



AUSTRALIAN
ALPINE
VALLEYS
AGRIBUSINESS
FORUM



Alpine Valleys

agribusiness forum

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

FROM THE CHAIR



Welcome to our June edition of the AAVAF Newsletter.

The innovative and productive projects you will read about in this edition are reflective of the confidence the AAVAF has in the future of agribusiness in this region. This region is rich with natural resources and resourceful people who are achieving in highly competitive domestic and global markets.

A highlight of the projects is the partnership that individual landholders, local and state government and industry groups have established with the AAVAF to achieve positive outcomes for the region. These partnerships are committed to driving economic growth and development in the Alpine Valleys to secure the future of our agriculture sector.

If you would like more information about any of these projects we would be pleased to hear from you.

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THE ALPINE New Industry

Leadership Program

The Alpine Shire, the Rural City of Wangaratta and the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum, with the support of Regional Development Victoria are providing the opportunity for ex-tobacco farmers, business and community representatives from the Alpine and King Valley regions to participate in a new leadership program.

The Alpine New Industry Leadership Program will focus on future opportunities and provide people with the skills to make informed decisions that will ultimately deliver many benefits to their local communities.

The program, delivered by the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program, was launched at a dinner at DeFazio's in Myrtleford on May 21 in the company of guest speaker Mr Jim Geltch, CEO of Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarships.

Fifteen participants have been selected from across the region to participate in the eight session leadership program which includes a study tour to New Zealand to look at examples of successful farming communities.

Provincial Pantry

Regional North East Produce

The Provincial Pantry web site is the collaborative effort of the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness, North East Valleys Food and Wine and the Hume Murray Food Bowl, funded through Regional Development Victoria. Currently within its pilot stage, the project aims to heighten awareness of North East produce and aid consumer online purchasing.

The Provincial Pantry is an e-commerce site designed to facilitate online purchases by using a webbased 'shopping cart'. There are currently six participating pilot businesses offering products from olives through to wine, all of which have the autonomy to upload their own produce and to manage stock levels. Once a consumer has ordered a product, a purchase order is automatically generated and sent through to the producer. For multiple purchases i.e. one bottle of wine, one six pack of beer and a block of chocolate, a more detailed purchase order is generated and sent through to Jason Sharp at Bright Foodworks who will coordinate the order.

The six pilot businesses gathered at a training day held at LaTrobe at Beechworth on June 6 to upload their product information. Komodo CMS (Content Management System), a Melbourne based IT company responsible for designing the site and representatives from all the collaborative partners were on hand to assist with the training and upload.

**If you would like more information about the Provincial Pantry project, please contact:
Tania White on 0427 279255.**



It has been widely recognised and accepted for some time that many of Australia's top companies and carbon emitters will be looking at farmers and rural areas to seek offsets for their regulated carbon footprint through the establishment of a carbon trading system and other 'public-good environmental services'. ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICE PROVISION SEMINAR

Rural Futures - Young Farmers Forum

Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum and the Department of Primary Industries are hosting the Rural Futures – Young Farmers Forum

Date : Monday 21st July 2008
Venue : DPI Rutherglen
Time : 4.00pm – 8.30pm
Cost : No charge

Dinner is provided

Guest Speakers:

Traci Griffin DPI: Climate Change – operating environment, policy adaptation and mitigation

Neil Barr DPI: Farm and local population change, social changes on the farm

Mike Stephens: Succession Planning and farm employment conditions

Jill Briggs: Rural Training Initiatives, will facilitate discussion sessions

Contact Anne Shaw, Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum on 0458 216 088 by Wednesday July 16 to confirm your place. Bookings essential. Travel assistance also available upon request

People of all ages are welcome to attend, however, The Forum will specific address issues for farmers aged between 18 – 40 years.

Environmental Service Provision Seminar

The AAVAF, together with the North East Catchment Management Authority, Department of Primary Industries, Plantations North East and North East Water recognise the need to provide timely information to landholders in our region about the impact and opportunities 'public-good environmental services' may offer them and will be hosting a forum later in the year to discuss this matter.

In the not too distant future it is believed that there will be a whole raft of entrepreneurs offering environmental services to landholders. Whilst most of the schemes on offer will be genuine, benefiting the landholder, region and environment generally, it is feared that some may also be less scrupulous.

There are a number of environmentally ethical opportunities available to landholders which could mark a whole new way for farmers to manage their land holdings and business with the public concern for environment and climate at the forefront.

The aim of the environmental services seminar is to assist participants to understanding how a range of new politically driven services can benefit not only the individual but also their wider community.

According to Lachlan Campbell, AAVAF Sustainability Manager,

"There are some real incentives that will be on offer in the future for landholders who are well informed on how to better manage the climate change risk by locking part of their properties into arrangements where they will receive payment for service".

"This new industry will potentially offer a number of opportunities to landholders that may include environmental stewardship and plantation timber through MIS schemes. However, nothing is more certain than landholders need to be well informed of opportunities and ensure that decisions are not made in isolation."

Further details about the seminar will be provided in our next newsletter.



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Many farm owners and workers have been affected by on-going drought conditions and the closure of the tobacco industry in the North East. Of those affected, many have an urgent need for immediate employment or to take steps to improve their opportunity for long term future employment. **RURAL SKILLS CONNECT AGRIBUSINESS TO INDUSTRY**

Rural Skills Connect *Agribusiness to Industry*

The aim of the Rural Skills Connect initiative is to connect regional industry to a skilled workforce, matching job ready candidates from the agribusiness sector to existing employment opportunities.

Funded by Regional Development Victoria and delivered in conjunction with the Rural City of Wangaratta, Moira Shire and the Greater City of Shepparton, rural workers have the opportunity to attain certification for their previous work experience, competencies and transferable skills giving them a good opportunity to earn an off farm income.

It is hoped that the Rural Skills Connect project will arrest the growing skills shortage that currently faces businesses in the region by linking the right employment and training opportunities to rural workers to meet industry needs. Participants will be assessed for their Recognised Prior Learning competencies, offered the opportunity of subsidised training and assisted with the application for the appropriate licences and registrations.

AAVAF Board Member and Secretary of TAFCO, Kerry Murphy, sees the Rural Skills Connect program as a major positive initiative in light of last years collapse of the tobacco industry. *"This project will offer farmers who were forced out of the tobacco industry with no firm future plans or those struggling through the drought, the opportunity to be formally recognised for their wide range of skills which in the past have not been acknowledged. For those wanting to become more employable, this project delivers a 'win-win' for industry and workers alike."*

To find out more about this free service, contact Greg Laidlaw from the Rural City of Wangaratta on 0418 225 271.



AAVAF Drought Services Co-ordinator

Anne Shaw, AAVAF Drought Support Officer, has been assisting the Shires of Wangaratta, Indigo, Towong, Alpine and Wodonga over the past five months with the communication and facilitation of drought issues.

Anne has observed an extremely high level of partnering, co-operation and sharing of resources amongst all government and agency groups working on drought issues.

There is strong collaboration between all Hume region drought workers in assessing current needs and resource allocation.

Many successful projects and events have been developed by the various local drought committees and while these are continuing, there is a sense of a change in the focus towards more long term sustainability issues and the need to deal with change and the building of rural resilience to cope with drought and other aspects of climate change.

The funding provided by the AAVAF for drought support has mostly been offered to support and enhance programs offered by councils and agencies.

These have included:

- Facilitated planning sessions for drought committees
- Future Farm Planning session
- Alpine New Industry Leadership Program
- Women in Dry Times grants
- Fathers & Children Camps for farming families
- Women on Farms Bus Tour



participants from Women on Farms bus trip to Sunnymeade gardens at Strathbogie



EverGraze FIELD DAY UPDATE

The AAVAF has been coordinating the 'more livestock from perennials' EverGraze project in North East Victoria for the past year. The project, a Future Farm Industries CRC, MLA and AWI research partnership has been developing and testing new farming systems in different environments across the high rainfall zone of southern Australia.

The AAVAF coordinated project is investigating management strategies that can be adopted on-farm that will improve the contribution of native perennial grasses to pastures. The research will develop sheep production systems based on native pastures that are more profitable and overcome current environmental challenges.

Six recent field days were held to introduce local landholders to the EverGraze project. Each field day provided attendees with a background to the principles of EverGraze and how the project is trying to achieve improved farm productivity and profit through the better management of both introduced and native perennial pastures.

The AAVAF agronomist, Jim Moll who has set up of each of the eight supporting sites in the North East, provided information on each of the sites that have been tested and assessed for the best types of grazing and perennial pasture management. He also gave an overview of the different pastures being tested, and how soil analysis was used to determine the levels of lime and phosphorous to be applied to each site.

The project now will be reduced, given each supporting site is established. Jim will continue to be available for phone support and any questions regarding the on-going management of each site. Jeff Hirth from Springhurst will be taking over the ongoing monitoring and coordination of each supporting site.

Kate Sargeant from the Department of Primary Industries provided landholders at the field days with information on assessing the condition and stage of their pasture using the MLA pasture measuring 'stick'. The measuring 'sticks' are available free from EverGraze staff along with advice on how to use them to assess your pasture condition and amount of feed on offer for stock.

Kate also provided field day attendees with some guidelines on the interpretation of soil test results and the importance of the various elements of a soil test, including Olsen Phosphorous, pH, Cation Exchange Capacity and exchangeable Aluminium. Perennial pasture and stock monitoring of each supporting site will be taking place over the next two years, with data collected and analysed regularly from grids placed on each site. The next schedule of field days will be held in spring.

The EverGraze project staff and the AAVAF acknowledge and thank the landholders hosting the eight supporting sites for their commitment and work undertaken to date. All of those sites are coming together well and look forward to assessing the project's results later in the year.

FOR INFORMATION AND MEMBERSHIP DETAILS CONTACT:

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VISION

The North East of Victoria be widely recognised for its attractiveness to agribusiness, and there be growth in the economic value and sustainability of agribusinesses.

The contributing role of the Agribusiness Forum to making this vision a reality is widely recognised.

MISSION

The role of the Forum is to:

- foster and stimulate the development of viable and sustainable agribusiness in the North East
- create the right climate in which agribusiness can successfully operate.