

YP farming directions for 2010

There were many take home messages from the recent Yorke Peninsula Alkaline Soils Group's grower update at Maitland, including the dismal feed barley price outlook.

It wasn't all bad news though, with Mike Wake's enthusiastic presentation about Free Eyre making the audience think out of the square. Free Eyre is the brainchild of a group of West Coast farmers who were concerned with the future of farming and lack of control over their commodities.

The group identified four main issues: marketing, storage and handling, lamb finishing and oil mallee (with associated carbon benefits). Since 2005, the group has made inroads into each of these areas and this year dealt with 630,000 tonnes of grain and set up a storage and handling site near Rudall.

and is an example of the value of local branding, now boasting its own logo and an office in Port Lincoln.

Agricultural economist, Rob Rees presented a global view of grain production, explaining global market drivers and their effect on grain and oilseed prices. Wheat opening stocks were up 43 million tonnes before the start of last harvest, a negative for prices, which are determined by supply and demand, US dollar movements, mineral oil price and various hedge funds' activities.

Giving a fascinating insight into the many factors that affect prices for growers, Rob suggested strategies including protecting canola prices if the record South American canola crops are realised and using swaps and forward futures.

Bill Long's presentation about gross margins

PowerPoint presentation showed different commodities in a vast range of scenarios, not all of them encouraging!

Hugh Wallwork from SARDI gave a cereal disease update on net form net blotch, barley leaf rust and stripe rust. These diseases have only existed in SA since 1993. Since then, Franklin, Barque, Keel, Skiff, Maritime and Fleet varieties have shown virulence. Hugh's advice on avoiding rust diseases is to avoid barley on barley stubble and use high rates of fungicides early in the season.

Other subjects covered included an overview of Viterra's services, seed dressings and inoculants, water use efficiency, ryegrass management, chaff carts and dump burning.

The day concluded with a barbecue dinner and entertainment by locally raised, and now world famous, comedi-



■ Free Eyre's Mike Wake delivers an enthusi-