From Planning to Performance, Improving an Agronomist’s Workflow.

Agworld saves me a lot of time, especially during the busiest parts of our season.”

Bruce Larcombe
Larcombe Agronomy, Dookie, Vic

Challenge
As agronomist for 22 broadacre growers that all grow winter crops in the same district, Bruce Larcombe experiences extreme peaks and troughs in his workload throughout the season.

Solution
Bruce manages his workflow with Agworld and uses crop templates that allow him to quickly and simply create plans for each paddock pre-season. These plans are then turned into recommendations as the season progresses, without taking much of Bruce’s time.

Result
By creating plans for all his clients, Bruce is able to provide them with accurate recommendations during the season. Using plans also prevents potential errors that could arise when having to make recommendations in a rush. Growers can now turn these recommendations into applications or records of what was actually done and, together with Bruce, create farm performance reports at the end of the season to help with reviewing the results.
Growing winter crops around Dookie

Larcombe Agronomy's Bruce Larcombe is an agronomist around Dookie in Victoria’s Goulburn Valley. Where other parts of the Goulburn Valley are irrigated and able to sustain horticulture or dairy farming operations, the Dookie area is mainly based around dryland winter cropping. Bruce explains: “Most farms around here have what is called “Dookie Red” soil, which is a type of clay loam, that originally used to sustain yellow box trees and white cypress pine or Murray pine trees. Land that has been cleared for cropping is usually flat or undulating and, with an average 22” annual rainfall, it makes for excellent winter cropping land. Average farm size is around 1200 hectares and crops such as, wheat, barley, canola, beans and chickpeas can all perform really well here, depending on the season obviously.”

With all main crops in the Dookie area having similar planting and harvesting dates, seasonal peaks in demand for farm inputs, labour and other services are commonplace for most growers and suppliers. Bruce: “The majority of my work as agronomist here takes place from planting time up until harvest time. Of course, there are still some jobs that need to be done out of season, such as soil sampling and checking fallow paddocks for example, but that is easily manageable; it is the growing season when I’m very busy.”

Planning on a large scale

To manage this peak workload and ensure that all crops are getting the best care possible, Bruce creates accurate cropping plans for all his clients. Bruce elaborates: “Before the start of the season, I sit down with each of my clients, we discuss the budget and decide what we would like to do that season. I use Agworld to plan for every paddock separately, from seeding rate to fungicides, insecticides and everything in between. Nitrogen planning is usually left until just before the season, when we know how much moisture we have and what our planned nitrogen usage is. Creating these plans helps the grower plan their workload and it allows them to give their input providers information that helps them plan their stock levels, while it also allows the financial service providers to accurately forecast the cash-flow demand. And, most important for me personally, having plans in Agworld allows me to work a lot faster during the season.”

Bruce continues: “As the crops emerge, I have a solid 16-week period where I have to check lots of paddocks every day and make a lot of recommendations.
for my clients. I am a consulting agronomist for over 450 paddocks between 22 clients, so you can imagine the workload! By having the plans ready in Agworld, I only have to convert the plans to recommendations, which does not take a lot of time; this really helps me work a lot faster when I need it most. I only create recommendations from scratch when something needs to be done outside of the plan or when we do a fallow knock-down for example. For agronomists like myself, who service a number of large-scale properties that all grow their crops the same time of year, using Agworld really makes a difference and allows you to give the best possible service to all clients at all times.”

From planning to performance report

Tony Luderman, Glenorim, Dookie, is one of Bruce’s clients and an avid Agworld user himself. Tony, together with brothers Steve and Chris, crop their 2200-hectare farm in a rotation of wheat, canola, beans and occasionally chickpeas. Not only does Tony receive Bruce’s plans and acts on them, he also turns them into application records that form an integral part of his farm record keeping process and farm performance analysis. Tony explains: “I am the main Agworld user here, although both my brothers enter records as well; mainly converting recommendations into actual jobs. The season starts for me when I sit down with Bruce and create a plan together with him. Then, as the season progresses, Bruce turns the plan into recommendations, and these then automatically appear in my account. I then act on these recommendations and turn them into actual records when the job is done. What I like about Agworld is the speed and flexibility it offers us; it is really easy to create an accurate pre-season plan and budget, but we can also make adjustments to the plan as the season progresses. This key for me, as no two seasons are the same really!”

Tony continues: “We tend to plan well ahead of the season so that our inputs supplier can make sure that he has all our products in stock. Then, a bit closer to the season, we decide how much nitrogen we want to put on, which depends on the moisture available and the general outlook. We then also test our seed for germination, which helps us decide on a seeding rate. As the season continues, I can pull up a snapshot in Agworld at any time and know exactly how much we’ve spent on each paddock.”

“At the end of the season we put our yield and average price into Agworld, so that we can create a performance report. This shows us, per paddock, how much money we’ve made and where we’ve spent our money. This farm performance report allows us to do some further financial reports that show us how much we should be spending in regard to tax planning etc. So instead of having to rely on guesses or be left scrambling at the last minute, we know exactly where we stand and what strategy can help us minimise our tax costs.”

Communication is key

For Bruce, Agworld brings the obvious advantages of offering elaborate planning options, but he insists it’s more than just saving time for him: “As an example: by having a solid plan, I am constantly reminded of which chemistry I
need to use in each paddock to avoid resistance issues. If I were to make recommendations on-the-fly for 450 paddocks, I can guarantee that there would be mishaps sometimes, but by using Agworld I can avoid this as I’ve got this all sorted during the pre-season planning. I can also see, live in the paddock, all information that Tony or other growers have entered - which has the potential to minimise mistakes and definitely saves me time. Whether it be an observation, photo of something specific or any other information that gets entered, having it right there when I’m inspecting a paddock helps me a lot.”

“Also, however good my recommendations might be, I have to make sure that my growers get them, on-time and legible, so that they know exactly what they need to do and get this done on-time. Using paper copies or phone-calls that you can’t trace back are really not an option in this day and age anymore. I feel that this is something that Agworld offers and that all agronomists need: a platform that allows you to collaborate with your clients on every level. It eliminates the opportunity for mistakes, every step of the way, and allows myself and my growers to make the most out of every season.”

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