

# Integrating grazing with other agricultural enterprises

Dr Richard Price  
National Operations Coordinator  
Grain & Graze

## **Observations from interviews with ~60 mixed enterprise farmers (2005)**

The case studies have demonstrated that individual enterprises are well-understood and managed by producers, but there is scope to capitalise on the synergies between the enterprises. This requires an understanding of how and where the enterprises can be fitted together better, which is a complex and difficult task.

## More observations

Another observation about the Grain and Graze program targets is that they are at a scale consistent with what we observed in the case studies, that is the potential for improvement in livestock profitability is higher than that for cropping.

## **More observations**

We constantly came across examples of producers making decisions based on experience or intuition, but without objective measures.

It is apparent that producers would benefit from having a process that takes them through a logical decision making path such as that used in leading farm discussion groups.

## **More observations**

The use of agronomists was common, but use of business consultants was not.

The Grain and Graze program is likely to benefit from the use of facilitators/mentors/co-ordinators who have business skills as well as technical/production skills.

## **More observations**

There was often a large quantity of wasted feed in stubble, in lucerne and in pastures due to low stocking rates, timing of the livestock enterprise or grazing management practices (albeit that some producers are still restocking after the drought). This is likely to provide mixed farms with the most opportunity to lift farm profitability.

## **More observations**

Overall the drought and rainfall variability in general has increased producers' aversion to risk. This is impacting on their attitude towards employing labour and investing in NRM activities for example.

## More observations

The focus for natural resource management (NRM) was often the soils. As stated previously, this is seen as very positive and awareness of soil health issues was very high. However we would have expected a broader appreciation of the importance of conservation of natural resources within the case studies.

A minority of farmers saw management of NRM as a whole farm approach, eg. 'ecological footprint'.

## The questions that arise . . .

- How do we create businesses based on whole-farm management of temperate grasslands?
- How can businesses capture value within the context of the producer to consumer supply chain?
- What are the non “Grain & Graze” uses of temperate grasslands that can fit into a whole-farm or regional business strategy? (And how might they fit into mixed farming businesses?)