



Project momentum builds as research commences

Welcome to the first newsletter for *Farming for the Future*, a project that is working towards a more financially prosperous, climate-resilient and decarbonising agriculture sector in Australia.

Earlier this month, Dr Sue Ogilvy - Research Director of *Farming for the Future* - and some other members of our team attended the National Farmers' Federation Conference. We were delighted to meet so many like-minded individuals and there was genuine excitement in the room about our project. See below for a summary of this event.

As our first farm assessments are now underway, we are starting to hear reports back from our ecologists on how this process is going, see below to read an update from them.

We are delighted to announce that the following organisations have chosen to partner with us: National Farmers' Federation, Meat & Livestock Australia, Australian Wool Innovation, Foundation for Rural and Regional Renewal, and The Yulgilbar Foundation. We are also pleased to welcome Bush

Heritage to the program as one of our key partners whose ecologists will provide ecological assessments.

We thank them for their support and are grateful they have chosen to join us on this exciting project.



National Farmers' Federation Conference



Farming for the Future the talk of the town at NFF Conference

Amidst a background of global uncertainty, the 2022 National Farmers' Federation (NFF) Conference heard about the opportunities *Farming for the Future* is looking to unlock for Australian producers and how stakeholders of the agricultural sector also stand to benefit.

Panel delves into natural capital

Farming for the Future Research Director, Dr Sue Ogilvy, joined a panel of fellow industry leaders to explore ecosystem services and the opportunities it presents to producers. In a wide-ranging discussion, the panel dissected how producers are and could be rewarded for good stewardship of their land. Determining the point at which further natural capital investment no longer benefits farm production, but still improves ecosystem outcomes, will be key to determining any incentive or reward programs from governments going forward.

Beyond the 'pull factor' incentives for natural capital investment, some major 'push factors' are coming through. The access requirements of some global markets are increasingly including production footprint and process considerations. Quantifying natural capital investment and the impact of it on the ecosystem will only become more important in maintaining access to premium markets.

Partnering with AgTech to build the capability to demonstrate adherence to market requirements, and commercialising it so that it is accessible to all producers is not only essential for market access, but it will likely also uncover further insight that will assist producers with their operations.

The first step often the hardest

While there was a general consensus in the room about the growing link between environmental and commercial outcomes of agricultural production, knowing where to start in actioning this was raised as a clear obstacle for producers. In fact, the obstacle was much broader and indicated general uncertainty amongst producers about how to start successful, long-term process change.

This sentiment reinforced how important the stakeholder engagement element of *Farming for the Future* will be to its success, as will enabling peer groups with the tools and information they need to support each other.

NFF bold in its vision for regions

Also a major topic of discussion was the NFF's launch of *Time to Thrive* - its 'five big ideas' for strengthening our regions that it is putting to all sides of politics this federal election. The ideas - plan for smarter regional growth; partner for a healthier environment; connect every Australian; secure Australia's farm workforce; and give farmers a fair go - are the latest strategic steps by the NFF to drive long-term prosperity of Australian agriculture as the industry powers towards its \$100 billion by 2030 target. We are excited about the alignment of these ideas with *Farming for the Future* and the opportunities that can bring. Learn more at [Time to Thrive](#).

Farm participation

Last month we put the call out to farmers to be involved in our program. To date, we have had more than 60 expressions of interest from producers from all over Australia. Initially, our study is focusing on producers in the New England region of NSW as Autumn is still suitable to do natural capital measurement there. We will be opening the study up to the other areas of Australia shortly.

We have had 15 producers agree to participate, and detailed ecological maps of 13 farms have been developed. Seven of these producers have had the satellite imagery for their properties analysed for field observation planning, and field observations have been completed for five of these. Currently, we are racing against the weather to get these field visits completed because it becomes difficult to identify many types of grass and forbs if they are affected by frost.

The team is delighted with the progress so far and are looking forward to reviewing the data with the producers and getting their feedback.

Do you know a farm interested in getting a set of natural capital accounts completed at no cost to them? If so, please direct them to our website to sign up so one of our team can contact them.

[Click here to sign up](#)

Updates from the field

As our farm assessments get underway, we have some updates and feedback from our ecologists undertaking work in the New England region. All of whom have had wild adventures due to the rain and ensuing mud!

All have reported how delighted they have been by the enthusiasm and interest shown by farmers as they go about their assessments, with many helping to dig holes for soil assessments and identifying plants together. Farmers enjoy teaming up with visiting ecologists to help read the landscape together, and ecologists enjoy hearing their stories and ideas around management, production, biodiversity, and soil health.

Ecologists and farmers have had interesting conversations about some trade-offs for pushing high production and finding that sweet spot between long-term sustainability and a productive business.

The ecologists are looking forward to further refining their methods to evaluate production following ongoing feedback from participants.



Narelle Jarry, John Finlayson and Imogen Semmler out in the field.



Bill Perrottet taking part in the field assessment on his farm.

In the media

Dr Sue Ogilvy and Michelle Gortan have both recently appeared in the media, discussing the links between natural capital and farm profitability.

You can read both articles here:

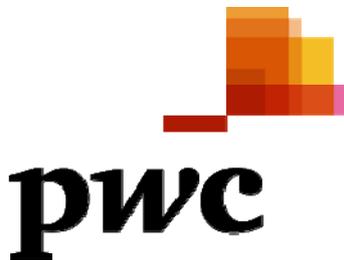
- [*The Farmer Farmers can cash in on natural capital*](#)
- [*The Land Linking natural capital with farm profitability*](#)

Coming next

While our ecologists continue the farm surveys, the rest of the team is busy working to source other industry partners and seeking opportunities to raise the profile of *Farming for the Future*.

Coming up on the 1st June, Michelle Gortan, Chief Executive Officer of the Macdoch Foundation, will speak at the upcoming Global Food Forum in Melbourne. The Forum will present industry experts to debate and discuss the critical issues facing Australia's agricultural sector. Michelle will appear on a panel discussing the opportunities for agribusiness and farmers in biodiversity, trees, soil and natural capital farming.

Farming for the Future is a project initiated by philanthropic foundation, The Macdoch Foundation. This program is supported by PwC Australia, and a multidisciplinary research team of scientists and farm advisors led by the team at Integrated Futures.



For further information about *Farming for the Future* please visit our [website](#) or email hello@fftf.org.au.

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