

## New work on barley leaf rust

While specific fungicides effective against leaf rust have been shown to increase barley yields by up to 30 per cent, and improve grain quality, their use in SA remains limited.

Bill Long of Ag Consulting Co, Ardrossan, says the principal reason for this is a lack of data available on the best time to apply fungicides in different environments.

He says his company and the Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Group have shown that specific fungicides are effective against leaf rust in manganese deficient soils on southern Yorke Peninsula.

“However, research into fungicide efficacy and optimum timing is required at other sites, too,” he said.

“Under a new project supported by the SA Grains Industry Trust, research will be conducted at a site in a high risk, guaranteed, leaf rust environment and another in an area where leaf rust is less severe.

“Evaluation of existing and new generation triazole fungicides, as well as a range of strobilurin fungicides will occur to determine if the significant extra cost associated with the new products is justified against the use of existing cheaper fungicides.

“The effect of timing of application on fungicide effectiveness will also be investigated.

“Currently the use of fungicides to control barley leaf rust is extremely low across SA, despite the significant gains that have been demonstrated.

“Growers and many advisers lack knowledge in application timing with many growers reporting poor results, invariably as a result of applying product too late.

Mr Long said the research was very important because leaf rust had become a major problem in SA, including in those areas where crops had been previously unaffected by the disease. Its spread had been fostered by the growing of leaf rust susceptible varieties.

He said current malt barley production practices were not achieving yield potential due to increased leaf disease pressure while grain quality was also suffering. Yield and grain quality losses were also significant for feed barley lines.

Mr Long said the research would be carried out by Ag Consulting Co staff, Stephen Wentworth and Matthew McCallum, in conjunction with the Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Group.

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