Media Release
Chiefs of Staff, News Directors

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Australia’s best young agronomists announced

A private agricultural consultant from South Australia and a NSW Government agronomist have been named joint winners of the 2015 Young Agronomist Award.

Louise Flohr, who works as an Agricultural Consultant at Agrilink Agricultural Consultants Pty Ltd in South Australia, and Rohan Brill, who works as a Research & Development Agronomist at the NSW Department of Primary Industries, were presented the Australian Agronomy Society award at the 17th Australian Agronomy Conference in Hobart today.

Ms Flohr has responsibility for the implementation and management of Agrilink research in the Mallee region and also coordinates three Grass-Roots Agronomy for Women in Farm Business groups.

She was also involved in the Soil Water Project with the CSIRO and her ability to interpret soil-water information and deliver it to local farmers has been invaluable, and allowed for more accurate management of broad acre cropping.

The second award recipient, Mr Brill, leads, supervises and collaborates on multi-state GRDC co-funded research projects focusing on new canola agronomy, phenology and physiology; barley agronomy and frost mitigation research in wheat.

Mr Brill is communicating the outcomes of his work to a large audience of advisers, grain growers and researchers via GRDC Adviser and Grower Updates, field days, national and international conferences and recently via social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube.

Australian Society of Agronomy President, Professor Holger Meinke, said the award recognises excellence in research and/or the application of science related to agronomy by an agronomist aged under 36 years.

“The award is made on the basis of the young agronomist’s contribution to research, teaching and education, their publication record and relevance of other communications to both the scientific and non-scientific community,” he said.

“Both winners have delivered exceptional results in both applied research and also through the communication of research outcomes that can benefit farmers.
“Their passion is ensuring farmers have valued advice on the latest research developments and both have introduced innovative ideas for effective communication.”

The Australian Society of Agronomy also awarded two Fellowships recognising the important contributions to agronomy of Dr Neville Mendham (Tasmania) and William (Bill) Long (South Australia).

More than 350 agronomists and agricultural scientists are attending the four-day Hobart conference, which is organised by the Australian Society of Agronomy and hosted by the Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture (a joint venture between the University of Tasmania and Tasmanian Government).

Today’s keynote speakers are:

- Dr Steve Phillips (International Plant Nutrition Institute) - Achieving sustainable improvements in nutrient efficiency with precision agriculture.
- Dr Tina Acuna (University of Tasmania) and Dr Jim Pratley (Charles Sturt University) - Repositioning education in agriculture.

The conference will also host a panel discussion about the challenges of intensifying cool temperate agriculture, and the potential for agricultural systems research to address these challenges by considering opportunities in Tasmania and reflecting on experiences in New Zealand.

Other topics being presented at today’s conference sessions include:

- Assessing the impact of climate change on early cotton growth (Katie Broughton)
- Changed recommendations for the use of phalaris on acid soils (Richard C. Hayes)
- Farm Biosecurity Hot Spots prediction using very high resolution big data analytics (Ritaban Dutta)

For more information on the conference program visit www.agronomy2015.com.au

Media are invited to attend all sessions of the conference, which is being held at Wrest Point Casino on 21, 22 and 24 September and to attend the field trips on 23 September.

The 17th Australian Agronomy Conference Twitter hashtag is #agronomy2015

**Information released by:**
The Tasmanian Institute of Agriculture
Phone: 03 6226 6216 or 0418 524 297
Email: tia.comms@utas.edu.au

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2015 Young Agronomist Award winners’ profiles

Louise Flohr,
Agricultural Consultant
Agrilink Agricultural Consultants Pty Ltd
South Australia.

Ms Flohr is responsible for business and agronomic advice to farm businesses and has responsibility for assessing financial, agronomic and personal objectives of farm businesses, implementing strategic and operational plans for farm businesses and monitoring agronomic and business performance. She has expertise in extension and adoption and conducts workshops and speaking engagements for farmer groups and research and development agencies.

Ms Flohr has the responsibility for the implementation and management of Agrilink research in the Mallee region. She also assists the research conducted by Agrilink at Mid North trials sites. Most of Ms Flohr’s career as an agronomic consultant to date has been extending the research message to farmers, based on research from public and private sources.

Her employment with Agrilink in 2013 saw a move into role where she assisted the principal consultants with trial work at the Mid-North high rainfall zone site in South Australia. Now in 2015 she is managing her own trial looking at the nitrogen response curve in her local area, and the interaction that grazing has on heading date, maturity, harvest index and ultimately yield.

Ms Flohr’s ambition and drive to teach women in farm business about agronomic practices, led her to successfully gaining funding to run the Grass-Roots Agronomy for Women in Farm Business in 2014 from the GRDC. The program gained a lot of attention from the general public, as well as the media. Due to the success of the program, funding was again granted and she is running two groups, one in Eudunda in South Australia, and continuing with the original group in Lameroo, South Australia. The focus of the workshops is to provide women who are currently involved in farm business at an administration level with enough information to understand the why, when and how of agronomy, and provide a base level of information to participate in conversation with their farming partners/husbands.

Ms Flohr’s skills in communicating information to the scientific community and farmers are exceptional. She has been involved with a Soil Water Project with the CSIRO that has involved characterising local soil sites that can then be used by the wider community to manage soil water throughout the season by using the APSIM program Yield Prophet. This involved saturating soil through the profile, determining the ability of the soil to hold moisture, and then calculate the ability of the crop to extract moisture. As a result of Ms Flohr’s involvement with this project, the local NRM has installed soil moisture probes that can be incorporated into the model to more accurately measure soil moisture. This sort of technology is new in the district, and Louise’s ability to interpret this information, and deliver it to local farmers has been invaluable, and allowed for more accurate management of broad acre cropping.

Ms Flohr’s involvement with the Federally Funded Emission Reduction Fund program, through the Regional Connections Extension and Outreach project, has seen her present many times to farming groups about farming in a changing climate. This has involved attending workshops, and then packaging the largely scientific information to suit the target audience.
Rohan Brill  
Research & Development Agronomist  
NSW Department of Primary Industries  
New South Wales

Mr. Brill leads, supervises and collaborates on multi-state GRDC co-funded research projects focusing on new canola agronomy, phenology and physiology; barley agronomy and frost mitigation research in wheat.

In addition, Mr. Brill is communicating the outcomes of his work to a very large audience of advisers, grain growers and researchers via GRDC Adviser and Grower Updates, field days, national and international conferences and recently via social media platforms such as Twitter and YouTube.

Mr. Brill is principal researcher and is leading the on-ground implementation of the GRDC co-funded research project ‘Optimised Canola Profitability’ across NSW, SA and Victoria. Initial findings include:

- Identification of major phenological development differences between spring canola varieties when sown earlier than the traditional sowing time.
- Data that shows phenology has a major effect on biomass production and hence yield potential.
- Proving that hybrid types have improved emergence over open-pollinated (OP) types; however grading OP type seed > 2 mm diameter improves emergence, early vigour, weed competition and grain yield to be comparable to hybrid types.

Mr. Brill’s research on barley showed improved performance from early sowing and high grain yield relative to wheat, due largely to rapid development, avoiding spring heat and moisture stress, and also having a greater tolerance of frost (compared with wheat) during reproductive stages. He also developed and implemented the Eastern Australia component of the collaborative project with Department of Agriculture and Food WA (DAFWA) and Birchip Cropping Group (BCG) investigating effects of stubble and canopy management on frost effects in wheat, with initial findings being colder canopy temperatures in retained stubble systems. This project is part of the GRDC supported National Frost Initiative.

Other of Mr. Brill’s achievements in research, which have also been published in scientific journals, include:

- Improving legume inoculation methods for chickpea through research and development on inoculant formulations.
- Accelerating the uptake of new crop varieties through early stage evaluation of phenology and agronomy.
- Identification of high relative grain protein concentration in the wheat variety Spitfire.
- Improved flaxleaf fleabane management through development of in-crop herbicide options and enhanced crop competition
- Development of agronomy practices for hybrid canola production in northern NSW.

Mr. Brill has made a major contribution to education and training, utilising trial sites to educate university and high school students. He has also won two GRDC Industry Development Awards that enabled him to run field trips for farmers and advisers to look at various crop management strategies.