

# RIRDC - Rice Research and Development Committee Report for IREC Annual Report 2007

As this is my first annual report to IREC, I would like to sincerely thank Daryl Gibbs for his leadership of the rice R & D committee over the last 5 years.

2007 is proving to be another difficult year for the rice industry at all levels. The R & D committee has been proactive in dealing with a shrinking income, at the same time we have actively chosen to focus on the core business of our programme, maintaining our varietal improvement programme and maintaining human capital. No new projects have been funded this year and most projects have seen cuts to their budgets. I would like to thank all of our researchers for their cooperation, under very difficult circumstances.

Over the last couple of months, we have made several trips to Canberra to lobby on behalf of the R & D programme. We currently have a submission before the Australian Government, as part of their recent announcement of \$10m to support rural R & D programmes. The RGA in conjunction with RIRDC led the effort to access funds to support the rice research programme and we are grateful to the Government for agreeing to provide assistance.

2006/7 saw projects completed on:

- Improvement in rice breeding - a biotechnology approach
- New markers for Australian rice improvement
- NIR to enhance precision crop management
- Rotational weed control practices for rice
- Permanent beds for sustainable cropping systems on rice farms
- Water fowl movements in agricultural and natural wetland landscapes
- Quality rice production for South Eastern Australia
- Capacity building for a productive and sustainable rice farming system

2007 also saw:

- Helen Dalton undertake her Nuffield Scholarship-Studying the economic and ecological importance of native vegetation and biodiversity in farming systems, in particular rice growing areas.
- The rice R & D programme represented at the 4<sup>th</sup> International Temperate Rice Conference in Italy, in June, which included a pre-conference tour of the rice industry in Spain and France.

Another highlight was Geoff Beecher's presentation to the Chair of RIRDC, Mary Boydel, of his publication, *Permanent Beds for Sustainable Cropping Systems on Rice Farms*, at the RGA annual conference.

**Ian Mason,**  
**Chairman, RIRDC-Rice R&D Committee**

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