



## 12/07 Tip Sheet for Regional Research and Extension

**Nigel McGuckian and Dr Lauren Rickards– RMCG, Bendigo**

### **Introduction**

The Grain and Graze social research project has developed a number of reports and discussion papers to communicate the findings from the research. This “Tip Sheet” aims to present, in a simple format, some helpful hints to assist people working in grain and graze regions to communicate their messages and carry out their research and extension.

### **Story Telling**

- take every possible opportunity to engage people in conversation and story telling (eg. discussion groups, discussions at field days)
- engage with people who have a trusting relationship with farmers such as advisors and use these people to engage farmers in “story telling”
- include facilitated discussions in as many activities as you can. Encourage openness and honesty in discussions.
- Tell the story around your research. For example, through a farmer case study.

### **Easy Living**

- Tailor your messages around “make life easier” eg. labour saving. Consider whether the technology you are working with will reduce labour or increase it.
- Technologies need to make people feel safer/less vulnerable and increase robustness and stability. Stress where your technology can do this.

### **Simple Sums**

- Keep the sums simple and ensure they are easily understood – Farmers will use this analysis in their complex decisions.
- if you can make money by saving money it is more likely to be adopted than having to spend money to make money.

### **Communication**

- A fact sheet (such as this one) isn’t always the answer. A large amount of material is produced which is not read.
- If you don’t have a clear prescription from unclear scientific results, discuss the results and problems with the farmers.

- You don't have to have it all worked out before you talk to farmers. Be open to discussing the options and possibilities with the farmers.

#### **Giving advice**

- Farmers are good at complex decision making – you are not there to tell them what to do. You may provide a useful part of the decision making.
- Don't over-emphasise the importance of your message for farmers – be humble.
- Be clear about what goals motivate your research and understand what farmers' goals are.

#### **Evaluation**

- Many outcomes are social – make sure you record them. Social outcomes may be easier to measure than scientific or financial outcomes.

#### **Using Advisors**

- Public and private sector advisors have an important role in farmer decision making. Private sector advisors are interested in being involved.