



AUSTRALIAN  
ALPINE  
VALLEYS  
AGRIBUSINESS  
FORUM



# Alpine Valleys

agribusiness forum

Issue 6# | December 2009

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

## THE 2009 AAVAF AGRIBUSINESS AWARD WINNERS:

### NEW AND EMERGING AGRIBUSINESS:

**Davide and Erin Angelini - Alpine Tea Co of Tawonga**

Presented by sponsored Rick Felton of Department of Primary Industries

### COMMERCIAL AGRIBUSINESS ACHIEVEMENT AWARD

**Simon and Phillipa Noble - Brimin Lodge, Rutherglen Lamb and Cod**

Presented by sponsor Graeme Gonin of Wodonga TAFE

### AGRIBUSINESS OF THE YEAR

**John Brown AO - Brown Brothers Milawa Vineyard Pty Ltd**

Presented by sponsor Kendall Beattie of Bendigo Bank

### AGRIBUSINESS LEADER OF THE YEAR

**Colin McCormack of TAFCO (presented to Alison McCormack)**

Presented by sponsor Kendall Beattie of Bendigo Bank

### CERTIFICATE OF APPRECIATION (IN RECOGNITION OF ONGOING SUPPORT TO THE COMMUNITY)

**Carl Fraser - Rural Financial Counsellor, Goulburn Murray Hume Agcare**

**Nerida Kerr - Regional Development Victoria**

## THE AAVAF SHOWCASE OF *Innovation, Entrepreneurship* AND AWARDS FOR 2009

A gathering of over 150 of the regions agribusiness producers, supporters and rural leadership participants joined the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum in celebrating innovation and entrepreneurship at the AAVAF's coveted 2009 Innovation and Entrepreneurship Awards dinner, forum and AGM held at Remel 185 in Whorouly on Wednesday 14 October.



Panel speakers from around the region presented throughout the afternoon on the core elements that contribute to agribusiness excellence, management of production, value adding, pasture management and new irrigation methodology.

Dinner guest speaker, Mr John Corboy inspired many of the Agribusiness Awards guests with his stories of challenge, resilience and entrepreneurship on how he, together with a team of leaders and all staff, pulled SPC from the grips of bankruptcy and closure.

Included at the gathering were over 30 participants of the new Leadership programs that are due to commence in the coming weeks, the NewGen Farmers Leadership Program for young farmers and the Rural Women's Leadership Program, developed specifically for women living in drought and bushfire prone rural regions.

PICTURED: **Above left** - Left to right Alison McCormack, John Brown, Simon Noble, Davide and Erin Angelini **Above right** - Left to right Carl Fraser and Nerida Kerr

As 2009 closes it is worth reflecting on the success of the AAVAF in the past year. It is also prudent to note the challenges that we face as we move into 2010. Importantly, it is essential that our organisation continues to be dynamic and remains relevant to our members and the agribusiness community if we are to fulfill our commitment to sustainable agribusiness in the North East.



## Welcome from AAVAF Chair

DECEMBER 2009

**In 2009, the Board made a strategic decision to provide a forum for the exchange of information as a primary means of delivering on our commitment. We have continued to deliver information, providing a forum for discussion and information exchange to enable members to make more informed decisions.**

A key element of this has been continuing to provide information on market opportunities and land-use change. Presentations by Andrew Campbell and David Ch'ng at Beechworth and Colin Seis and Professor Tim Reeves at Oxley were two excellent examples of this commitment.

While we have shifted activities towards a forum focus, we continue to deliver project based activities. These are and will remain a strength of our organisation. A number of our projects are reviewed in this newsletter with updates on the Evergraze Project, the Leadership Projects and the Farming Futures activities at Omeo.

Underpinning all of our activities is an ongoing commitment to the development of effective networks and partnerships with our sponsors, members and that broader group we like to call friends of the organisation.

As we look towards 2010, our changing climate will continue to shape our activities. The question of whether we are experiencing a long drought, or indeed the climate has markedly changed remains unanswered. Importantly, our response to the challenges offered by the existing climatic conditions is more important than some of the debate existing at the government level.

The coming year will provide new opportunities to better understand the key issues driving change and influencing the sustainability of the agribusiness sector in the North East.

Before closing I would like to welcome some new faces and recognise the service of two departing Board members. This year we welcome two new members to the Board, Peter Nolan and Russell Kelly, both of whom will bring new experience and enthusiasm to the organisation. I would like to extend my sincere thanks to Sandy Salmon and Warren Vogel for their contribution to the Board. Sandy and Warren left the Board in 2009 and we look forward their continued association as members of our organisation.

**Let me close by wishing you and your families all the best for 2010. I look forward to your participation and engagement in our activities in the New Year.**

Dr Tim Clune, AAVAF Chair

## Next Gen and Women in Agribusiness

### LEADERSHIP PROGRAMS LAUNCHED

**Graham Nickless and Julie de Hennin launched two new Leadership Programs as part of the Innovation and Entrepreneurship Awards dinner at Remel 185 in Whorouly on October 14.**

The Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum, in conjunction with the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program, recently received funding from the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry to deliver two new leadership programs in North East Victoria.

The **Agribusiness Young Leaders Program** is specifically developed for younger generation farmers and the **Women in Agribusiness Leadership Program** has been developed to engage women in rural industries.

The aim of the leadership programs is to skill rural women and young rural people to enhance their leadership skills and contribute to the ongoing strength of their communities during times of change as a result of ongoing drought and climate change adaptation.

Fifteen young people from across the region have been selected to participate in the **Agribusiness Next Gen Leaders Program**. An outdoor retreat and a Melbourne trip to meet with industry leaders is scheduled into the program.

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Course topics include leadership skills, farm business planning, risk management and decision making. Case studies of North East based agricultural innovation will be highlighted.

#### **The Rural Women's Leadership Program**

includes twenty three participants from a diverse range of agricultural enterprises across the North East. This program will provide workshops including leadership skills, risk management, decision making, mentoring and networking. High profile, well connected guest presenters will be featured and the program will include a visit to Canberra to meet with government agencies and policy makers to gain an understanding of government processes.

**The programs will run between October 2009 and May 2010 and will be delivered by the Alpine Valleys Community Leadership Program.**

## AgFuturesForum

**'A Forum for productive, competitive and sustainable farming families.'**

**The Omeo – Benambra AgFutures Forum was a two day event held on the 14 July and 18 August which addressed issues of climate change, social demographics and change, productivity, innovation and entrepreneurship.**

The Forum project partners included the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness, North East Catchment Management Authority, LandCare, DPI, VFF, West Gippsland local government and West Gippsland Catchment Management Authority.

The program and facilitation plan was built around the needs identified by the community to know more about climate change, population and demographic changes, global impacts on farming and new and emerging opportunities for increasing productivity.

Invited speakers for the forum on Day 1 were Dale Grey, DPI, speaking on 'Climate change and how it will affect you' and Neil Barr, DPI, speaking on 'Social landscape and change in the district.'

Invited speakers for Day 2 were Professor Tim Reeves speaking on 'Global trends, agriculture and opportunities' and Dr Geoff Daniel speaking on 'Productive scale and enterprise.'

The twenty four participants in attendance comprised of farmers, graziers, farm managers and contractors and support agencies.

AgFutures assists farmers and farming communities to make sense of changes that will affect agriculture in the future and enables better long term decision making.

Overall participants came away from the Forum indicating that the information given was of great benefit and expressed a desire for more information on the future on climate change and pasture development.

During the Forum, participants identified opportunities for their region, including:

- Carbon Trading
- Bio-mass
- Research and production into - Longer growing grasses, perennial grasses, GM
- Grasses, 'fit for area', native grasses ie Evergraze project
- Direct / regional marketing of products
- Management of market forces
- Connect the future of agriculture
- Respond to the impact of bigger farms in the future
- Promotion of the 'paddock to fork/fork to paddock'

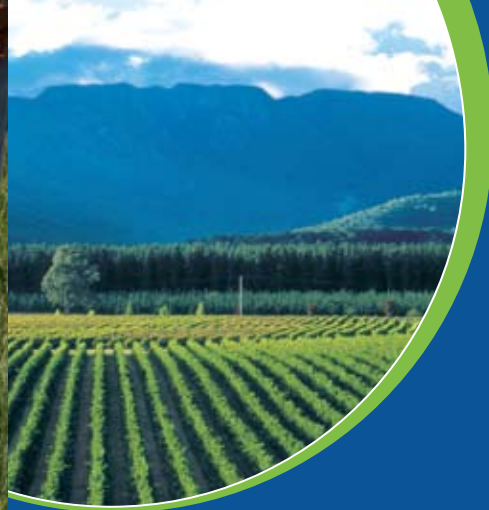
## Rural Men's HEALTH NIGHT

The Rural City of Wangaratta Drought Committee, in conjunction with many agencies, including the Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum, held a very successful Rural Men's Health Night in Wangaratta on Thursday 12 November.



Merv Hughes, Ambassador of Andrology Australia, was the special guest speaker at the event to promote men's health. Held at the Wangaratta Performing Arts Centre, the event called **Laugh It Up – Tune It Up**, included pitstop health checks and a free dinner followed by an entertaining presentation from Merv Hughes.

Over 280 men attended this event and sixty health professionals donated their time to provide the health checks.



**EverGraze**  
More livestock from perennials

## update

### The second year of monitoring the EverGraze paired-paddock comparisons at seven sites across the NECMA catchment has now been completed by project agronomist, Jeff Hirth.

Each comparison was developed in late 2007 in discussions with local LandCare groups to address the most important question about perennial pastures needing evaluation under local conditions. The sites were set in early 2008 and are located at Benambra (2) in the south east, Cudgewa in the north east and near Wangaratta (2) in the west of the catchment, with one site each in the Tallangatta Valley and the Murrumbidgee Basin.

#### In summary, the 'key' questions to be answered in the comparisons included the benefits of:

- sowing and rotationally grazing new varieties of tall fescue and cocksfoot (4 sites),
- rotational grazing of existing phalaris pastures (2 sites),
- increased fertiliser and lime use on native perennial grass pastures (2 sites), and
- spring-summer rests from grazing of native perennial grass pastures to increase seed set and seedling recruitment (3 sites).

The 2008 growing season proved particularly challenging and overshadowed many of the benefits expected to be shown in the comparisons.

Usual stock management practices had to adjust to the poorer forage and water supplies and many pastures were heavily grazed over the 2009 summer and autumn.

Despite the adverse conditions, the average density of established perennial pasture grasses, whether native or sown, across the seven sites remained stable at 43% between the 2008 and 2009 autumn breaks. Ground cover understandably declined over the 12 months, from an average of 75% to 61% in May 2009. Of greater concern, the density of the annual legume component, predominantly sub clover, declined significantly over this period, presumably because the dry spring conditions meant little or no clover seed was set for the 2009 growing season.

Jeff, together with Kate Sargeant and Alison Desmond from the Department of Primary Industries, are in the middle of their spring field day program with a series of twilight meetings at the sites over November. Participants' ability to identify the many grasses and legumes that are currently flowering in our spring pastures will be tested. Alison will discuss the \$ costs of establishing a perennial pasture and Jeff will update participants with the latest pasture measurements from each site.

All sites will be soil sampled next autumn and the final set of pasture measurements will be taken soon after the 2010 autumn break as the current phase of funding from Australian Wool Innovations concludes. Discussions are currently underway for two sites, Tallangatta Valley and Murrumbidgee, to continue with Caring for Our Country funding until 2012.

#### For further information contact:

**Jeff Hirth**

*EverGraze Supporting Site Agronomist*

TEL: **[03] 5726 5270**

MOB: **0428 732 007**

EMAIL: **jeffhirth@bigpond.com**

[www.evergraze.com.au](http://www.evergraze.com.au)

#### FOR INFORMATION AND MEMBERSHIP DETAILS CONTACT:

Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum Incorporated

TELEPHONE: +61 3 5721 6088

PO Box 915  
Wangaratta Vic 3676  
AUSTRALIA

[admin@alpvalleys.com.au](mailto:admin@alpvalleys.com.au)

A0034550K | ABN43 882 936 247

BECOME A MEMBER- visit:

[www.alpvalleys.com.au](http://www.alpvalleys.com.au)

#### 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.