Variable Rate Technology

Points to Consider in the Workshop in Data Collection, Interpretation and Translation to Practices

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- Potential returns to VRT range from <$5 to > $40 /ha. An increase in profitability of $10 /ha will invariably pay for the costs of applying VRT .

- Zone areas need to be seasonally consistent 70 % of the time for VRT to be effective and profitable.

- Defining zones can be done using yield, near infra-red (NDVI), soil, electromagnetic induction (EM), elevation and ‘ mud’ maps.

- Often a combination of techniques is used to ‘fine tune’ zones. Different maps may also be used to apply differing products. Where as yield and NDVI maps are often used to zone paddocks for nutrients, EM can be used to zone paddocks for gypsum applications where subsoil sodicity/boron are affecting crop yields.

- There is currently no one universal zoning technique.

- Zoning is best applied where farmers are confident that their ‘higher’ yielding areas are performing near their water limited potential and that the marginal return from investing in VRT is higher than rectifying the limitations in ‘poorer’ yielding areas.

- Technical support and compatibility between products has hindered VRT adoption. However, with increased demand this should be a short term issue.