

AgFutures News



Newsletter #1 November 2008

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History

AgFutures was funded in 2008 as a part of the State Governments \$205 million Future Farming Strategy. This funding followed on from the successful delivery of the Rural Futures Initiative (RFI) in 2007/08 across 7 farming communities throughout Victoria.

View the project website to find out more about the 2007/08 program
www.dpi.vic.gov.au/AgFutures

Project Summary

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

Over the next 4 years, AgFutures will work with 12 agriculturally based communities each year.

How?

By providing information on the trends and drivers of change such as:

- local farm performance
- rural population change
- global markets
- climate change
- land use change
- natural resource management
- future farm technologies

Results

By bringing farmers, service providers and government together to discuss information and change, there will be:

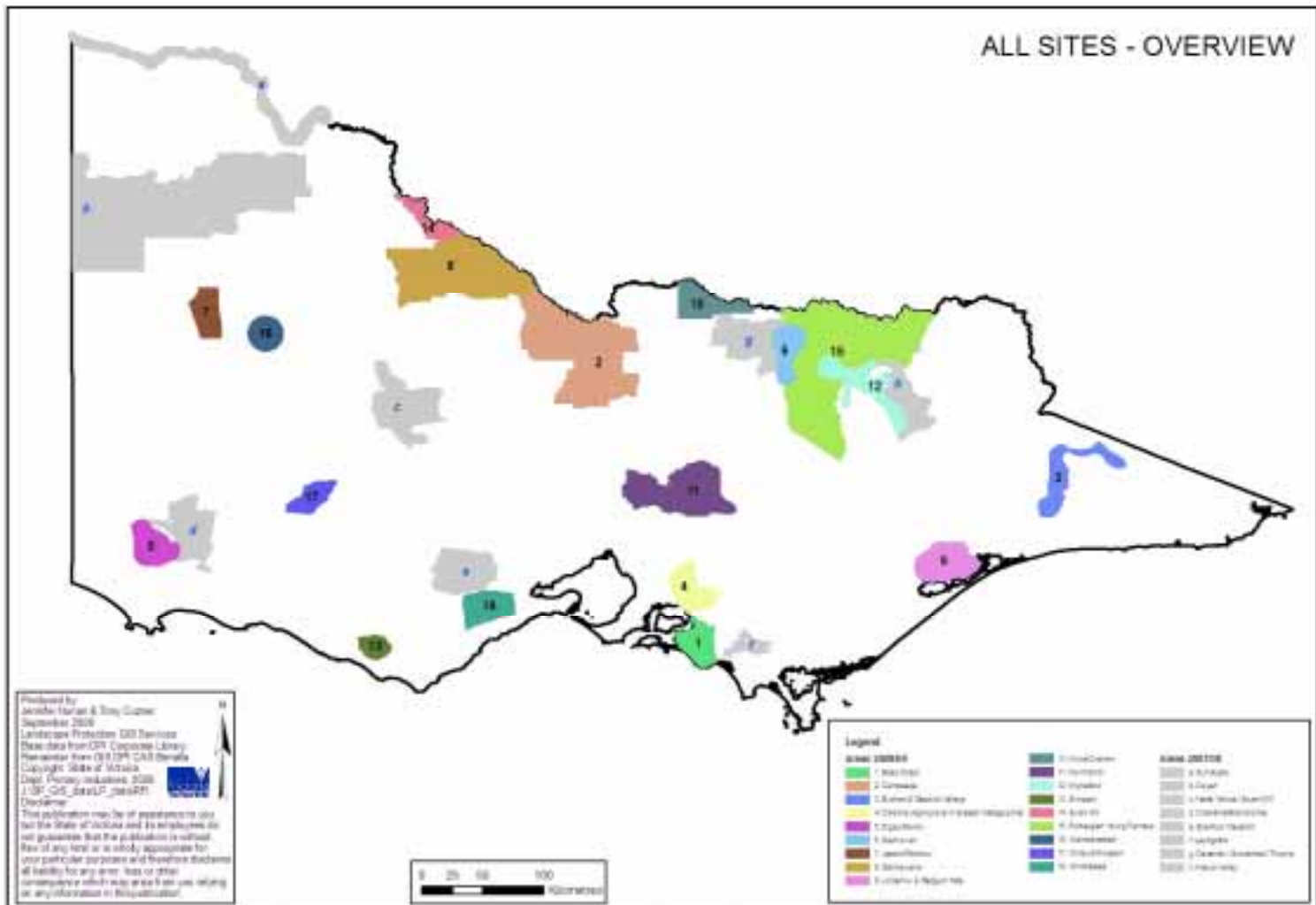
- better informed decisions when responding to change
- access to stronger and wider networks
- better awareness of farm services available





2008 & 2009 AgFutures Project Areas

AgFutures will be delivered in 18 farming areas over the next 18 months as outlined on the map. The project was delivered in 7 areas in 2007/08



Legend

Areas	2008/09	Areas	2007/08
	1. Bass Coast		a. Sunraysia
	2. Campaspe		b. Ouyen
	3. Buchan & Deddick Valleys		c. Natte Yallock/Stuart Mill
	4. Cardinia (Agriculture in Green Wedge zone)		d. Coleraine/Braxholme
	5. Digby/Merino		e. Shelford/Meredith
	6. Glenrowan		f. Leongatha
	7. Jeparit/Rainbow		g. Devenish/Goorambat/Thoona
	8. Gannawarra		h. Kiewa Valley
	9. Lindenow & Redgum Flats		
	10. Moira/Cobram		
	11. Murrindindi		
	12. Myrtleford		
	13. Simpson		
	14. Swan Hill		
	15. Rutherglen Young Farmers		
	16. Warracknabeal		
	17. Willaura/Moyston		
	18. Winchelsea		



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Website launch

The AgFutures website will be live Thursday 27th November.

www.dpi.vic.gov.au/AgFutures

The website contains contact information, project area summaries and any upcoming events. Presentations from events will be posted on the website.



FORWARD THINKING FARMERS ATTEND CARBON TRADING FORUM AT BARUNAH PARK

Emissions Trading is a policy tool used for controlling pollution by providing economic incentives for achieving reductions in the emissions of targeted pollutants.

Forward thinking farmers took the opportunity to learn how a Carbon Pollution Reduction Scheme will affect their businesses, at a workshop held in Barunah Park on 7th August.

Hosted by the Department of Primary Industries (DPI), through their AgFutures (formerly Rural Futures Initiative), the forum attracted over 60 participants.

Dr Richard Eckard from the University of Melbourne and the DPI, said the scheme is based on a 'cap and trade' approach.

"A 'cap and trade scenario' involves a cap on total emissions based on a 'business as usual' scenario for each industry, the allocation or auction of permits up to that cap, and trading to make up the balance," explained Dr Eckard.

Agriculture will initially be excluded from the CPRS, however, this delay does not prevent farmers from being immediately affected by the introduction of the scheme. Negative impacts will include higher energy, fuel and fertiliser costs. On the positive side, astute farmers can benefit from the trade in carbon which is already occurring in Australia.

There are many good reasons for having a farm which has more carbon – other than the prospect of financial gain through selling carbon. Farmers already appreciate that trees provide lots of other benefits on a farm, and soils with higher organic matter and carbon are considered healthier and productive. The new carbon markets can provide some significant win-win

situations for landholders and the environment.

Graeme Anderson from DPI explained how growing numbers of farmers are including carbon in their farm matrix, through tree planting schemes- but they are only one of a number of solutions to mitigating climate change. "Reducing emissions in the first place is always a priority. Forest offsets will only be a part of the overall carbon market activity and this will be in competition with other forms of eligible emission reduction techniques."

Michael Williamson from Sustainability Victoria provided farmers with information on bioenergy technology opportunities for Victorian Agriculture. Mr Williamson said that "there is public support for cleaner energy and the carbon cycle of biomass for energy is intrinsically carbon neutral." Mr Williamson also explained that "the energy supply and delivery system we have today is not the one we will have in 20 years time and bioenergy will increase its contribution as energy gets more costly and emissions trading matures."

Opportunities for bioenergy in Victoria include a rapidly transforming energy market which will favour low carbon energy sources and large potential resource in agricultural, municipal and process wastes. Bioenergy feedstocks include wood waste, purpose grown energy crops, animal/human wastes, crop residue and food processing wastes.

All speakers cautioned farmers to seek out the most reliable information and obtain expert advice before making any decisions about accounting for their carbon. They also encouraged farmers to participate in discussions and forums surrounding a CPRS.

For more information view the website www.dpi.vic.gov.au/AgFutures



Many young farmers take time out for forum

Over 40 of the Hume region's younger farmers attended the Rural Futures Young Farmers Forum held at the Department of Industries Rutherglen Research Centre on 21 July 2008.

They came to hear an expert panel of guest speakers present many of the current hot topics such as climate change, carbon trading, local farm demographic changes and succession planning.

Key presenter, Traci Griffin from the Department of Primary Industries addressed the audience on some of the key issues currently impacting on farmers, now and in the future. Included in her presentation were climatic cycles and trends, what constitutes an 'exceptional circumstance' and where Victoria's key viable agribusiness regions could possibly lay in 2050. A major topic of discussion was carbon offsets and how DPI were working towards improving feed and technology in an effort to reduce the well publicised high emissions percentage generated by farming activities and improve returns.

The number of farms in the region are reducing and the farmers are getting older, according to the statistics presented by the DPI's Neil Barr. The price of land is rapidly increasing due

to outside influences, preventing many farms from undertaking the growth necessary to remain profitable. He also reported on the trend of young people leaving family farms to generate an off-farm income, with many never returning to the farm.

Mike Stephens delivered a light approach to succession planning. Those in attendance were given several succession scenarios, some of which worked, with just as many not, due to poor future planning. The message given to the audience was to plan ahead early and to ensure everyone is in agreement as to their specific role in the family business.

"We are delighted to have had such a strong response to the Young Farmers Forum" said Anne Shaw, Drought Services Co-Coordinator. "The forum attracted young farmers from right across the region, with many travelling several hours to attend. The Young Farmers Forum, hosted by the Australian Alpine Valleys Agribusiness Forum and supported by the AgFutures project, delivered very up to date and vitally important information to the key group in attendance, ensuring they are well armed with the information to make well informed decision in the not too distant future."

For further information contact Anne Shaw, Drought Services Co-ordinator on 0458 216 088 or view www.dpi.vic.gov.au/AgFutures
Want to know more about AAVAF go to www.alpvalleys.com.au





The signpost

A list of events, interesting reading or a website to visit.

Events

DSE EcoTender Public Information Sessions: Wednesday 3 December - San Remo Hotel, 10.30am & 7.30pm
Thursday 4 December - Poowong Hotel, 2pm & 7.30pm
Further Information: www.dse.vic.gov.au (search EcoTender)

Reading

DPI Latest Information Notes:

Risks Associated with Grazing or Cutting Failed Crops for Stockfeed (updated version September '08)
Information Notes available from the DPI website
www.dpi.vic.gov.au

A Step Ahead - Stories of Farming Life

DVD available from the DPI Customer Service Centre on 136 186
Fact Sheets available from the DPI website www.dpi.vic.gov.au

Websites

Future Farm Industries CRC: www.futurefarmcrc.com.au

South West Climate Change Forum: www.swccf.com.au

DPI Drought Information: www.dpi.vic.gov.au/drought

Next edition: February 2009



Published by the Department of Primary Industries, (optional - add name of Group/Division), (location address), (Month and Year)

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Authorised by the Victorian Government, 1 Spring Street, Melbourne 3000

1836-487X (Print)

1836-4888 (Online)

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