

2010 GRDC NUFFIELD SCHOLARS ABOUT TO TAKE ON THE WORLD

In October last year, 18 Australians were awarded scholarships in the nation's leading research program for primary producers – the Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship.

The 2010 scholarship winners join an elite group of about 1400 scholars worldwide. The scholarships are valued at \$27,000 each and are supported by leading Australian primary producer and agribusiness organisations.

For 2010, the GRDC is a proud supporter of six Nuffield scholarships.

Nuffield Australia chairman Mr David Brownhill says the number of scholarships awarded has tripled during the past decade, as a wider range of industries within the primary industry sector increase their investment in innovation, leadership, and networking capacity.

"Nuffield is focused on developing the practical, managerial and commercial capabilities of each scholar to enable them to be better producers and to make a significant contribution to the future of Australian agriculture," David said.

"The scholarships give primary producers the opportunity to travel internationally and explore agricultural issues and opportunities in a global context. A Nuffield scholarship can open doors, and provide opportunities for life-long learning and self-improvement.

"The scholarships are awarded to men and women who are judged to have the greatest potential to create value for themselves, their industries and their communities, and are awarded on the strength of each applicant's vision, ability and determination to pursue their farming goals."

Life changing experience

Nuffield Australia CEO Mr Jim Geltch said many Nuffield Scholars had gone on to become active leaders in agriculture and the community. "For many, the scholarship experience has changed their lives by opening their eyes to the wider world and giving them the confidence to pursue their goals," Jim said.

The 2010 Australian Nuffield Scholars will leave Australia in February, June or September 2010 for a compulsory Global Focus Program. This will involve travel to China, North America, South America, Middle East, India and Europe investigating agricultural marketing and trade issues, environmental issues and experiencing the different social and cultural aspects of each region.

They will meet with scholars from other countries including the UK, New Zealand, Ireland, Canada and France to exchange ideas and experiences, and join a network of people who are at the cutting edge of primary industry.

Following the initial six-week program the scholars will go their individual ways to pursue specific study programs in the country or countries of their choice.

For more information contact Nuffield CEO Jim Geltch . Ph: 03 5480 0755 Mobile: 0412 696 076 Email: jimgeltch@nuffield.com.au

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Stephen Ball

South Australian grain grower Stephen Ball will use his scholarship to investigate zero-till disc seeding systems in high rainfall growing zones and its impact on soil biology and nutrient cycling.



Stephen and wife Nikki Hannaford farm 600 hectares in the Gilbert Valley, at Riverton in South Australia's lower-north region. They produce cereals, legumes and oilseeds using no-till methods and have recently destocked the property of sheep entirely to advance to zero-tillage and improve soil health. They also have a 2300 head commercial rabbit enterprise.

"We should be able to produce a lot more grain than we do with our current rainfall," Stephen says. "We average 500 mm rain a year in our region, and I believe there is potential for greater yields than the 5.5 tonnes per hectare we have been able to achieve. There is a lot of unused, or under-utilised rain that is either being lost from the system, or converted to vegetative growth rather than grain.

"I am particularly interested in the techniques and equipment being used to conserve moisture in Brazil and Paraguay, where they have been using no-till and zero-till strategies since the 1970s and have been able to refine the equipment to handle greater levels of stubble."

Stephen plans to visit Chile, Paraguay and Brazil in South America as well as Canada, the United Kingdom, Spain and France.

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With the assistance of the GRDC, investigates recent advances in international grains R&D.

Robert Egerton-Warburton

Western Australian grain grower and livestock producer Robert Egerton-Warburton will use his scholarship to research integrated stock-cropping systems.



He manages a 3000 hectare mixed sheep and cropping business in southwest Western Australia, near Kojonup, with merinos for wool production and store Merino-Samm first-cross ewes for prime lamb production.

He crops canola, barley and wheat using no-till techniques. Additional farm enterprises include distribution of wildflower seed, supply and distribution of electro-dip equipment and the supply of wheat seed.

Robert plans to investigate grazing and long season wheat varieties that may be better suited to southwest Western Australia, and which can be profitably integrated into livestock systems.

"For the past four years I have been growing winter wheats for grazing and shelter for lambing," Robert says.

"Last year we achieved 129 per cent lambing in winter wheat compared to 98 per cent on pasture, and lambs fattened on wheat achieved more than 300 grams growth a day.

"I plan to look for similar or alternative livestock interactions in mixed farming systems to see if this can be improved even further. Higher lamb survival, greater feed availability and alternative feeds during late breaks and cold winters all help increase income and flexibility within the farming system," he says.

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Alastair Starritt

Riverina grain grower Alastair Starritt will use his scholarship to investigate the role of soil carbon in maintaining soil fertility and generating additional carbon-related income.

He is a partner in his family's mixed livestock and cropping business, at Wamboota, in the southern Riverina near the NSW-Victorian border. They run a 2500-head Merino flock and 2500 first-cross ewes for prime lamb production across 4000 hectares. Cropping is focused on winter cereals, canola and lucerne hay.

Production is based on biological farming systems to maintain and improve soil health.

"There is currently a lot of confusion about the benefits of soil carbon, and I think its role in emissions trading schemes will essentially come down to our ability to measure stored carbon in the soil," Alastair says.

"Some literature suggests that if farmers – who make up the largest group of land managers in the world – can increase their soil carbon by just a small amount we can make a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions and carbon storage. If all it takes to do that are a few adjustments in our farming practices then it's something we should pursue," he says.

"But I think farmers also need to be encouraged and rewarded for good soil management."



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OTHER GRDC-SUPPORTED 2010 NUFFIELD SCHOLARS

David Gooden, Lockhart, NSW

David will study responsible herbicide applications to maximise uptake and minimise chemical losses.

Ph: 0269 207 438
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Rowan Paulet, Flynns Creek, Victoria

Rowan will study the integration and management of cropping and livestock enterprises in high rainfall areas.

Ph: 03 5197 7290
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Alan Redfern, Wee Waa, NSW

Alan will study groundcover management to preserve water for crop use, to improve the flexibility of farming systems to respond to seasonal conditions and market opportunities.

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Travel reports from these 2010 GRDC-Nuffield Scholars will appear in a future issue of Australian Grain.