

# Regenerative Ag

## A Farmer's Story



National  
Landcare  
Program



*Fraser Lourie is a member of the Raywood Regenerative Farming group. The family property is located west of Raywood.*

Fraser works on the family farm with his parents Geoff and Marcia and has been actively involved on the farm since 2012 after a career in accountancy. The 1,700ha property is predominately dryland, with 150ha that can be irrigated using two transportable centre pivot irrigators. The property is mixed cropping and sheep, running 2,300 self-replacing merino ewes, lambing twice a year in autumn and spring. Dryland pastures are lucerne based. Paddocks are kept in pasture for several years and are brought into cropping when lucerne plant density is depleted. Cropping is currently undertaken on a four-year rotation of canola, wheat, barley then back to canola, which is generally under sown with lucerne and clover. Although with experiencing cereal root disease in recent years this rotation may change.

"The soils on the property are generally healthy, but we are always looking for ways to improve them especially in relation to phosphorus and nitrogen levels. The regenerative agriculture project has provided some opportunities to explore cover crops, which may assist as a break crop between our wheat and barley crops," Fraser said.

"The multi-species cover crop trial we planted with the project, consisted of 13 different species including cereals, legumes, safflower, canola, and tillage radish. The trial paddock has had some issues with water logging and compaction in the past, the trial will allow us to monitor for any paddock improvements going into the cropping phase. The plant growth of the cover crop had been enormous."

Even though the trial experienced a heavy infestation of red legged earth mite (RLEM) Fraser said they still had very good germination and excellent plant growth that provided exceptional sheep feed and hopefully improved soil health (soil tests are in progress).

"We did not spray any insecticide and the RLEM had no impact on any plant species in the cover crop. In the

future we hope to include the multi-species cover crops on our property to serve a dual purpose – incorporate into cropping rotation program to combat root disease and improve nitrogen levels and provide additional sheep feed over winter months," Fraser said.

"We are always looking at other plant options that will complement our farming system and lucerne pastures. This could include other cropping or pasture legumes, tillage radish and forage brassica that have a strong taproot that can assist with penetrating the compaction layer and increasing nitrogen levels.

"We are also interested in the incorporation of animal manures into our farming system to improve soil health. We have spread plenty of chicken manure in recent years but have not closely monitored for any benefits. This is an area of our farming system that we need to better understand and possibly expand."

Involvement in the regenerative agriculture project has allowed Fraser to visit other properties, observe and discuss different farming practices and experiences, and be encouraged to experiment with trials on their farm.



Fraser Lourie talking about his multi-species cover crop

