

# PRESS RELEASE

## Batlow trial reveals new soil surfactant strengths

After two years of relative drought conditions for a high rainfall area, Batlow apple grower and Joyson Manager Graham Coventry has had a chance to reflect on his water use efficiency. There's no doubt necessity breeds innovation and for Graham, water stress conditions were having an effect on tree health.

But there is good news and he believes he has made good headway trialling a new soil surfactant.

Recommended by E. E. Muir - Batlow, the soil surfactant promised to improve water infiltration and penetration in certain hydrophobic soils, as well as improve lateral water movement to more efficiently cover the plant's root zone.

Knowing he needed to do something to counter the conditions, Graham bought several containers of AquaGro Gold, a soil surfactant, as well as several containers of a wetting agent also recommended for soil application.

He explains his soil types vary from heavy clay to sands weathered off granite and that's where he was hoping to find the biggest benefit.

"The sand doesn't hold a lot of moisture or nutrients," he said.

"We have about 200 ha of apples on drippers, plus another 25 ha of stone fruit, plus 15 ha of unproductive trees coming on.

"What I did was buy several of each product and gave them to my managers and they put them on in four different orchards.

"We could see in the drought conditions that where we had put the AquaGro Gold, it stayed wetter longer. You could dig down and find it was wetter in a bigger area, which is what it is supposed to do.

"Under the drippers in the sandier soils you normally see a moist area about an inch in diameter.

"Where we used the AquaGro we saw that moist area at the surface was six to eight inches diameter. So you could see that it was physically holding the moisture up at the surface providing lateral movement and it tended to spread it better.

"We put both products through the fertigation system and it was pretty easy to do.

"One of the managers commented that the AquaGro seemed to clean the dripper lines. We have a range of river water, bore water and dam water and the bore water can tend to calcify the lines a little bit.

"I've found that it doesn't take a lot of calcium to make the drippers inefficient.

“It doesn’t seem much but blocked drippers do cost you money to drive down the line and check and replace drippers. It’s an essential and yet unnecessary cost and if a person can drive down and only find one blocked dripper instead of five, you would soon pay for that application.”

In terms of comparing the two products Graham said you basically get what you pay for.

He said, “We saw the result with AquaGro and went back and got more.

“The trees definitely got to the end of the season a lot better than they did the year before.”

His fist application went on in February.

ENDs

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