

**Media Release
For Immediate Release
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Field days tackle the question: can grazing add profit to cropping?

Can farmers become more profitable and sustainable by introducing a grazing phase into their cropping systems? This question will be answered with a series of five Grain & Graze field days and barbecues on properties across the Border Rivers and Maranoa-Balonne catchments in late March and early April.

The 'Grain & Graze Roadshow' is a chance for farmers to come and see first hand how landholders are improving their mixed farming systems by introducing long and short term grazing phases. Grain & Graze aims to boost the profitability of Australia's mixed farms while simultaneously improving management of their natural resources.

Chair of the Border Rivers Grain & Graze Steering Committee, Robert Webb, says that the events will have a practical focus, demonstrating how to apply the collected wisdom of researchers and collaborating farmers from Grain & Graze and presenting farmers with useful tools they can use immediately.

'One of the great things to come out of the Grain & Graze program is the MLA feed demand calculator,' he says. 'There have been other calculators for different regions, but this one has been specifically designed for our local conditions. It's very exciting.'

The calculator is a simple tool which helps farmers improve management of their feedbase by analysing the balance between feed demand from livestock and feed supply (including pastures, forage crops, crop residues). Farmers can use it to plan six to 12 months ahead and predict risks and opportunities much earlier.

The five field days will include presentations by experts and fellow farmers in pasture management, biodiversity, soil compaction, land use and capability, soil fertility and water, grazing cereal crops and the economics of mixed farming, as well as the principles of feed base and how to use the MLA feed demand calculator.

'Overall, the Grain & Graze program has found that pastures can be brought in to crop rotations to maintain soil fertility and structure; control or manage weeds, pests or diseases; and reduce soil erosion, water and nutrient leakage,' says Robert.

'We'll be showing farmers what steps they need to take to have productive, persistent and profitable pastures.'

‘Mixed farming is incredibly complex, because each time you add another enterprise you compound the problems. This Roadshow is about showing farmers how to run the most profitable and sustainable mixed farms.’

Robert says he’s pleased to see that findings from the Grain & Graze program are already being adopted in the region.

‘One of the best indicators of the interest in the Grain & Graze findings is that people are putting in pastures right now, even though wheat could be earning them \$400 a tonne,’ says Robert. ‘They are taking a longer term view.’

The events are running on properties near Moree, NSW on 31 March; at Warialda, NSW, on 1 April; Toobeah (near Goondiwindi), QLD, on 2 April; Nindigully (near St George), QLD on 3 April; and near Roma, QLD, on 4 April.

For more information please contact Kathryn Taylor for QLD events on 07 4671 7900 or Carol Harris for NSW events on 02 6730 1900. In order to attend, RSVP to Kathryn or Carol by March 25.

Ends

The Border Rivers and Maranoa-Balonne Grain & Graze projects have been a partnership between the national Grain & Graze partners, the Queensland Murray-Darling Committee, the Border Rivers-Gwydir CMA, the Queensland and New South Wales Departments of Primary Industries, CSIRO, the University of New England, and the Queensland Department of Natural Resources and Water.

The national Grain & Graze partners include Land and Water Australia, Meat and Livestock Australia, the Australian Wool Innovation, and the Grains Research and Development Corporation.

For further information about the Grain & Graze Program, contact National Coordinator, Richard Price, on 02 6295 6300, mobile 0409 624 297; Gillian Stewart on 02 6263 6042; Merryn West on 02 6263 6013 or visit www.grainandgraze.com.au.

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