

Our Farm, Our Plan

success stories



Brad and Deirdre Smith are dairy farmers from Greendale, near Bega in NSW. They milk about 140 cows on a 175-hectare milking platform and a dry block for young stock.

The farm has 30 hectares of irrigated land fed by the Brogo River System. Their system involves year-round calving with batch calving every 3–4 months geared to work in with the export market.

Brad and Deirdre lease the dairy operation from Brad's parents who started dairying 50 years ago. Brad's been farming since he was 18 and Deirdre grew up on a hobby farm nearby.

Dairy farming is in the blood with their youngest daughter doing a traineeship with them and another daughter working full time on a neighbouring farm (and helping on the home farm when she can). The Smiths have one full time employee and another daughter lives on a farm next door.



Greendale, NSW

When asked why they did Our Farm, Our Plan the Smith's laughed and said "Greg made us do it," referring to Dairy Australia's Greg Duncan who they know well. Greg recognised that the Smith's would get a lot out of the program and let them know how to get involved.

Deirdre commented that she found the workshops and process useful to set business and personal goals. "Writing it down was useful and when we both put the Plan on a Page we were on the same page. It helped us realise that we were already pretty much on the same page, so it was nice to have that confirmed," Deirdre said.

When the family drew their visions of their ideal future they did them separately, but they all came out to be very similar in terms of how they all saw the farm in the future, which was good. "Setting SMART goals and looking ahead to where we want to be with the farm has been really good value," Brad said. "We've got a clearer view of what the girls are up to, which can change, but having an idea of where you want to be and how you're going to get there is helpful."

Deirdre has found having their plan written down useful to be able to track their progress. "Putting a big green tick beside things on your plan that you've done has been great. It's really motivating," she said.

Work/life balance was a key focus for the Smith's. "A lot of it was to have more balance – not more work, work, work all the time, and working in a way that gives us more family time. That's always a challenge."

Another one was discussing with the girls about where they want to go. "We had a pretty good idea about what the girls want to do, but that can change and it was good for us to talk that through again," Brad said. "And it doesn't always play out the way you hope. One of the things we had on our plan was we wanted to buy some nearby land, but the land price boom has meant that isn't going to happen at the moment. We've stepped back and will now reconsider what we're going to do about that."

Farmers participating in Our Farm, Our Plan are provided with one-on-one follow up support to help shape up their plan and review their progress. For the Smith's this was good value.

"The one-on-one session went really well. We got a lot of questions answered and were able to sort out some things we weren't sure about. We finished up with a more complete plan and the SMART goals helped make our goals clearer and more realistic" Deirdre said.

Brad said "You're never in complete control, but it did give us a clearer understanding about where we want to get to. Plans change, or conditions change so you've got to be able to shift your sights – the planning helps you do that."

Both Deirdre and Brad would recommend Our Farm, Our Plan to other farmers, and have already. Deirdre didn't hesitate to say, "It helps you get a clearer view."



Brad added "Yes, there's always roadblocks that get in the way but that's normal and it's all about planning out how you're going to get around them."

"I was a bit daunted when it took me out of my comfort zone at the start," said Deirdre. "But the further we got into it the more we understood it. I understand why the long-term support is provided – it takes a while to think through these things and, like Brad said, things can change so you have to change your plans."

The Smith's agreed that they've always been pretty much on the same page but Our Farm, Our Plan has confirmed that they are, and now they have a Plan on a Page to prove it.

The Our Farm, Our Plan program is provided at no cost to all Australian dairy farmers as one of the service benefits delivered through the Dairy Australia's dairy levy funding. The program is delivered with the support of the Gardiner Foundation and the Australian Government's Future Drought Fund, through Agriculture Victoria, NSW DPI, Tasmania's DENR and PIRSA in South Australia.

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