

SA GROWER

Maintaining good insects is pivotal

Better, healthier crops from IPM program

BY ALI KUCHEL

A BROAD-BASED approach bringing together biological, cultural and chemical controls to manage plant pests has proven financially beneficial for Kangaroo Island farmers.

In 2015, seed potato farmer Peter Cooper implemented the integrated pest management approach which is today being used by the majority of the island's growers.

The approach manages plant pests in a sustainable manner that minimises the unnecessary use of chemical interventions on crops.

Producing 1100 tonnes of seed potatoes a year, Mr Cooper said IPM had increased the quality of seed at his property Parnlee, 10 kilometers east of Parndana.

"Being a seed grower, it is important that our seed is clean of viruses, so we have



KI soils are disease-free.

got to be really careful with aphids and thrips because they will transfer viruses into our crops," he said.

"If they do get viruses, then we are not able to sell our potatoes as seed potatoes and they will be downgraded into the fresh market where they are worth a lot less to us."

Cropping soils on KI are free of soil diseases and Mr Cooper says they are yet to

test positive to Potato Virus Y.

Mr Cooper said promoting beneficial crop insects that prey on aphids and thrips added another precautionary layer to the potato operation.

Following a successful trial by several growers on KI, the farmers were able to control pests with only minimal use of selective insecticides and no application of broad spectrum products during the life of the crop.

"We've gone from spraying insecticides four times a year back to two," Mr Cooper said.

"But overall because we are not going over our fields those extra two times, we are seeing quite big savings per hectare."

He estimated a saving in excess of \$200/ha in machinery and chemical costs.

"In the past, we have used up to four broad spectrum insecticides and killed

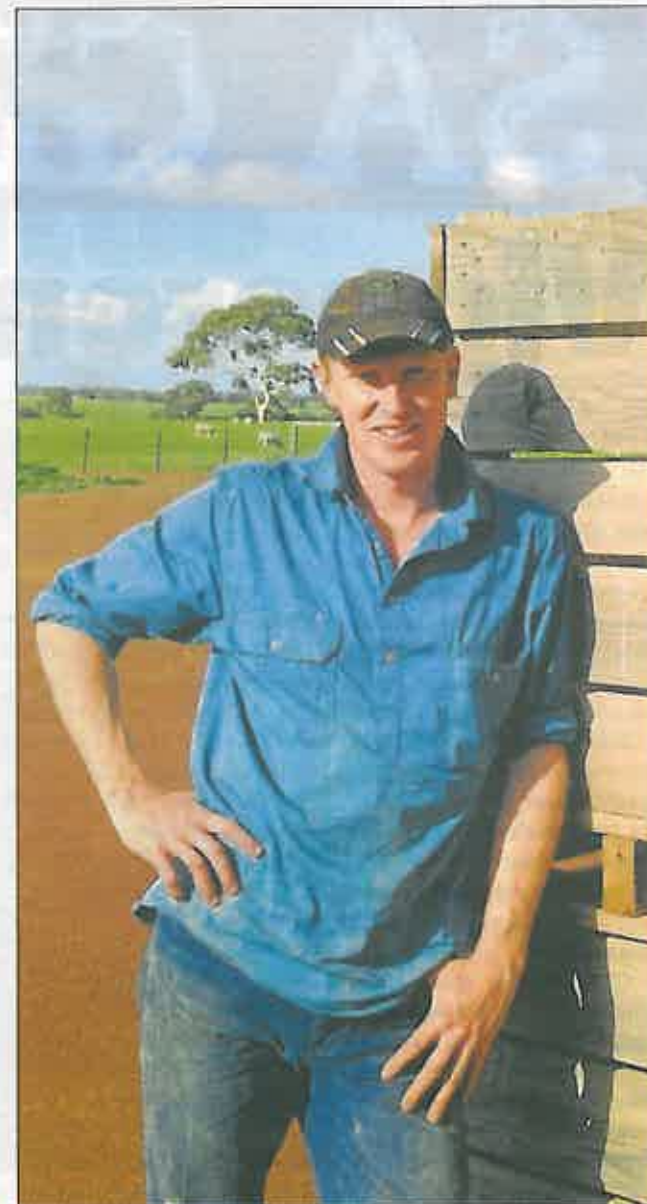
everything, then we are relying on the chemicals as our only means of controlling our pests," Mr Cooper said.

"The IPM program for us is about getting better value out of insecticides and improving our insect pest control."

The trial, which was first implemented in January 2015, was undertaken by IPM Technologies agronomists Paul Horne and Angelica Cameron.

Ausveg national manager – communications Shaun Lindhe said the basis of IPM was an understanding of the role of beneficial insects and the effects of different chemistry on both beneficials and the target plant pests.

"The experience of these growers on KI shows that IPM can get results even in an industry where tolerance of insect pests and associated insect-vectored diseases, is very low," Mr Lindhe said.



Kangaroo Island seed potato farmer Peter Cooper has adopted the IBM program to keep good pests and remove the bad.