
TABLELANDS FARMING SYSTEMS

Information for
members and sponsors

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Introduction

Tablelands Farming Systems Inc. (TFS) has been established as a progressive and innovative farmer initiated association. TFS was established in April 2013 primarily as a research, development and extension based organisation. The principle aim is to assist farmers and their businesses to be more profitable and resilient in the face of shrinking government support for traditional research and extension services. The group will service members through cutting edge research and development and extension of best practice information through training, seminars and field days, as well as a quarterly newsletter.

TFS membership will be drawn from throughout the Southern Tablelands and as far as the ACT region. The aim is to recruit members from progressive farm businesses. The membership base will extend across many enterprises including wool, beef, meat sheep, cropping and livestock. Small area farmers and producers of niche enterprises are most welcome to participate.

Aims and Objectives

Aims:

- Be owned and driven by members
- Provide a forum to initiate and manage relevant agricultural research & extension
- Provide members with evidence based research outcomes
- Provide opportunities for members to learn, interact and exchange ideas
- Provide a forum for skills development in finance and risk management
- Establish mutually beneficial partnerships with government, corporate and private organizations in the pursuit of the group's objectives

Objectives:

- Improve profitability of wool and meat sheep, and beef production through focus on genetics, breeding efficiency, stock health, nutrition, growth rates and marketing
- Explore features of regional soils and develop guidelines for BP management
- Increase stocking rates and performance through pasture improvement
- Support the development of high rainfall zone(HRZ) cropping
- Support farmers involved in niche agricultural industries throughout the region
- Encourage a coordinated approach to natural resource management
- Encourage the adoption of strategies that reduce business risks
- Encourage business skill development and succession planning
- Provide pathways and support for young people in agriculture

Membership

An annual membership fee of \$500.00 (GST excl) will apply. Some of the benefits to members include:

- Regular opportunities for the exchange of information with like-minded people
- Opportunities to network with leaders in the rural industry and Government
- Influence in TFS strategic direction and operational planning
- Discounts on soil testing and other farm management tools and technologies
- Discounts or free access to TFS activities
- Keeping up to date with cutting edge on-farm research and demonstrations

- Opportunities to participate in operational skills based training
- Opportunities to develop strategic skills in leadership, governance, communication, negotiation, marketing and more.

Potential TFS strategic partners and/or sponsors

TFS is keen to develop/seek sponsorship support from and partnerships with agribusiness and other organisations including but not limited to:

- Universities
- CSIRO
- Local Land Services (LLS)
- NSW DPI
- NSW TAFE
- Schools and Colleges
- Financial institutions
- Agribusiness service providers
- Chartered Accountants
- Other Government agencies
- Other farmer groups

Programs already commenced

1. Seasonal Updates

Workshops held at critical decision points in time to assist members to make better feed planning, pasture management and livestock health and marketing decisions. Two have already been held in March 2014 at Tarago and Binda and these will be continued in the future.

Projects about to commence

1. Potential for Phosphorus Efficient Legumes

An MLA funded Participatory Research Project to identify which alternate phosphorus efficient legume species will establish, survive and produce best in the Southern Tablelands environment at different fertility levels and on different soils types when grazed by sheep and cattle. The project is funded to run over three years at a number of different sites commencing in 2015.

2. Soil assessment program - “Soil Club”

An initiative to allow members to soil test several paddocks with the results being pooled to provide insight into soils across the region. Participants will critically analyse their farm’s soil fertility profiles and build a whole farm soil fertility management plan which facilitates better targeting of phosphorus (P) and sulphur (S) applications to underpin sustainable increases in stocking rates and farm business profitability.

Possible activities

The following are amongst a broad number of activities being considered by members and the board:

1. Time Measurement of Pasture Quantity

- a. Evaluation of equipment/methods for determining of feed quantity (feed on offer). In particular, the use of hand held optical sensor equipment. Development of a mobile device application (App) to be used in conjunction with assessment equipment is also being considered.

2. Research – Drench Resistance

- a. To determine the extent of drench resistance in sheep flocks across the Southern Tablelands, and best practice management options for several case study farms.

3. Research – Pasture improvement economics

- a. To determine the economics of pasture improvement on native pasture country with highly acidic soils. The aim of the trials will be to evaluate both pasture and livestock performance and subsequent financial returns from a range of pasture improvement approaches.

4. Research - Perennial pasture species evaluation

- a. A long term trial to include a wide selection of perennial pasture species which are to be performance measured and strategically grazed to evaluate production levels, nutritional value, compatibility and persistence through successive seasons.

5. Extension and miscellaneous activities:

- Seasonal updates
- Young farmer mentoring
- Quarterly newsletter for members
- Official launch
- Annual “TFS Expo”

6. Training:

The following ‘one day’ seminars are being considered:

- “Pasture Success Workshops”- Facilitated workshop sessions and field trips over two days to help farmers identify the key reasons why some pastures establish successfully and persist, and others do not.
- “Planning Farm Expansion - Doing the numbers and managing the risks”
- “Succession Planning for Farm Families”
- “Bred Well, Fed Well”
- “Best Practice for Beef Profits”
- “Negotiation Skills”

Tablelands Farming Systems - Board

Board members

Tom McGuinness (Chair), Bach of Bus (Ag Com), Uni of Syd

Tom lives at Bigga in the Tablelands of NSW running a mixed grazing enterprise, comprising merino sheep (wool) and beef cattle breeding. Tom has 16 years' experience working in and managing the business. He also owns and manages another mixed farming property (beef cattle and cereal cropping) at Coonamble in the Central West Slopes and Plains of NSW. Tom lives with his wife Georgie and young family and is focused on running a profitable farming business.

John Klem (Vice Chair), B.A.(Ed), HDA

John has 50 years' experience in the Agricultural Industry. He and his wife Kathryn currently farm at Bannister near Crookwell producing vealers and fat lambs. John was head teacher of Rural Studies at Goulburn TAFE and for 15 years and has been involved in a number of agricultural extension groups and Landcare. John has been chair of the State Catchment Committee, a Board Member of the Sydney Catchment Authority, a Member of Natural Resources Advisory Committee, a NSW Representative on the Australian Landcare Council and chair of the Hawkesbury Nepean Catchment Management Authority. John has formal training in Corporate Governance and has completed the Company Director's course. John has a keen interest in supporting and encouraging the next generation of young farmers. He believes the TFS group will be a major contributor to this cause.

Gary Kadwell

Gary is a 5th generation farmer producing certified seed potatoes, prime lambs and lucerne hay. Gary is passionate about achieving excellence in agricultural and horticultural production and is also a keen environmentalist having returned considerable areas of productive land on his farm to trees. He is very active in the community being vice president of the Crookwell Potato Association, director of Crookwell Taralga Aged Care, a board member of the Upper Lachlan Foundation and a volunteer delegate in the Southern Tablelands Bush Fire Management Committee.

Peter King (B.Com, Chartered Accountant)

Peter is originally from the Southern Tablelands. He studied Commerce at the University of NSW graduating in 1985, then commenced work with the international accounting firm Ernst & Young, firstly based in Sydney and then later in Melbourne. It was always Peter's ambition to return to the country and work in agribusiness. He commenced with Boyce Chartered Accountants in Dubbo in 1987 and was appointed as a Director of the firm in 1990. Peter moved to Goulburn in 1996 to establish a Boyce branch on the Southern Tablelands. Peter soon became involved coordinating an annual Tablelands grazing comparative analysis. Peter also served as the managing director for Boyce from 2003 to 2009. Peter specialises in rural accounting, succession and financial planning. Peter and his wife Kate operate a self-replacing merino and first cross lamb operation on their property "Eastleigh" at Golspie.

Phil Graham, (B Sc Agr (Syd Uni)) , Dip Farm Forestry (McMillian Centre)

Phil works for Agriculture NSW and is the pasture & livestock technical specialist based at Yass. Phil's working career has included time in the cotton, dairy and textile industries with the last 23 years spent with the NSW Department Primary Industries. Since 2005 he has filled the role as technical specialist grazing systems covering NSW. A current project Phil manages is looking at the impacts of potential changes in our climate to livestock production systems.

Skye Ward, B.Ag.Ec (Hons)

Skye has had a lifelong association with the land, having grown up on a property on Monaro and now running a merino enterprise with her husband at Bungonia, Windellama and also down at Cooma. This prompted Skye to study Agricultural Economics before embarking on a career in agribusiness finance and later as an agricultural economist for NAB identifying the key risks and opportunities facing the sector in Australia, New Zealand and the UK. More recently, Skye has worked in events management running the highly regarded Rabobank educational programs for Australia and New Zealand's leading primary producers, as well as operating her own niche tour business. However, her most fulfilling role has been the work she has done with her local community, running a series of wellbeing programs across the Southern Tablelands to help farming families build resilience during drought. Skye now works as a marketing and PR consultant from home.