactly what they need. If they need to have a grass spray, then just do it straight away. If they if you need to put insecticides on, just do it straight away. Don't sort of hold and come back, I'll do that a bit later. Just I've found, you know, we've even been able to grow lupins on the heavy clays and just quite simply, by taking away all the competition from what they might have to, they might have to put up with. And most farmers these days do that anyway, so it's, or perhaps I should say all farmers do that. But just let them grow on their own without any competitions whatsoever. I mean the sunlight and the rain; we can't control that. But just having me in a position that they can take advantage of that when, when it comes their way.

[00:09:31] **Shannon Beattie** So what you're pretty much saying is the crop will tell you what it needs. And when it does, just listen to it.

[00:09:37] **Ed Naisbitt** I think so. There are many good agronomists around that will help farmers along the way. But I'm confident with mine, I'll just put them in early and generally you can go away and leave them. I just remember last year we just poured on all the chemicals that they needed upfront. There was in one of the furthest blocks north that we had, and it was probably a month or more before I got back to them, which is not very good, but they were up and away and growing merrily in their little environment down there in the stubble.

[00:10:03] **Shannon Beattie** You mentioned that you've had some, or there are really good agronomists out there. Is that something that you do a lot, Ed is rely on the support of your agronomists to help growing lupins, but growing your crops in general?

[00:10:14] **Ed Naisbitt** I certainly use our local agronomist, but we get our chemical from. Fortunate for me, I have one of my three daughters is an agronomist. There are always other paid agronomists. I've got agronomists that I can ring at any time or text at any time and get an answer. And often I find that I'm going to ask two or three agronomists the same question, and I generally all get very similar answers, but it just reiterates what I'm thinking anyway, and I sort of like that. Don't necessarily for me go on gut feel, I actually do like a little bit of back up and then get their advice and go with that.

[00:10:47] **Shannon Beattie** This Legume Leaders series that we're doing, Ed, is all about that peer-to-peer learning and just asking questions from people, which is obviously what you do with your agronomist. But what do you see the value of asking questions of your fellow farmers as well?

[00:11:02] **Ed Naisbitt** Very much so. I know I'm surrounded in my area with what I call very good farmers. I mainly go out when we have the grower updates or meetings with other farmers and go in and have a look around their farms. I certainly go along to those. And I look and I ask questions, and if there's any fresh little ideas that might come out of them, I really try to pick up on those. And I think look to those who are doing well is what I like to do, and then see if I can emulate what they are doing and then tell them that it was my idea, of course.

[00:11:32] **Shannon Beattie** And are you happy being one of those people, Ed that people come to for advice? How does it feel to be in that role?

[00:11:39] **Ed Naisbitt** I don't know if it's so much more advice, but just more like bouncing ideas off. And I'm more than happy. If someone comes in, they've got an idea and I've done it, or I've used it or I've gone that way. And if I can give my experiences, that's what I'm more than happy to do, because I'm certainly not suggesting that I'm in a position that I'll be able to tell people how to grow their crops, but I just would like to be in a position to show people how they can grow their own, if that makes sense. They can see what I'm doing and then learn their own way.

[00:12:10] **Shannon Beattie** And if there are other people out there, other growers out there who are experts at growing legumes as well, would you recommend that they join this Legume Leaders concept as a leader themselves to help other growers on their journey of growing legumes?

[00:12:24] **Ed Naisbitt** I would like to think so because we all have our own little ideas and we all generally grow the same crops. I do know some of my friends that I seem to grow the best crop every year, and it's because of something they do in particular. It's not because it rains at their place more or that sort of thing. That's what we like to think is the reason. But these guys, they are doing something that the rest of us are perhaps not. And it might only be a one percenter, Shannon. But enough of these little one percenters can make up quite a difference.

[00:12:54] **Shannon Beattie** Ed, thank you so much for joining me on the podcast and chatting to everyone about lupins.

[00:13:00] **Ed Naisbitt** You're very welcome, Shannon. Thank you.

[00:13:07] **Shannon Beattie** That was Lake Grace grower and LIFT member Ed Naisbitt talking about lupins as part of the seven-part Legume Leaders series, which is an extension of a GRDC investment titled Closing the Economic Yield Gap of Grain Legumes in WA. Bios on the Legume Leaders and their contact details can be found on the GGA website. More information on this topic can also be found in the description box of this podcast, or online at GRDC.com.au. I'm Shannon Beattie and this has been a GRDC podcast. Thanks for listening.