



ROCA AWARD OF MERIT 2006 – Brian Rex Wilson

Brian Wilson (RDA 1961) of Lismore in south-western Victoria was presented with the Roseworthy Old Collegians Association's 2006 Award of Merit.

ROCA president, Mark Seeliger, said Mr Wilson was among a small group of people who in the mid-1990s set out to grow grain on raised beds in high rainfall country.

"In 1997 there were about 300 ha of raised beds used for grain growing in southern Australia," Mr Seeliger said.

"Today there are about 100,000 ha spread across various States and the crop yields that are being achieved on these beds are quite spectacular by Australian dryland grain growing standards.

"This farming system enables profitable grain growing to occur on country previously considered far too wet.

"In receiving the Award of Merit Brian, who graduated from Roseworthy in 1961, joins a distinguished group of producers, researchers, scientists and other Roseworthy personnel who have been acknowledged by ROCA over the past 46 years for their outstanding contribution to the advancement of primary industry."

Mr Wilson said with his wife Sandra and children he moved from Coomandook in SA's upper South-East in 1984 to the much higher rainfall country at Lismore where livestock production was the dominant income earner.

"But when wool prices crashed in the early 1990s we had to diversify and I began experimenting with growing wheat on land where underground drains were installed, and then on raised beds," he said.

"The yields were very promising so I became involved with a small group of people near Geelong, ultimately to become the 900 member-strong Southern Farming Systems group, and we began a series of raised bed trials in 1996.

"The trials and associated field days, including those on my property, have continued and expanded.

"Today there are 530 ha of raised bed and deep drained crops on our farm and I am averaging about 5t/ha for wheat, 5.5 t/ha for barley and 3.5 t/ha for canola.

"If it wasn't for raised beds, cropping would be restricted to a very small area on our farm and many others in the high rainfall region of southern Australia."

