

Adjusting my farm for Climate Change at Devenish

DEVENISH CROPPING AND SHEEP - SUMMARY

Matt Trewin, fifth generation farmer, is curious about how to manage his 1000 acre dryland cropping farm, incorporating nature to create beauty, develop alternative income sources and provide resilience strategies for the health of his land. He returns to the farm with corporate learning, understanding that the property is part of a larger natural system, in which correct care will provide a sustainable (financial, social and environmental) future for his family.

The farming enterprise over the course of Trewin's five generations has varied from cropping to sheep. They have consistently maintained an award winning Clydesdale horse breeding program with Clydesdale's still present creating a feel of nostalgia as you drive through the front entrance to the original homestead.

The current enterprise of cropping allows the greatest flexibility as Matt and his family are managing full-time work and farm management on the weekends. He is aware that his off-farm income assists in supporting new creative ventures on his property, but highlights that the farming operation is financially viable on its own. Matt is keen to continue to run the farm profitably but consider options for income in order to maintain the health of his soils, including its water holding capacity, and create habitat for insects that control pests and pollinate crops.

MOTIVATION FOR CHANGE

- Resilience of farming landscapes
- Reduce the risk of the farming business through weather related events
- Maintain the old trees and provide succession for them
- Profitable business



KEY FACTS

Property size: 1000 acres

Location: Devenish, VIC

Enterprise: Sheep and Cropping

Elevation: 185m

Annual Rainfall: Approx. 590mm

Soils:

IDEAS & INNOVATIONS

- To look at options for increasing the water holding capacity of the soil whilst continuing the cropping enterprise.
- To look at ways to build social and environmental resilience into what they are currently doing
- Is building successive paddock trees to ensure they stay in the system
- Tree shelter belts around each of the cropping paddocks to increase beneficial insects
- Developing and managing one paddock for wildflowers and native grasses to restore the woodland vegetation type
- Protection of the Quandongs and cultural heritage found on the property



KEY LEARNINGS AND NEXT STEPS

Matt is exploring the use of native pastures in select areas of his farm. He is developing ways to improve growth and harvest of bush foods endemic from a different era. He hopes to improve his soil and reduce his overheads, but for now, he is content to work with small patches of land and understand how these may assist improving the whole system.

The Goulburn Broken CMA, through funding through the Australian Government's National Landcare Program, was able to support Matt's farm by; providing trees to increase native vegetation connections and biodiversity; support the Yorta Yorta Nation Aboriginal Corporation to conduct a cultural heritage assessment in a site where Quandong trees were growing prolifically; and host a field day where the Trewins could learn from others and tell their story.

Matt and his family have a plan to return full-time to the farm. They want to continue to create flexibility into their livelihoods, environment and farming system.

When asked what is the most important aspect of creating this Matt responded by saying

Be curious, ask questions of people, be open to information that arises, seeking to place that into your own framework. Learning and planning is the key.



OUTCOMES

Ecological

To highlight their commitment to creating a more natural system, Matt and his family have planted shelterbelts around each of their cropping paddocks, fenced off their waterway and cordoned off their wildflower paddock to ensure the continued proliferation of wildflowers in the Spring. Remnant bush is also a feature of the property which the Trewin's are intent on managing as effectively as possible to reflect the grassy woodland vegetation type.

Social

Matt's family are particularly fond of the remnant vegetation, providing habitat for birds, mammals and reptiles that frequent the area. They see this area of the farm as a potential income source through guided wildflower walks with contacts they have made in their sabbatical to Melbourne.