



SPAA Society of Precision Agriculture Australia  
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## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Staunch supporters awarded life memberships

Two staunch supporters of precision agriculture were recognised with life memberships during the SA Precision Ag Expo at Loxton on Thursday, March 25.

Mark Branson, of Stockport, and Sam Trengove, of Bute, were presented with the awards during the Society of Precision Agriculture Australia (SPAA) event which had been postponed from last year because of the nationwide COVID-19 lockdown.

MC and former SPAA president Robin Schaefer said Mark was one of the original founders of SPAA and the organisation's first president in 2002.

Mark is owner-manager of Branson Farms, a mixed farm at Stockport, 80km north of Adelaide, where he produces cereals, canola, legumes and fine wool Merinos.

"Mark bought a yield monitor for his header in 1997 and hasn't looked back," Robin said. "He became one of the first South Australian farmers to adopt controlled traffic farming in 2004 and runs on those same lines today."

In 2005 Mark was awarded a Nuffield scholarship and spent 18 weeks travelling the world to research the pros and cons of precision agriculture (PA) and conservation agriculture. He adopted many of the techniques discovered during his travels.

"Mark has been a marvellous advocate for PA, ground truthing equipment and hosting research trials, speaking at conferences and grower events, as well as inviting student groups to visit his property and learn about the triple-bottom-line benefits of PA in dryland cropping systems," Robin said. "In recent years he has been actively involved in the editing of our flagship publication, *Precision Ag News*. Mark is retiring from the SPAA committee this year. We'd like to thank him for his generous support and leadership during the past 19 years and wish him all the best."

Introducing Sam Trengove, Mark said Sam had worked for 15 years as a PA consultant helping farmers adopt a range of technologies, and under the Trengove Consulting banner for the past decade.

Sam was a SPAA committee member for about 10 years and has a Master of Agricultural Science in his interest area of site-specific weed management.

"Sam's followed that interest in weed mapping and variable rate soil management across Australia and overseas to learn about new and emerging technologies and has presented at numerous grower field days and industry updates," Mark said. "Sam continues to work on research, development and extension projects with SPAA as a training and field trials facilitator as well as with the federal Department of Agriculture and Water and the SA Grains Industry Trust."

SPAA president Frank D’Emden said the award of life membership recognised individuals who have demonstrated a remarkable and ongoing commitment to SPAA that has enhanced the organisation’s standing with members and the wider community, without seeking personal reward.

“Both nominations received unanimous support from SPAA committee members,” Frank said.

SPAA executive officer Nicole Dimos said she had enjoyed working closely with both Mark and Sam during their time on the committee.

“Mark and Sam are enthusiastic advocates for precision agriculture who cheerfully share their experiences for the benefit of farmers everywhere,” she said. “I look forward to their continued association with SPAA.”

SPAA has awarded five life memberships in its 19-year history.

Previous award recipients are:

2018: Dr Rob Bramley, CSIRO Senior Principal Research Scientist and leader of the Precision Agriculture and Viticulture Team

2012: Dr John Heap, SARDI weeds researcher, and Malcolm Sargent, Crystal Brook farmer.

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### **About SPAA**

SPAA is a non-profit membership-based group formed in 2002 to promote the development and adoption of precision agriculture (PA) technologies and techniques. SPAA provides independent, timely and relevant information about PA to the grains, sugarcane, horticulture and livestock industries. To date more than 2000 members have benefited from our events and publications. These members have in turn helped drive research, development and extension that delivers on-ground benefits to farmers. Access to quality information and opportunities for sharing ideas is a critical element of progressive and resilient farming communities. Our motto is: Guiding you to farming success.