



Alpine Valleys

agribusiness forum

'Australian Alpine Valleys - Where the Best Grows to Perfection'

Chair Report 2009

Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum is a partnership oriented organisation. We cannot deliver our goals of supporting sustainable agribusiness in the alpine valleys without the co-operation and assistance of a diverse range of groups and individuals and I would like to pay tribute to that fact.

It is appropriate that I spend some time drawing attention to those partnerships that continue to be fundamental in our service delivery.

NECMA

In 2009 our strong relationship with North East Catchment Management Authority has provided our organisation with the capacity to deliver our services and our projects across the region. Importantly, we have taken the opportunity to revisit and renew this relationship, confirming our commitment to shared outcomes. While we greatly appreciate NECMA's support of that relationship, we are, and must remain cognoscente of the fact that within that sphere we must continue to deliver outcomes that contribute to their needs also.

DPI

A close relationship with the Department of Primary Industries has again been a feature of our performance in 2009. The DPI's support at Board level provides perspective and insight ensuring that our activities and direction is tempered by consideration of a range of factors that go beyond our immediate sphere of influence.

Our relationship with DPI has also been significant at the project level. Alpine Valleys is increasingly sought out as a provider of choice in service delivery. A factor best demonstrated by our contribution to the AgFutures program at Omeo.

LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Partnerships with local government remain critical in our activities and success. Our footprint across the shires of Alpine, Towong, Wodonga, Indigo and Wangaratta requires that we work closely together to ensure that we understand the issues and capture the opportunities that will be relevant to our members. The strength of that relationship is borne out in the diversity of agribusinesses represented in our awards tonight.

BENDIGO BANK

Our partnership with Bendigo Bank is another significant relationship for our organisation. We recognise and value the importance of this relationship. Indeed, events such as that today and this evening would not be possible without that support.

It would be remiss of me to focus on these partnerships in isolation and not consider the broader relationships that enable us to deliver our projects. I extend my appreciation in that sense to all our partners with whom we work on a case-by-case basis to develop and deliver our projects.

Importantly, it would also be a significant oversight to fail to recognise the importance of a strong working relationship between the Board and the staff of Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum, which underpins its success.

In 2009 Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum made a strategic commitment to ensuring that it provided a forum for discussion. A forum that provides relevant and topical information that enables our members and the broader agribusiness community in the alpine valleys to gain perspective and insight into changes that are affecting their businesses today and will do so into the future.

Highlights in 2009 included:

- Presentations by Professor Tim Reeves and Colin Seis in April on the future cropping opportunities in the north east. This event was attended by 60 people and presented in conjunction with NECMA, Woolworths and Ovens Landcare Network.
- The Future Food and Farming Forum featuring Andrew Campbell and David Ch'ng in Beechworth, in May. Attended by more than 100 people, the event challenged participants to consider the opportunities presented by changing populations and markets.
- A presentation in July by Professor Rick Rousch from the University of Melbourne examining the capacity of genetically modified species to alleviate world food concerns.
- The ABARE Regional Outlook Conference in July in Wangaratta attended by 130 people.
- Delivery of a two day AgFutures program to the Omeo/Benambra community in July

A focus on activity as a forum has shifted our project activity from one of directing activity to one of facilitating outcomes. This is best evidenced by our two latest projects, the Next Generation Farmers Leadership project and the Rural Women's Leadership project, both of which will be delivered by the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program.

Our reputation as a key participant in regional agribusiness discussions was also highlighted in 2009, contributing to a range of regional programs and presenting to the State Government Rural and Regional Committee hearing held at Wangaratta in April.

2010 is another challenging and exciting year for our organisation. Undoubtedly the vagaries of climate will be high on the agenda. How we continue to adapt our agribusiness systems to a drier environment will provide challenges in its own right.

However, the ongoing climate and carbon debate will continue to play a significant role in the development of agriculture policy at the Federal level. The outcome of decisions made in Canberra will bring new challenges for agribusiness. It will also bring an array of opportunities for agribusiness in this part of country.

It is very important that Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum continues its leadership role given the void that currently exists across the agriculture sector.

It is critical that Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum continues to play a leadership role in these and other discussions relevant to the agribusiness sector in the alpine valleys. We will continue to provide leadership, a point of reference and an opportunity for the agribusiness community to listen to the arguments, participate in the exchange of information and go on to make informed decisions.

We look forward to working with, and the support of, our partners, our members, and that broader group of friends we welcome to our events, to provide the best possible opportunity for the agribusiness community in the north east to enjoy a sustainable future.

Dr Tim Clue
Chair
Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum
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