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Organisers say bigger, better South Island Field Days deliver

Despite some literal and figurative clouds overhead, the 2019 South Island Agricultural Field Days (SIAFD) was a success, organisers say.

The bi-annual event took place 27-29 March at the SIAFD's permanent site outside of Kirwee. It hosted more exhibitors than ever before and more machinery was at work during the in-field demonstrations.

SIAFD media spokesperson Daniel Schat says despite the tragic events in Christchurch on 15 March and flooding that prevented some West Coasters from attending the event, the car parks at the field days were near capacity and attendance was strong.

A moment of silence was held at noon on the opening day to honour the memory of the victims of the terrorist attacks at the Christchurch mosques.

"We had 640 exhibitors this year compared to less than 600 at our last event in 2017. Feedback from them has been very positive. The introduction of the Diesel Tune NZ Tractor pull was another a positive addition with crowds of people gathered there throughout the field days," Daniel says.

A number of politicians dropped in on SIAFD 2019. They included Minister of Agriculture Damien O'Connor, local Selwyn MP Amy Adams, and Minister of Conservation Eugenie Sage.

Amy Adams presented the Agri-Innovation Award to Ravensdown for its Clear Tech effluent treatment system, and Eugenie Sage announced \$380,000 in government funding to support recycling waste plastic from farms.

The SIAFD site has 20 hectares of exhibitions and 10 hectares devoted to machinery demonstrations, and this year more machines were on display during the demonstrations.

Machinery demonstrations organiser Andrew Stewart says the demonstration area included 4 ha of grass, 1 ha of fodder beet, 1 ha of maize for harvesting and 3 ha of grain stubble for cultivation.

"We had good buy-in for the demonstrations this year," Andrew says. "Twelve different companies demonstrated their machines and that included four companies who demonstrated four different machines.

"We had five balers on display this time and only two at the last field days. We also had four or five machines that were new to New Zealand. They included the Weaving disc

drill from the UK, a drone that does spot spraying with a five-litre tank and a fire suppressant system for combine harvesters.”

Andrew says not only were there more machines, there were also a number of larger machines at work during the demonstrations. They included several cultivators that were more than 10m wide.

Norwood won the award for the best groundwork gear demonstration and Claas Harvest Centre won the best harvest gear demonstration, with Claas also taking out the overall best machinery demonstration award and the Phillip van De Klundert Memorial trophy.

SIAFD secretary and event coordinator Tineka Johnstone says the quality of the displays at the 2019 was very high.

“PGG Wrightson won the award for the best large site and the Hamish Reid Memorial Trophy for the Best Overall Site. They had pre-grown crops to demonstrate their products and all of the different sections of their site were nicely demarcated,” Tineka says.

“Maxxis Tyres won the best small site because of their dynamic display of four wheel drive tyres and their welcoming, friendly attitude.”

Tractorpull NZ Inc general manager Vaughan Coy says although he would have like to see more farmers and contractors putting their tractors on the line, re-introducing the tractor pull to SIAFD was a successful step.

“It was a lot of fun and we had good crowds parked up on the bales watching the action for considerable periods,” Vaughn says. “And whenever the super-modified tractor started up, people would flock in.”

The winner of the Tractor Pull’s standard class was Baylee Horn in a Massey Ferguson 8240, second was his father, Andrew Horn in a Massey Ferguson 3645 and third was Tim Rowe in a Fendt 716. Winner of the modified class was Gavin Millar in Who Deeres.

SIAFD is organised entirely by a team of 27 volunteers, this year captained by organising chairman Rodney Hadfield. With the 2019 event now in the rear view mirror, they will take a break and then in a year’s time they will start getting ready for the next event, which takes place March 24-26, 2021

For further information contact Tineka Johnstone on 0274 046 383 or info@siafd.co.nz or visit www.siafd.co.nz.

CAPTIONS

007 --- Ravensdown’s Carl Ahlfeld with the Agri-Innovation award.

012 --- SIAFD volunteers (from left) Henry Williams, Andrew Stewart, and Tim Wilson with the fodder beet crop grown for the machinery demonstrations.

097 / 1032— Visitors to SIAFD 2019 enjoyed more displays and machinery demonstrations than ever before.