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ACID TEST FOR RESEARCH INVESTMENT

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Growers through SAGIT are funding annually approximately \$1.3M in research per year. The types of research vary from modification of farming practices to "blue sky" research e.g. molecular biology. In this article we highlight the importance of SAGIT's investment in SA No Till Farming Association

One of the important criteria in assessing projects for funding is achieving adoption by growers of the research outcomes and in the case of more basic research by other scientists, for example the adoption of doubled haploids by breeders.

Successful adoption is the acid test for research since it is central to the main aim of SAGIT which is to maximise returns to grain growers from their levy investment.

Having adoption as important criterion sometimes demands an input of resources by SAGIT.

For example SAGIT have or are investing in pure communication projects such as in SANTFA and an Extension Officer at Minnipa Agricultural Centre and the regional grower research / demonstration trials eg Yorke Peninsula, Hart field day site and Wolseley Agricultural Bureau.

SAGIT is particularly pleased about these investments and their benefits to grain growers.

SANTFA has a state - wide impact whereas the farming systems project provide targeted regional research.

SAGIT provided the seed capital for the successful establishment of SANTFA.

Steve Ball President of SANTFA said recently "the seed funding by SAGIT of SANTFA in its first 6 years was critical in getting the organization up and running"

SANTFA has now achieved 50% adoption of No - till by SA grain growers and is predicting over 75% within the next five years.

It is an organization with 1100 financial members, running large annual conferences with international speakers, involved workshops, and the production of publications.

It is now involved looking for Carbon Sequestration opportunities with US based companies and has been a founding member of the Conservation Agricultural Alliance of Australia and New Zealand.

They are also involved in research in association with the regional farming systems groups - a great way to demonstrate new technologies to growers.

This has been an excellent investment by SAGIT and reflects the foresight of the grower committee and their "boots on the ground" knowledge of the needs of their industry.

Another way to achieve adoption is using the Farming Systems Groups across the state.

Farming systems research is now managed by growers, this is an important change. Previously government organizations, scientists or agribusiness usually drove the process.

Now growers are addressing their problems and enlisting consultants, scientists and in some cases doing their own research and as well they are seeking funding.

Project requests from grower groups such as these backed by good operators and producing good research are very attractive to SAGIT. These efforts clearly signal grower ownership of the research. These projects attract a high level of grower interest ensuring a high level of adoption.

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