

ROCA AWARD OF MERIT 1988 – Reginald French

Reg French (RDA, 1944) graduated with Honours from Roseworthy then gained his BAgSc from the University of Adelaide in 1948, and a MAgSc in 1967 whilst working in the Soils Branch of the South Australian Department of Agriculture.

From 1951 to 1956, Reg was stationed at Cleve as Soil Conservation Officer, returning to Adelaide in 1957 as Soils Research Officer, then Principal Soils Research Officer in 1964, rising to Chief of the Division of Land Use and Protection before retiring in 1990 after 42 years of dedicated research, extension and administration.



Reg was widely known across South Australia for his practical approach to soil conservation issues facing farmers. Research carried out from 1964 to 1975 as Principal Research Officer provided practical models giving farmers productivity guidelines related to available soil moisture.

These 'benchmarks' are useful in determining farmers' efficiency in their cropping program and in estimating statewide crop yields. Three levels of the model were developed: one for farmers, one for advisory staff, and a computer model for use in departmental planning and prediction.

Reg's research into South Australia's soil and land use gained him an international reputation, he worked in Tunisia and presented papers in the United States and Portugal and visited research centres in the UK, Germany and France. He produced over 90 papers relating to farming systems and techniques and contributed to numerous scientific publications.

Reg French was for ten years the State Representative on the National Soil Conservation Committee evaluating techniques in all states as well as Papua New Guinea and New Zealand. He spoke to hundreds of farmer meetings and Soil Boards across southern Australia and was strongly supportive of both field and research staff within the Soils Branch of the Agriculture Department.

Reg French was a Fellow of the Institute of Agricultural Science, and President of the South Australian Branch of the Institute. He was awarded the CM Donald, Australian Society of Agronomy Medal in 1987, the Prescott Medal for Services to Soil and the ROCA Award of Merit in 1988 for his work on soil conservation and land use in South Australia.