

Our Farm, Our Plan

success stories



Sarah Wake is involved in a family farming business in the Hunter Valley in NSW. The family were considering the future of the business and what that would look like for the whole family.

"Our Farm, Our Plan gave us the chance to take a step back away from the day-to-day family operations that tend to be focused on the immediate things that need to be done," said Sarah. "It's given us a chance to look at our business as a whole, think about where we're at and what it is we'd like to achieve and develop a plan with support from our Regional Extension Officer and a farm business consultant."

Sarah recognised that each family member brings different strengths and experience to the table, so everyone had ideas about what they'd like to implement or the changes we could make in order for the business to grow. "Through doing Our Farm, Our Plan we were able to clarify our vision



Singleton, NSW

for the business and outline our values as well. From there we were able to set our long term business goals and personal goals, and I feel like we're all on the same page now after all being a part of the process," said Sarah.

The Wake's farm is a well established, multi-generational business. Like any dairy farming business there are a lot of things to be across and a lot of areas that need to be well managed. Sarah commented that between the family members there were a lot of ideas and they were having a hard time prioritising. "Our Farm, Our Plan helped us to order what things we are going to focus on next, which would be where we put our effort," she said.

"The Farm Fitness Checklist helped us to identify things that we probably need to look at sooner rather than later. I definitely feel like the process helped us to get clarity and even though we might all have different ideas we were able to work out what comes next."

Developing a Plan on a Page involves putting pen to paper and documenting your vision for your farm, key focus areas, business and personal goals, and the actions that need to be taken to meet those goals. Identifying who is accountable for each action and the time frame that needs to be met is an important part of the process. "Writing down the actions and timelines has been really good for us," Sarah said. "It's given us some accountability, but has also meant that if something else pops up we can review those actions and makes changes if we need to. It's helped us to be really realistic about what we need to achieve."

Sarah was positive about the value of the one-on-one follow up sessions with an experienced consultant. "I think it's been great because we've had really difficult discussions about succession planning, which is a focus area for us. We haven't got any major issues, but the session meant that everyone was heard and everyone's needs were met and we've been able to have open and honest conversations about what can be a difficult and daunting topic for some people."

Some of the Our Farm, Our Plan process was pretty challenging for Sarah and the family. The program helped a lot with the challenging discussions that can be part of working through succession, but Sarah found trying to draw their vision for the future hard, but good. "We all had some different ideas and are definitely at different stages of our artistic ability but it showed a lot of common ground. The similarities between our drawings were a real eye opener, and that was really good for us to see what each other were thinking and that we lined up on a lot of things. It was great," said Sarah.

Sarah found the Our Farm, Our Plan resources such as the Farm Fitness Checklist and the QuickPlan workbook really useful. "The whole thing has helped us transition our ideas into SMART goals and actions that will increase the likelihood of success and us following through with the plan."

Recommending Our Farm, Our Plan to other farmers is the strongest endorsement that a program like this can receive, and Sarah was happy to provide it. "I understand how time poor dairy farmers can be but I'd encourage them to make the most of the different ways that you're able to get involved in this program. It's definitely going to benefit you – it's a great opportunity to evaluate your business and have a think about parts of your farm that you haven't had a chance to look at for a while," she said.



"It will reinforce your strengths as well as highlight areas you might improve. Importantly if there's a few key decision makers in your business it will open up those lines of communication and make sure you're all on the same page."

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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