

Myths, facts and realities about Australian agriculture (2006)

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Thanks go to our friends at Currie
Communications for providing
material used in this presentation

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Myth:

An idea that forms part of the beliefs of a group, but is not founded on fact

Oxford Australian Dictionary

Myth #1

Corporate agriculture is swallowing up the nation's farm sector

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The Facts #1

- 95% of farms are run by families
- Over 90% of holdings are 'small'
- The number of small farms is set to double
- Small farms turnover every 5-7 years

Reality #1

Australia's farm sector is dynamic, growing, drifting; and increasingly diverse

(15 new farms each working day in Victoria)

Myth #2

Things are crook in the country

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The Facts #2

- Youth unemployment is declining faster in rural Australia
- Population growth is 40% higher
- Better balance of women to men
- Highest sense of wellbeing is in rural towns

Reality #2

Social capital is higher and people feel better in regional Australia

(Community connectedness fosters wellbeing)

Myth #3

As technology improves it will be easier to communicate to rural Australia remotely

The Facts #3

Why communicate remotely, when:

- 89% of farmers are in community groups
- 42% are aware of issues through word of mouth
- 83% get information from their local paper
- Regional people support local events

Reality #3

Expediency will never replace the need for local voice, local action, local life

(Timing + relevance = interest, influence)

Myth #4

Aging farmers are less likely to adopt new technologies

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The Facts #4

The jury is out:

- Older farmers often have less debt and can be less risk averse

versus

- Adopting significantly different practices is likely to occur in the first 5 years of property ownership

Reality #4

Adoption has less to do with age, size of property and availability of capital than it has to do with attitudes, aspirations and personal risk profile.

Myth #5

Rural Australia plays an important role in defining Australia's unique character

The Facts #5

- 25% of Australians live within 3 kms of the sea
- 95% of Australians live within 50 kms of the sea

Reality #5

More and more, Australian values are being shaped by metropolitan lifestyles.

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Myth #6

Farmers in subsidised countries are better off.

The Facts #6

- Every week in the United States 500 farmers go out of business
- In France, the figure is 769 farmers per week
- Ireland is the only developed country to buck this trend

Reality #6

Australian agriculture is not immune to global trends, and protection is not the answer.

Thank you

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