



## **LIEBE GROUP MEDIA RELEASE – FRIDAY 29 SEPTEMBER 2017**

### **Liebe Growers expand knowledge and skills in Esperance port zone**

Farm business efficiency, crop diversity and learning from fellow farming peers were the key take home messages of the Liebe Group GRDC funded Grower and Advisor development tour to the Esperance region last week.

Ten Liebe grower participants and two Liebe staff members travelled to the Esperance region to gain knowledge and experience on farm business management, diversification, technology and collaboration for the management of constraints to the local farming system.

Alana Hartley, Liebe Group Research Agronomist and Coordinator said that “tours such as those funded through the Grower and Advisor development program provide a valuable pathway for growers to learn from one another in a different region.”

“While our farming systems might be vastly different, a lot can still be learnt and growers are able to consider the improvements they can make within their own farming business.”

“Tours also build strong, lasting networks across WA that will be valuable into the future to both the participants and the Liebe Group,” said Alana.

Poor seasonal conditions in the Northern Agricultural Region opened up an opportunity for growers within the Liebe region to focus on professional development by attending tours, field walks and workshops.

Liebe members expressed strong interest in touring to other regions as a way of escaping the current on-farm conditions in the Liebe region and preparing themselves strategically, through the collaborative learning experience, for the coming years.

A visit to Wittenoorn Hills grower Chris Reichstein, showed the group a SEPWA canola variety trial and spoke to the group about the benefit of on farm demonstrations and trial work for the purpose of innovation, and continual farm business improvement. Chris is also a firm believer in collaborative learning and discussed the outcomes of his Nuffield studies and the benefits of the shared learning experience.

Chris Kirby, Liebe member from Beacon said that “it was a fantastic opportunity to interact with other innovative growers, both the ones we visited and those from our own region. It has given us a chance to look at our own enterprise with fresh eyes after seeing what others are doing.”

Liebe members were also impressed with the scale, diversification and management of the farming enterprises in the Esperance region.

Steve Sawyer, local Dalwallinu grower and Liebe Research and Development committee member, said “it was incredible to see the thought process and the effort that has gone into the farm set ups, to establish efficient farming operations. There is simplicity in what is a very complex system.”

Other highlights and key learnings from the tour included innovation in machinery and technology, when visiting local Neridup grower Mic Fels and Scaddan grower Mark Wandel.

The Liebe members were also captivated with the region's approach to the handling and management of grain in an export dominated market, with innovation in grain storage, marketing and establishment of a domestic market.

Neil Wandel, farmer and owner of Esperance Quality Grains, reiterated the importance of working together as a region to find solutions to improve farmer capacity, to produce the volume of grains that complement their farming system, whilst ensuring supply and quality to the local and export markets.

Other tour highlights included a visit to Lucky Bay Brewing, where growers learnt the value of using locally produced grains to produce a locally brewed beer product, and a visit to local tourist attraction, Esperance Stonehenge.

Key learnings from the tour were in keeping with the participant's desire to improve the way they farm by learning from other farmers and regions, to build more resilient farming systems.

The Liebe Group is a dynamic, grower-driven, not for profit organisation servicing over 100 farming businesses within the Dalwallinu, Coorow, Perenjori and Wongan-Ballidu Shires, encompassing a land area of over 1,000,000ha.

### **Media Contact**

Alana Hartley, Liebe Group Research Agronomist, T: 08 9661 0570, E: [research@liebegrup.org.au](mailto:research@liebegrup.org.au)

### **Photo Captions**

Photo 1: IMG 1209 – Liebe growers enjoying Mark Wandel's faba beans, sown on 750mm spacings

Photo 2: IMG 1234 – Mic Fels showing Liebe member Alex Keamy, the difference in crop biomass between tine sown and Alpha Disc sown Scepter wheat