

Update: September 2021

Location: Tamworth, New South Wales

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BASF's AgSolutions farm in Tamworth is the company's major agricultural research farm in Australia. Farm Manager Russell Ison and fellow Field Biologist Georgia Readett run a diverse range of trials all year round. They test and adapt new crop protection and production solutions – many supplied through the company's global pipeline – to verify the most effective use patterns under local conditions. They also go on testing products after registration, often in new combinations, to help growers get full value from them as they try to manage emerging challenges.

With lockdowns limiting opportunities for in-person visits to the farm this year, growers and agronomists can check out the company's virtual Innovation Site to see the many agronomic trials first-hand and get valuable insights into its progress. Just go to **crop-solutions.basf.com.au/innovationsites** or type 'BASF Tamworth' into your search engine.

This has been an exceptional year for assessing and comparing crop protection products because the same high rainfall that created the opportunity for bumper yields in this area has generated plenty of threats too.

"There's been high weed and disease pressure and pretty tough conditions," Russell Ison confirms. "We've seen waterlogging that caused crop damage and some of the industry standards for pre-emergent weed control to fail."

Voraxor® and Luximax® herbicides were included in the broadacre pre-emergent trials and have done well despite the relatively high degree of difficulty.

"We're very pleased with both products," Russell says. "Both their weed control and crop safety are looking really good – as they have every year, so we expected it, but it's great to see them consistently achieving those results."

Sixteen weeks after sowing the weed numbers in the treated plots were still quite low and by that stage the plots were past reliance on the pre-emergents and into the 'crop competition phase' of weed control.

The farm has been consciously developed so that the crops are exposed to as many of the major threats farmers have to deal with as possible.

"The weed control data we produce is always relevant," Russell explains, "because we have all ten 'driver' weeds in Australian agriculture here except wild radish (which isn't suited to these conditions), and that includes annual ryegrass with multiple resistance. And if you want to see meaningful numbers, this is the year."

Disease pressure has been high as well. “The fungicides trials have been very positive,” says Russell. “We’ve seen how well our fungicides perform against key diseases at the farm including spot form net blotch and scald in the barley, leaf rust and stripe rust in the wheat and sclerotinia in the canola. The untreated canola plot has been decimated, and there’s an obvious difference between it and the treated plot looking really good beside it.” That plot was treated with a new fungicide scheduled for registration later this year. Photos and results will be posted online, as they will for other trials, so it’s well worth re-visiting the site from time to time.

The company’s recently revamped website is a sign of things to come, as the company’s Technical Services Manager Phil Hoult explains. “We have some very ambitious plans to increase the digital tools we’ll be offering agronomists and growers to help them interpret what’s happening in the paddock. Our team here in Australia is constantly adapting the results of the company’s global research to benefit local farmers and we’re currently working towards launching some new smartphone technologies that can both identify crop impacts and potential threats and suggest strategies for managing them.”

For more information or to visit BASF’s Innovation Sites visit: <https://crop-solutions.basf.com.au/innovation-sites>