



## Christmas 2017

As 2017 draws to a close, I want to take this opportunity to wish all members of NZGFA seasonal greetings and good fortune in 2018.

What a year 2017 has been! In my President's Column to you in the October Groundspread Magazine, I was complaining about not being able to get on with our work because of the rain! Sodden paddocks, spreaders getting bogged and sliding around hills, if you could even get going! In every Branch area with the exception of Southland, it wouldn't stop raining. In November it did stop raining and the industry has been doing its August, September and October work in November. In the eastern provinces of New Zealand, it hasn't rained through November so the season is shaping up to be a very dry one.

This has meant long hours, for most of us, not spreading any more fertiliser, but spreading it in a more concentrated time period. Apart from the long hours in the truck, the other downside is fertiliser 'outages' and waiting times. Shortages of DAP, single super and triple super have been reported to me. Also immature "green" super has been delivered to stores causing spreading quality issues because of spinner build-up. While not wishing to dash the spirit of goodwill to all, outages are a sign of inefficiencies in the wider fertiliser manufacturing and importing industry. Demand has not suddenly expanded, it was simply delayed through the spring because of wet weather. That the fertiliser was not available when needed by the farmer shareholders represents a disconnect between the manufacturers and importers and their customers and an added cost to the total industry. As a total industry we must do better.

The NZGFA Professional Development Courses held in Christchurch and Hamilton for members, were judged a success by those attending. Along with 12 others I went to the Hamilton workshop. The course covered business structures (governance, management, operations) and performance. Course presenter Geordie McCallum [who presented at the Napier Conference] analysed taxation accounts to determine business financial performance. Depending on the availability of funding, and member interest we should repeat this type of course next winter before Conference.

The development of Farmer Spreadmark is proceeding albeit slowly. It is clear that Farmer Spreadmark must include Spreadmark pattern testing of farmer spreaders, the same as commercial spreaders. Interestingly on the Synlait model farm, improved accuracy of fertiliser placement showed a production gain to the farmer of 44c kg milk solids. How long have we been saying that improved accuracy of fertiliser placement will deliver increased profitability to farmers?

Sarah joins me in wishing you and your families a blessed Christmas. Take some time to recreate and refresh with family and friends and greet the New Year with enthusiasm. May your 2018 be a year of achievement for your business and satisfaction for you.

Dean Brooks

President.