



Media Release

Tuesday, 15th December, 2009

GREEN MANURE TRIAL PRODUCES MORE POTATOES, HIGHER PRICES AND HEALTHIER SOILS

A trial of green manure on a potato crop near Deloraine has achieved some pleasing initial results.

The Serve-Ag trial on Gavin Clark's property was funded by NRM North.

Following a summer wheat crop, trial plots of one hectare each were drilled into wheat stubble. Green manures were mulched and ploughed in and followed with Russet Burbank potato crop.

Annual ryegrass manure returned 12 tonnes dry organic matter per hectare to the soil and BQ Mulch (mustard) returned five tonnes.

At harvest, plots with rye and BQ Mulch yielded an extra 4.3 tonnes per hectare compared with wheat stubble re-growth control.

The green manure plots also had an additional five per cent of tubers (potato stems with buds) in the bonus weight range, resulting in a higher price per tonne.

The nutrient savings were \$330 per hectare and the potato yield bonus from the green manures was \$1680 per hectare.

Therefore, including the cost of establishing and mulching the green manure, the rye or BQ mulch green manure gave financial benefit of \$1820 per hectare.

In addition to the financial benefit, the green manures also build soil carbon, increase soil biology, help suppress potato parasites and diseases and reduce nutrient leaching into groundwater and streams.

Following the pleasing results, Mr Clark expanded the use of BQ Mulch, using it on an eight hectare paddock in winter this year which has been mulched in and recently sown to potatoes.

"I'm still learning about it, but trying it on a bigger scale. Now I'll wait and see what results." Mr Clark said.

"If we can use fewer chemicals and improve the ground, it would be worth it."

NRM North's Sustainable Agriculture Coordinator, Adrian James, said the trial showed that putting carbon back into the soil and building up soil biology can give quick financial returns.

"NRM North will continue working with Serve-Ag to monitor and communicate the results of this expanded trial and others throughout the region." Mr James said.



Mr Clark's property also hosts an evapotranspiration weather station partly funded by NRM North which can provide up-to-date, detailed crop and weather information for the Deloraine area, available on the internet.

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