

New feed legume performs at Roma

A non-bloating high quality winter legume is showing great growth potential in trials near Roma.

More than 30 producers and agribusiness advisors recently inspected a trial planting of Sulla at Richmond Downs, 15 km south of Roma.

The Sulla had produced 5.7 tonnes of dry matter per hectare compared to 6.4 tonnes DM per hectare from oats over the 120 days since sowing on June 12, 2008.

The trial was part of the GRDC-supported Southern Queensland Farming Systems (SQFS) project and showed Sulla would also provide an additional 80 kg of nitrogen per hectare for subsequent crops.

Andy Arthur, owner of Richmond Downs said he was impressed with the establishment and early productivity of the Sulla and was looking forward to seeing how it performed in the second year.

"One challenge will be controlling weeds over summer when the Sulla is not actively growing," Andy said.

Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) researcher David Lloyd said Sulla was a short-lived perennial suited to two to three year rotations in cropping systems.

"In this situation Sulla could provide valuable nitrogen inputs as well as high quality winter-spring grazing," David said.

"It is non-bloating, which offers advan-

tages over lucerne and medics for beef producers."

He said Sulla was a temperate legume growing from mid autumn until late spring or early summer and was not productive during the heat of summer.

SQFS project researchers report there is great interest in this species with three Australian cultivars released in the past three years.

Wilpena and Moonbi grazing types have limited seed available at present following release in Queensland, NSW and South Australia.

Flamenco is an upright cultivar more suited to hay production and has been released in Western Australia.

CSIRO farming systems scientist and project leader, Dr Lindsay Bell says Sulla and a number of other winter and summer-growing forage legumes suited to

short-term rotations in cropping systems are being tested as part of the SQFS project which is a collaboration between GRDC, CSIRO and DPI&F.

"With the increasing prices of fertilisers, many farmers are looking for alternative sources of nitrogen for their cropping systems," Lindsay said.

"Forage legumes are one of these options that provide greater nitrogen benefits for legume grain crops.

"Some newer short-term forage legumes options such as Sulla and burgundy bean are now available and we are looking at how these might be incorporated into cropping rotations."

The project is also comparing the new forage legumes to existing legume options such as lucerne, lablab, snail medic and purple vetch, as well as oats and forage sorghum. ■



CROP DOCTOR With Peter Reading NORTH

COASTAL FARMS LOOK TO LEGUMES

A new joint initiative between the Grains and Sugar Research and Development Corporations (GRDC and SRDC) is supporting the linking of coastal farming operations with rotational legume cropping knowledge critical to the future viability of the region.

The Burnett and Southern Coastal Farming Systems project led by Queensland Department of Primary Industries and Fisheries (QDPI&F) principal agronomist Dr Mike Bell will enhance soil health and ultimately impact on levels of fertiliser use in sugarcane.

"The farming systems and agribusinesses of the inland Burnett and southern coastal cropping regions of Queensland are becoming increasingly interlinked as grain legume crops become more firmly entrenched in coastal sugarcane areas," Mike said.

"Grain legumes such as soybeans and peanuts are key components of dryland cropping systems and valued for their ability to fix soil nitrogen and as a break crop for disease control."

Mike says soybeans and peanuts, and possibly maize and winter cereals like barley or wheat, have a real and demonstrated role in sugarcane rotations in coastal regions.

"Assisting growers to integrate those crops into viable and sustainable cropping systems will be critical to the region's viability," he said.

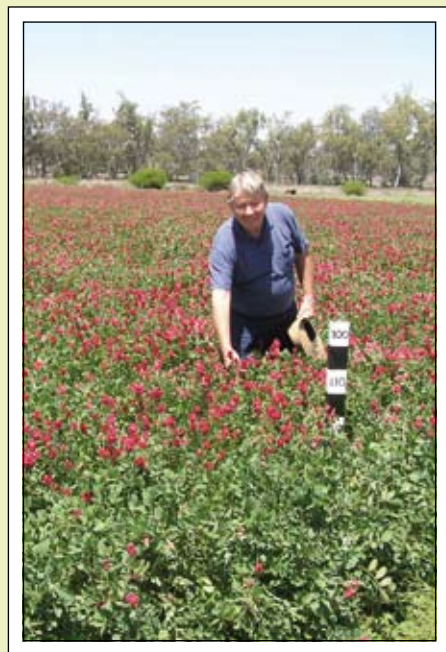
Canegrowers have been proactively working with research and extension specialists from BSES Limited to manage traditional fertiliser use and nutrient runoff.

GRDC and SRDC support for this project will ensure benefits from grain legume rotations are maximised and that subsequent management operations in the sugarcane phase of the rotation contribute to the environmental health of Australia's natural resources.

"The traditional dryland cropping areas of the inland Burnett are attempting to adapt to drier and more variable climatic conditions by focussing on soil health and water use efficiency," he said.

"Increasingly diversifying farm businesses are including mixed cropping and grazing systems and this new project will support growers involved in making these changes."

Peter Reading is the Managing Director of the Grains Research and Development Corporation, phone (02) 6166 4500.



David Lloyd in a crop of Sulla.