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Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Rice Production

... of growing importance

Media Release

New Rice Cropping System

20 August, 2003

Representatives of the Punjab Agricultural University in India visited Yanco Agricultural Institute on Friday to meet with their Australian counterparts working on a new system of crop cultivation aimed at improving the water efficiency, profitability and flexibility of rice farms.

Permanent Bed Cropping Systems (PBCS) as the name implies, involves the cultivation of irrigated crops on raised beds and has the very real potential to increase the viability of rice based farming.

PBCS is a concept born out of the merger of two separate fields of research beginning in the mid 1990's and is being developed in the Riverina with international collaboration.

Research was being carried out into the cultivation of crops after rice, especially wheat, which aimed at taking advantage of the soil moisture present after rice is harvested.

At the same time work was being done to investigate the possibilities of water savings by growing irrigated crops on raised beds as opposed to flooded bays.

It was then realised that, if the two principles were combined, a single paddock could be utilised to grow a wide variety of crops without the need to reconfigure the paddock layout.

As well as rice and winter cereals, other possible crops may include canola, soy beans or even row crops such as maize or sunflower.

The ability of a farmer to grow a variety of crops without changing his paddock layout means he can respond quickly to market forces, effectively improving his overall viability.

In addition to the potential water savings, other benefits have also been identified such as a reduction in soil compaction due to the introduction of controlled traffic in the paddock environment.

By ensuring that tractor wheels travel on the same line with each passing, the actual cropped area of the paddock is spared the consequences of soil compaction.

While still far from complete, research into this innovative technique is continuing under the umbrella of the CRC for Sustainable Rice Production with input from NSW Ag., CSIRO and the Punjab Agricultural University.

Funding for much of the work has been provided by the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research (ACIAR) which is administered under the government's Foreign Aid portfolio to fund collaborative research between Australia and developing countries.

The GRDC and RIRDC have funded some of the Australian experimental work with cooperation from Coleambally Irrigation, Murray Irrigation and Murrumbidgee Shire Council which offered the Murrumbidgee Shire Community Experimental Demonstration Farm for use in the research.

PHOTO also available - contact Rice CRC

The Rice CRC is sponsored by the Australian Government's Cooperative Research Centres Program. The Centre coordinates the research activities of teams from Charles Sturt University, NSW Agriculture, CSIRO, Department of Land and Water Conservation, University of Sydney, Ricegrowers' Co-operative Ltd and the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

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