

# Oat event for Perth

**Highbury farmer Ashley Wiese stands amongst Bannister oats during harvest.** Picture: Danella Bevis

## CALLY DUPE

One of the biggest events on the global grains calendar is headed for Perth, with the first International Oat Conference in six years scheduled for Crown Towers from October 10-13.

The four-day affair will begin with field tours on October 10, before the three-day conference from the October 11-13 – which also includes a conference dinner and several workshops for attendees.

It is being co-ordinated by the Grain Industry Association of WA and the International Oat Organising Committee, with the conference also going by the abbreviated name OAT2022.

Normally held every four years, the Perth conference is the event's 11th edition, and has been delayed by two years because of WA's hard border.

GIWA oat council chair Ashley Wiese said the event would be worth the wait.

"It is exciting to be able to hold this face-to-face," he said.

Mr Wiese said while the program was focused on research, there would be parts aimed at innovation, markets and agronomy, and content for a local farmer audience.

"We hope growers will attend the field day, conference dinner and the days to showcase our industry," he said.

The conference will be held 18 months after news broke that the Australian centre for oat breeding would be shifted from South Australia to Perth to be led by InterGrain at Bibra Lake.

The conference theme is health – with topics to include health trends in oats; oat quality; products and innovation; oat

genomics and bioinformatics; oat breeding and genetics; global oat markets; and oat agronomy and global farming systems.

The program also features WA-based agronomist Garren Knell, from ConsultAg, who will discuss oat agronomy and global farming systems with Aberystwyth University principal investigator Catherine Howarth and Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada agronomist Bill May.

Seven other speakers have so far been confirmed, including Oatinformation president Randy Strychar and University of Sydney Plant Breeding Institute Professor Robert Park. The hybrid event will allow in-person and virtual registrations.

Australia is the world's second-biggest oat exporter, representing 10-15 per cent of the trade behind Canada at 75 per cent.

Oat exports from Australia have increased in the past five years, with robust growth last year driven by significant demand from

several key markets. The area sown to oats in Australia varies widely each year, but the five-year average production sits at about 1.4 million tonnes, with WA the biggest producer.

Mr Wiese said there was a lot of opportunity for Australia's oat industry, with a reduction in production in Canada.

"The lack of supply out of Canada has opened up some great opportunity for Australian oats in wider markets than we are typically used to, so that is exciting," he said.

"And demand into Australian markets continues to grow."

Mr Wiese said oat research had been "left behind" compared with cereal crops.

"The conference will bring the latest research and technology to WA," he said.

"It'll also highlight some of our issues to the research community across the world so that they can hopefully . . . address some of our problems."

