

Talking Family, Business, Technology and Trade

By Bernard O'Brien

Conservation Farmers Incorporated was one of the alliance partners of choice to receive a grant from the Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal (FRRR) to deliver a capacity building project focused on achieving an increase in resilient agricultural family units within the Conservation Farmers Inc. central region.

The core aim of this project was to bring regional agricultural families together to discuss family, health and business matters, and more importantly to interact on a social basis in a safe and comfortable environment. The objective was to leverage the local facilities as a focal point for meetings, forums and activities.

The project is fundamentally targeting the establishment of a grower group in the Western Downs region that will be grower driven.

Conservation Farmer's role was to be the facilitator by acting as the conduit and sourcing relevant specialists to present to the regional farming individuals and groups from areas of Roma, Chinchilla, Jandowae, Dalby, Tara, Moonie and Meandarra itself. Community involvement and participation was as follows:

- Regional growers and graziers from the areas already mentioned.
- Fantastic support of the local Meandarra Bowls Club and their catering service.
- Accessing local health and professional services by engaging:
 - Chanthal Stedman from Partners in Recovery, through the Australasian Centre of Rural and Remote Mental Health and
 - Jodie Lucas, Principle Inspector of South West Region, QLD Workplace Health and Safety.
- Accessing commercial business professionals to provide information and support from Families in Business, Managing Risk and Sustainable Agriculture strategies:
 - Marina Skinner, Family Business Consultant from Grant Thornton.
 - Shaun McKinnon, National Leader (Financial Advisory) - Agriculture Group from Grant Thornton.
- Accessing relevant, up to date sustainable farming advice through Tim Neale of Precision Agriculture.
- Finally demystifying the new Chinese and Asian Free Trade Agreements presented by Lloyd Russell.



Chanthal Stedman, Lloyd Russell and Jodie Lucas

The major benefits from the social, community and business interactions across the various individuals and groups was as follows:

- Interaction with local community organisations:
 - The local Meandarra Bowls Club was the venue for the day, whilst also catering for the event. They were fantastic and highly recommended for future events in that area. Thank you Lyn and Don as well your group of Ladies for the great day.
 - Chanthal Stedman opened proceedings with the first presentation, which took all participants on an emotional journey of her own life, depression and how she has managed to now move forward. Chanthal set the scene for the day, with her ability to involve all the audience, achieving a real understanding of "Depression" in their regional community.
 - Jodie Lucas, used a practical example and video of a quad bike accident to get the audience to understand how simple and easy an accident can happen, but what she really did was open the audience up to thinking of safety on their own farm and what were the practical solutions in safety management. The audience feedback was for more and more practical information.



Roger Henderson, Marina Skinner and Shaun McKinnon

- Marina Skinner presented a practical perspective of family succession by addressing the issues created by the inter reaction and crossover of the three dynamics of family farms; ownership, family and business. Her perspective was that success was only achieved by establishing the family farm being founded on;
 - Values
 - Clearly defined vision
 - Communication strategies
 - Education and
 - Collaboration.
- Shaun McKinnon's presentation focused on the need to understand performance and where opportunities may exist. To achieve this, business must have reliable and consistent financial information to understand performance, assess options and maximise value. The relevant questions to ask:
 - Are your assets employed cost effectively and
 - Are your assets generating an appropriate return?
- Tim Neale presented what he has learnt in regards to sustainable agriculture from his many years working with farmers predominantly in the Downs and central Queensland. With a strong understanding of the complexities associated with farming systems, Tim presented a practical perspective on delivery of targeted solutions supported by integrating spatial technologies with the management processes of cropping systems. His platform for results is founded off the principle of "measuring to manage".
- Lloyd Russell on behalf of the National Farmers Federation after their sudden withdrawal from the Meandarra day, covered off their presentation on the recent Chinese and Asian Free Trade Agreements.



John Coggan and Tim Neale



Finally Conservation Farmers Inc. would like to thank the presenters, their Businesses / Departments and in particular for the time and effort put aside to attend and present.

As well Conservation Farmers thanks the other sponsors of the Capacity Building / Sustainable Agriculture day, being:

- The Condamine Alliance.
- Rabo Bank.

Without the major Funding from FRRR, this enjoyable, thought provoking day would not have been possible, so a big thank you from Conservation Farmers, its members and those attendees who got the most out of the day.

Finally thank you to those farmers and industry stakeholders who made the effort to attend and participate in the day.



Rabobank

Lloyd Russell, Rae Logan and Phillip Kelly



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