

Revamped NVT features extensive disease screening

The revamped National Variety Trials (NVT) will feature additional state-based disease resistance ratings in response to stakeholder feedback and a major review of trial operations.

The Grains Research and Development Corporation (GRDC) funds the NVT program across Australia. It involves more than 580 trials sown at over 250 locations each year.

NVT is managed by the Australian Crop Accreditation System Limited (ACAS) under a service agreement with GRDC and crops tested include wheat, barley, triticale, oats, canola, lupins, lentils, field peas, faba beans and chickpeas.

Dr Juan Juttner, GRDC project manager pre-breeding says GRDC has contracted pathologists to provide disease resistance ratings for lines entered into the NVT program since its inception in 2005.

"In 2008, GRDC expanded the network of regional pathologists contracted to provide rust resistance ratings in recognition of the regional differences in rust ratings associated with different production environments," Juan said.

"Following the NVT review, and in re-

sponse to review recommendations and stakeholder feedback, GRDC has further expanded the network of regional pathologists to encompass each state of mainland Australia and to address a greater range of diseases.

"Given the importance of disease ratings to growers making variety selections, GRDC will continue to contract regional pathologists to screen NVT wheat and barley entries for resistance and/or tolerance to a range of diseases."

Disease screening provisions are likely to go further than the review recommendations and additional diseases to be assessed in the northern region include crown rot, common root rot, yellow leaf spot and root lesion nematodes.

The review, planned at the establishment of the National Variety Trials (NVT) in 2005, incorporated more than 360 group and individual submissions.

James Clark, GRDC northern panel chair says a timeline for implementation of review recommendations is available from the GRDC website at www.grdc.com.au/director/events/onfarmtrials/nvtreview.

James says one of the key findings arising from the NVT Review is the need for a more formalised advisory and consultative mechanism for stakeholder involvement in NVT operations.

"The NVT review team recommended the establishment of an NVT advisory committee that should meet at least annually, be chaired by a GRDC representative, and include the NVT Manager, representatives from the breeders, growers, agronomists, plant pathology, statisticians, and service

providers, and include an extension expert," James says.

"GRDC will establish the NVT advisory committee system during 2009. But rather than a single committee attempting to meet the needs of all crop types, separate committees will be established for wheat, barley (and coarse grains), canola, and pulses.

"The GRDC will be looking to appoint one representative from each GRDC region on each of these four committees."

Quality of service

The NVT review also identified considerable variation in the quality of service delivered by service providers.

"To address variability in trial quality, GRDC will implement a formal auditing process for all NVT trials and amend future service provision contracts to strengthen performance-related payments schedules, termination clauses and penalties linked to the independent trial audits," James says.

The first stage of the selection process will be the identification of possible service providers in all NVT regions through an open, multi-stage tender.

The assessment of tenders will be by a panel of industry experts, including grower representatives from each GRDC cropping region.

Successful service providers will commence operation at the start of the 2010 season.

For more information on the timeline for implementing review recommendations, visit www.grdc.com.au/director/events/onfarmtrials/nvtreview



FIGURE 1: GRDC will call for nominations for the new NVT advisory committees in July 2009 - all grains regions will be represented

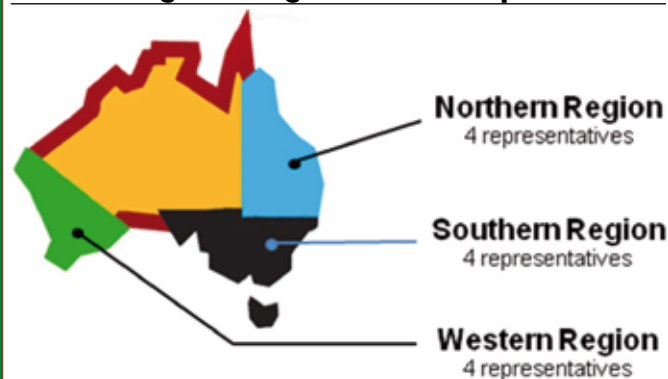


FIGURE 2: GRDC has announced its timeline for selecting suitable NVT service providers

