

Checking in with grower Randall Wilksch, Growth Awards Sustainability Winner

Broadacre
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SA Grower, Randall Wilksch, won a Growth Award in 2016.

Each month in Cereals News, we will be showcasing the outstanding work that our Growth Awards Winners are achieving out in the field. This month we talk to 2016 winner in the Sustainability category, Randall Wilksch, owner of Wilksch Agriculture in South Australia.

Randall Wilksch is a man who tells it like it is. He farms with his parents Max & Julie, partner Julie and brother Jordy. He has a passion for information and for nature that drives him to operate the family farm in the most sustainable way possible. Randall doesn't see their crops as commodities; instead he sees it as food for people, and in his eyes sustainability is partially about looking after the consumers and partially about ensuring the longevity of the Australian agricultural industry.

Sustainability really means doing things smarter, which in Randall's case, means using technology to gather as much data as possible. Generally speaking, Randall implements new and innovative technology and methods on his farm to achieve a balance of sustainability and profitability. He runs weather stations and numerous moisture probes to collect environmental data and receives that information directly to his phone. He utilizes biological technology as part of his long-term integrated resistance management strategy, and is undertaking trials to assess the validity of biosolids, together with strategic deep ripping to enhance sub-soils.

Randall sees his farm as an ecosystem, with every element perfectly in sync to support one another –

and he has become so familiar and in tune with his surroundings that he can use the environment to assess his on-farm sustainability. For example, there are a number of dams that still exist across the Wilksch farm from their livestock days. Instead of removing all these dams and improving the pasture for cropping, Randall uses the dams as a water supply for bees. Yabbies, reeds, and a whole host of aquatic life also live in the dams, and can also serve as an indicator to Randall of the health of his overall environment, as they are very sensitive to chemicals.

Video of 2016 Growth Awards Winner - Randall Wilksch

Randall, how do you think your work helps to overcome the challenges of modern farming?

I'm very active on social media and interested in connecting the consumer world with the agricultural world. I use social media to communicate with audiences outside of the grower/adviser and agricultural industry, and I hope to inform and educate on why the agricultural industry operates as it does. I hope to communicate the necessity for crop protection products and explain to consumers why they're necessary. What I am really trying to achieve is open channels of communication to get everyone on the same page.

How has your drive to operate more sustainably influenced your practices?

My drive to preserve the land has led me to totally rethink my entire operation, from moving to smaller machinery in order to preserve the soil, to implementing technology that can deliver data straight to my phone in real-time. I make sure to follow best-practice and strive to improve best practice where I can. I definitely look to the data I collect to direct my management practices so I can be confident that I'm making the best decision for the situation at hand.

What did winning a Growth Award and what did participating on the study tour mean to you?

I find international travel fascinating and I love meeting new people in their own environment, where I can learn from what they do. The Study Tour really provided a great opportunity to meet new people and learn about new technologies.

Randall joined the Growth Awards Study Tour of the UK and Europe in June this year.

Video of Randall Wilksch at Cereals 2017 in the UK

Learn more about the Growth Awards and read the profiles of other winners [here](#).