

Talks to highlight profiting from precision agriculture

Making money through precision agriculture will be the hot topic at tomorrow's Adelaide conference of the Southern Precision Agriculture Association.

Precision agriculture uses techniques such as global positioning systems and yield mapping technology to map paddocks to enable growers to manage their land according to yield potential.

Association executive officer Rohan Rainbow said the half-day conference would look at the direction of farming technology, and how growers can use it to increase profits.

"The keynote speaker will be Dr Brett Whelan from the Australian Centre for Precision Agriculture in Sydney," Dr Rainbow said.

"He will give a national perspective on the profitability of precision agriculture from working with farmer groups such as SPAA.

"Trials conducted by SPAA have demonstrated opportunity for increased profits through more targeted use of fertilisers and increased yields.

"South Australia has a wealth of knowledge and is well advanced in the adoption of precision agriculture compared with other states because of the work done by SPAA," Dr Rainbow said.

SPAA president Malcolm Sargent said results from two years of practical on-farm trials would be presented to show farmers how they could profit from precision agriculture.

"The challenge is working out what to do in which part of a paddock.

"Through remote sensing imagery, determining variations in soil properties and consulting yield maps you can make informed decisions about your cropping program to maximise profits.

"Then it will be targeting inputs whether it be applying more fertiliser or fungicides to higher yielding areas of a paddock and reducing inputs where yields are low," Mr Sargent said.

Swan Reach croppers, Ady and Colin Stoeckel will share their experiences as low rainfall farmers making profits from precision agriculture.

Also SA Research & Development Institute researcher Dr John Heap will discuss his findings from on-farm trials showing that root disease was higher in the higher-yielding area of most paddocks. The variation of disease levels between rows has been another significant find.

“The aim of the conference is to demonstrate to growers that precision agriculture need not be complicated and that it is a useful tool that can increase profits,” Mr Sargent said.

The conference will be at the Mawson Lakes Campus of the University of South Australia, from 1pm - 5.30pm.

Admission is free to SPAA members and \$20 for non-members. For further information contact Dr Rohan Rainbow on (08) 8842 1568 or email info@spaa.com.au.