



Australia's Growing Edge



Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award - Wimmera

Matthew and Alan Staples

Alan and Matthew Staples run a 2400-hectare minimal tillage cropping enterprise on sandy loam country at Rainbow in the Wimmera/Mallee. They see themselves not as traditional farmers but as 'conservation farmers' although tradition has played a part in the operation as Alan's father, George was one of the earliest users of direct drilling in the area.

The current farming operation is based on causing the least possible disturbance to the soil. By leaving the soil in a more natural state they reduce compaction which allows the microbial activity in the soil to work more effectively. It also disturbs fewer weed seeds which cuts down on the need for chemicals.

Alan and Matthew believe they need to have a system of farming that is both sustainable and under sound management in regards to salt areas and erosion from wind and water runoff. As a farming enterprise that supports two families with minimal off farm income profitability is crucial.

Part of the property, which is near the edge of Lake Hindmarsh, contains large fragile sand dunes. The Staples have fenced out these areas and sown a mixture of native grasses and perennials to protect the dunes and prevent erosion.

The Staples are board members of the Wimmera Conservation Farming Association and are also involved in the Birchip Cropping Group. They are always keen to find out more about best practice in farming and to share their own knowledge and experience with others. The property has been used for numerous field days and as a trial site.

The family has also been heavily involved with the Werrap Rabbit Action Group. The group's rabbit ripper lives at the Staples property where they maintain it and lend it out.



Pictured L-R: Andrew Jenkin, Plant Manager Hi Fert, Matthew and Alan Staples, winners of the Hi Fert Sustainable Farming Award – Wimmera, John Thwaites, Minister for Environment and John Landy, Governor of Victoria.