

## More than \$1.2m. for SA crops research

Information critical to the effective and economic control of leaf rust, which is regarded a serious threat to barley production in SA, is to be gathered in a research project supported by the SA Grain Industry Trust.

Leaf rust has become far more common in recent years with both yields and grain quality suffering. Research into ways to combat it is one of 32 SAGIT-supported projects to be tackled from July 2004 by SA-based researchers.

SAGIT chairman, Malcolm Sargent, said trial work on southern Yorke Peninsula by the Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Group and Ag Consulting Company had shown that specific fungicides had the ability to reduce leaf rust disease levels and improve yields by up to 30 per cent, and also improve grain quality.

“However, use of fungicides is low among growers as more work needs to be done on fungicide efficacy and optimum timing of applications at other sites” he said.

Mr Sargent who has replaced Mr Ken Schaefer as SAGIT chairman (Mr Schaefer having retired after 13 years on the Trust) said total investments by SAGIT in 2004/05 research would exceed \$1.2 million – the investment made possible by a voluntary levy of 15c a tonne collected on all grain produced by SA farmers.

He said other new grain industry research initiatives to be undertaken with SAGIT backing included:

- The establishment of suspension fertilisers as a viable option for SA graingrowers.
- Effective ways to control weeds in wheel tracks used in controlled traffic farming.
- The fast-track breeding of wheats with combined disease resistances and with improved drought tolerance.
- The training of a cereal plant breeder by providing scholarships for an Honours and PhD research program.

Mr Sargent said that as well as 13 new project investments, SAGIT would continue to support a suite of on-going projects ranging from basic laboratory research, to applied in-paddock work including that being undertaken by farmer groups on Eyre and Yorke Peninsulas, and in the South-East.

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