

Future Orchard 2012 – Donnybrook, Western Australia Orchard Walk 13 September 2006

at the property of
Martella Bros, Santa Rita Orchards of Kirup

30 persons (including presenters) attended the first Future Orchards 2012 orchard walk in Western Australia.

The orchard visited was 2nd leaf Cripps Pink on MM109 rootstocks with M26 inter-stems planted at 4.5 m x 1.8m approx

A general introduction was given by Tony Portman DAFWA (assistant facilitator) Alma Reynolds (Industry Services Manager APAL) outlined the objectives of the Future Orchards 2012 program and criteria for choosing Agfirst Consultants New Zealand, to assist with the program.

Steve Spark (Agfirst Consultant) explained the situation in New Zealand and how the process for intensification of production has taken place over the last 10 to 15 years.

The use of dwarf rootstocks/scion combinations and pruning methods adapted to New Zealand conditions was explained.

Steve outlined the economic advantages to intensification of existing varieties and stressed the important of adopting intensive system when planting new varieties to achieve maximum returns .

In the orchards Steve indicated that the trees were planted too far apart to obtain good economic returns in the early part of the orchard life.

- He explained pruning and tying down technique
- How to measure tree girths and tree row volumes and the important of these calculations to indicate optimal yields per tree and per hectare.
- How to estimate tree crop loads and therefore thinning strategies
- Indicated number of wires to support crop, pole distances and the configuration of wires and support poles

Growers participated and contributed well to the in-field discussions often breaking into small groups themselves to discuss particular aspect of the orchards.

From the evaluation sheets growers would have appreciated a more hands on pruning and tying down and general tree shaping demonstration.

Generally the majority of participants felt that it was a valuable experience.