

## Disease protection plus upgrade

Victorian farmer Tim Jensz netted an extra \$55 per hectare from a 2007 barley crop grown with the broad-spectrum fungicidal seed treatment, Dividend. This was even though his property had no known history of the target diseases.

Tim grows barley, canola, oats and field peas at "Oscarnell", near Balliang, 50 km north of Geelong.

The district is in the rain shadow of the Brisbane Ranges to the west, but in most years its red and grey loam soils and 400–450 mm rainfall grow good cereal crops.

In 2007 Tim used one of his barley paddocks to compare the performance of Dividend, to his usual seed dressing.

Developed by Syngenta, Dividend is registered for the control of *Pythium* root rot and most major seed-borne fungal diseases in wheat and barley. It has also been registered for the suppression of *Rhizoctonia* when applied at the higher rate of 2.6 litres per tonne.

### Little known about *Pythium*

*Pythium* is a little-known fungal disease which has been described as the "common cold" of cropping systems. Despite being considered unimportant by many farmers, the disease is capable of causing yield losses

of between 10 and 15 per cent, particularly in higher rainfall areas.

"*Pythium* was never an issue I'd known about and I don't know if we've ever had it here," Tim said. "To be honest, I don't know if we've had smuts or bunts either, but I'd heard about Dividend and I wanted to see for myself how it would go."

Tim direct-drilled 100 hectares of Gairdner barley at 80 kg per hectare with 75 kg per hectare of MAP fertiliser in early June, 2007. About 20 per cent of the seed was treated with Dividend at 1.3 litres per tonne and the remainder with his usual seed treatment at 1.5 litres per tonne.

"At first glance, we didn't notice a lot of difference but when we had a closer look, the Dividend-treated barley was half a leaf to a leaf in front," he said. "It was as if it had been sown a few days earlier. And when we dug up some plants, the barley had a more extensive root mass than the other plants."

When harvested in December, the Dividend-treated barley yielded 1.35 tonnes per hectare, four per cent better than the comparison. The barley also made malting grade and returned an extra \$55.80 per hectare. ■

## FARM ADVISORS SHOWN R&D PIPELINE

Farm advisors have been given a sneak preview of new crop protection technology that may improve the emergence and early vigour of wheat and barley crops.

The new insecticide controls sucking pests such as aphids and red-legged earth mites and has been developed by crop protection company, Syngenta, for use with its broad-spectrum fungicidal seed treatment, Dividend.

Used in combination, the new product enhances Dividend's positive effect on crop emergence, root development and plant vigour.

The preview was one of the highlights of the company's recent Victorian Field Biology Tour, which was attended by a large number of agronomists from leading rural distributors throughout the state.

Accompanying the tour were the Syngenta's Global Seed Care Development Head, Melanie Klix, who is based in Switzerland, and Singapore-based Regional Seed Care Manager, Martin Weiss.

The three-day itinerary included visits to a number of farms and trial sites throughout northern Victoria, including the Syngenta Learning Centre, located within the Elmore Field Days site. Syngenta State Sales Manager, Gavin Jackson, said the Learning Centre hosted a number of trials comparing the efficacy of various crop inputs, as well as dozens of wheat, barley and canola variety trials.

"We saw comparison trials pitting Dividend against other cereal seed treatments which reinforced the fact that Dividend produces far better emergence than other products," Gavin said. "There was also a trial of a new cereal seed treatment we are developing for release to the Australian market. It is still in the developmental stage but the early results are exceptional."

**Syngenta Global Seed Care Development Head, Melanie Klix, Switzerland, and Regional Seed Care manager, Martin Weiss, Singapore, on the three-day tour of northern Victorian trial sites.**

