

The next revolution is underway – and wet

By PAUL JARVIS

THE revolution is well underway and the revolution is wet.

That was the message from CSBP at its briefing in Perth recently with CSBP market development manager Wayne Crofts explaining that a large percentage of the company's nitrogen sales are now sold as liquid.

"When you look at the uptake graph it runs virtually straight upwards from 1999-2001 but I think we have only just started to

scratch the surface in terms of the importance of liquids to WA broad-acre farming," he said.

The take-up of liquid fertiliser had been driven by larger operators in the eastern and northern Wheatbelt and that had led producers in more traditional mixed farming areas who were starting to now look at utilising liquid systems.

"A lot of the mixed farmers are starting to use higher nitrogen rates, so Flexi-N is a little bit more expensive for them than for the guys in the East who are

using lower rates over larger areas," he said.

"What we are finding is that guys are really starting to get into that spraying more than two times or three times a year routine."

He said a lot of the feedback coming back from farmers in those areas was that they were still sitting back and looking for the next evolution in liquids application in terms of banding, however for those using liquids application consistency was a major bonus.

"A lot of our growers

tell us that even application is one of the main reasons they have shifted to liquids. But having said that a few have also told us that they have gotten sick of running around fertilising fence-lines and rock heaps," he said.

"Liquids store well, can be handled and applied in wet weather - we have a lot of guys that will drop out the herbicide and pesticide if it is raining and just go spraying liquids."

CSBP agronomist Matt Evans said flexibility and the ability to mix

with herbicides, pesticides and fungicides was increasingly seen as a key to liquid's success.

"Probably the biggest driver is that it allows the partial mix with herbicides, and we are working with the chemical companies on that, as well as the ability to mix trace elements and fungicides," he said.

He said Flexi-N was also performing well as a risk management option because it could be stored if climatic conditions dictated.

"We are actually seeing some of the guys in

high rainfall zones metering N out through liquids to prevent leaching, and we are also seeing more of a move to prescription mixing of trace elements and fungicides," he said.

"That tends to be one of the biggest drivers we have seen particularly for the guys with liquid carts. Trace element mixes can be specifically mixed for different paddocks. They don't buy 200 tonnes of AgStar copper, zinc, moly, they buy trace elements they can mix in

with their liquids."

He said research was also proving liquid application of trace elements was showing better uptake and uniformity.

In terms of fungicide application, liquid-based systems enabled more specific use of particular fungicides to target specific fungal outbreaks.

He said most of the applications of clear liquids was made with pesticides and pre-emergents, particularly Flexi-N and Flexi-NK, however there had been a move to Flexi-NK on sandier soils.

"They have to be used at higher application rates but it allows growers to put down a maintenance dose of K pre-seeding and as we see potassium deficiency expanding through the Wheatbelt."



CSBP
agronomist
Matt Evans.