



Cooperative Research Centre for Sustainable Rice Production

... of growing importance

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CRC Research Pays Big Dividends

A cost-benefit analysis of research done by the CRC for Sustainable Rice Production has predicted investment in research projects will yield up to 1,500% return on investment over the next twenty years. The results of this research can be seen as evidence that investment in the CRC has been a very worthwhile exercise for the partners involved.

Carried out over a three year period, the research investigated three separate projects covering three different aspects of rice production. The study analysed all associated costs and potential benefits taking into account such aspects as the increased time required to produce meaningful results.

The most significant of the projects analysed was one involved with the breeding cold tolerant rice varieties. Cold stress in rice crops is responsible for yield losses of around 720kg/ha on average, equating to around \$20million a year in lost income for the industry.

The analysis showed that increasing cold tolerance by just 1°C could retrieve more than half of these losses; an on-going return of close to \$10million per annum.

Another project put under the microscope is one involving the development of new and better crop rotation methods. The so-called "Crops After Rice" project, aside from potential for increased farm income from extra cropping of around \$321/ha over a 9 year rotation, was also shown to have positive environmental spinoffs.

A crop sown into a paddock immediately after rice harvesting will 'intercept' water at a rate of around 1ML/ha. This is water which would otherwise end up as groundwater recharge, thus contributing to rising water tables and salinity problems. Together, the increased income from extra crops, and the cost savings related to the 'intercepted' water are predicted to return over \$5m over the 20 year period.

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 Infrastructure, Planning & Natural Resources, University of Sydney, SunRice and the Rural Industries Research & Development Corporation.

Grant Webster
Communications Officer
C/- Yanco Agricultural Institute
Private Mail Bag
Yanco NSW 2703

Phone: 02 6951 2519
Mobile: 0411 29 66 42
Fax: 02 6951 2533
Email: grant.webster@agric.nsw.gov.au



A third project, related to the development of a soil test to determine nutrient requirements using Near Infra Red (NIR) Spectroscopy techniques, also showed positive financial benefits, although not as spectacular as the other projects analysed.

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