



Key Messages

- Plant serradella into clean paddocks to reduce weed burdens in crop
- Choose small paddocks for bulking up serradella
- Improve the harvesting of pods, remove any rocks and sticks

Project Snapshot

Land Manager's:	Anna and Colin Butcher
Property Size:	2730 hectares
Location:	Brookton
Annual Rainfall:	325mm
Enterprise mix:	65% Crop, 35% Stock
Soil types:	Duplex, sand, loams

Their story

Anna and Colin Butcher of Mail Rock Farm in Brookton got involved in Wheatbelt NRM's project after receiving the SEAVROC newsletter which they subscribe too. They saw the funding as an opportunity to establish a 25ha seed nursery paddock of Margurita pink serradella that could be harvested to enable economically viable plantings of serradella across the farm. The Butchers view serradella as a better fit than lupins, which originally made up 25% of their cropping rotation. "We hope to make some major rotational changes within three years" Anna said. She added "By using a year in year out rotation across 50% of our cropping area we anticipate we won't have to reseed the annual legume pastures".

Anna explains the major drivers for these changes by saying, "We will be growing our own nitrogen and expect minimal need for nitrogen fertilisers. We expect to be spending less money on weed issues too". In a drying climate Anna also expects deep rooted legumes, such as serradella, to be more productive and economically viable than current cropping legumes such as lupins.

Managing the nursery paddock

Prior to seeding the serradella, the Butchers applied a knockdown spray. They then spread 200kg/ha of Super Potash 3:2 which was then followed by 8kg/ha of Margurita pink serradella and 10kg/ha of ALOSCA Group S inoculant. A post spray pre-emergent ('bare earth') insecticide was used for RLEM control. Anna also pointed out the importance of closely monitoring and spray for budworm if they are present.

Post seeding all rocks and sticks were picked to ensure a good clean paddock for harvest. A grass selective herbicide was used to control grasses and volunteer cereals in crop and later in the season a weed wiper was used to control broad leaf weeds. The serradella was then harvested for seed to be used on the farm to increase the area sown to serradella in the rotation. Anna recalled, "Harvesting height is very low, so harvesting is slow and can be a bit stressful".

Lessons Learnt

The major change from this project for the Butchers has been rotation. Long being unsatisfied with lupins they got to the stage of only having 6% in their rotation. Conversely, they couldn't be happier with their decision to introduce serradella into the system. Anna and Colin were amazed at how green the serradella stayed so late in the season (until the end of the year) and believe that the deep rooted serradella will provide late feed for weaned lambs. "In a higher rainfall year than 2012, we expect to graze the serradella in late autumn, winter and early spring" Anna said. In addition the Butcher's were also pleased at how well the sheep went on some of the serradella they cut for hay. "We will do this again, particularly on paddocks that can't be winter grazed", Anna mentioned.

If the Butchers were to do the project again they would definitely sow the serradella into canola stubble as it will give them a clean paddock and protection to the emerging seedlings. They have also considered sowing after hay. Anna stated, "We are going to try growing the serradella after a hay crop, but we will be making sure that we spray top the previous year".

They however wouldn't recommend sowing serradella into a pasture paddock unless it has been spray topped two years in a row as there is too much competition from weeds. "It is also very important to know the chemical history of a paddock; as some chemicals are residual and have a major impact on the serradella", Anna explained.

The Butcher's found they learnt a lot of invaluable information from attending field days and by talking with other farmers. They wish to acknowledge the valuable assistance given to them by Angelo Loi, Brad Nutt and Ron Yates from Department of Agriculture and Food, Western Australia. "They assisted with paddock selection, agronomy, monitoring and successfully managing the serradella crop", said Anna.

Looking forward

The Butchers plan on using their own scarified serradella seed to establish more nursery paddocks. "They will be sown after a break and post a knockdown to ensure that we have a clean paddocks for seed." said Anna. "We plan on grazing these paddocks with the potential of harvesting them depending on the season," mentioned Anna.

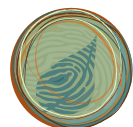
The Butchers are also going to grow some biserrula and seed it, after a knockdown. The biserrula will fit in other areas of the farm where they have heavier soil types, longer rotations and rocky hills.



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