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June 27, 2011*

'Highland View' reaches new heights – NZ winner of leading Australasian farm managers' award

Personal and business performance benchmarking has unlocked the key to success for Hawke's Bay farmer Mark Watson of 'Highland View' – winner of Rabobank's prestigious 2011 Farm Managers Program business development award.

Recognised for his 'improvement plan' which has been executed across all levels of the farming operation, Mr Watson has successfully driven results into his farm business, resulting in higher productivity gains.

The Rabobank Farm Managers Program is a business management course designed to develop the operational and strategic business skills of young farmers who represent the next generation of leading farm business owners. Now in its sixth year, the 2011 Program was held in Brisbane this month, attended by 30 participants from both islands of New Zealand and all states of Australia and representing a wide range of agricultural commodities.

Receiving the prize at the program dinner held in Brisbane, Mr Watson said the course had far exceeded his expectations. "It blew me away how professional the course is – it goes beyond farming and delves into business and personality assessments so you get a very well-rounded assessment of how to run your enterprise," he said.

"My Farm Managers project was focused on my 'personal improvement plan' which explored my leadership style, emotional intelligence, time management and communication.

"The second part of the project was my 'business improvement plan' which involved the development of a strategic business plan that the whole business team has had input in to."

Mr Watson manages his family farming business located in Hawke's Bay on the east coast of New Zealand. The operation winters 9,000 stock units on 750 hectares of rolling to medium-steep summer dry country. The enterprise is mainly a margin trading business, which includes 80 dairy carryover cows, 500 two-year old bulls and steers, 200 yearling stags and finishes approximately 8,500 lambs/hoggets.

"It's astounding to see how small changes can really make a big difference to your business – both personally, and professionally," Mr Watson said. "Big changes don't happen overnight but the little things you nudge away at will make a positive difference in a big way."

Rabobank Farm Managers Program director Angus Taylor – also one of the award judges – said Mr Watson's personal and business productivity plan had a positive impact on his business "by weeding out" certain behaviour traits. This has helped influence his business productivity for the better.



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“The idea that the personal productivity of leaders is central to business profitability is an important principle of the Farms Managers Program and Mr Watson has done a wonderful job of applying this,” Mr Taylor said.

“Overall, the participants on this year’s program are great examples of how the course helps young producers to have a positive impact on their farm businesses and their lives. At its heart, what we aim to provide is an unrivalled opportunity for the development of the sectors’ emerging leaders.”

The Rabobank Farm Managers Program is designed for farm business managers who will be running and taking ownership of a leading agribusiness in the future. Applications for the 2012 program will open in early 2012 however advance enquiries are welcome. For more information, contact Rabobank business programs manager Nerida Sweetapple by phone on +61 2 8115 4139 or email nerida.sweetapple@rabobank.com.

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Rabobank Australia & New Zealand is a part of the international Rabobank Group, the world’s leading specialist in food and agribusiness banking. Rabobank has more than 110 years’ experience providing customised banking and finance solutions to businesses involved in all aspects of food and agribusiness. Rabobank is structured as a cooperative and operates in 48 countries, servicing the needs of more than nine million clients worldwide through a network of more than 1600 offices and branches. Rabobank Australia & New Zealand is one of Australasia’s leading rural lenders and a significant provider of business and corporate banking and financial services to the region’s food and agribusiness sector. The bank has 83 branches throughout Australia and New Zealand.

Media contacts:

Denise Shaw
Media Relations Manager
Rabobank Australia & New Zealand
Phone: 02 8115 2744 or 0439 603 525
Email: denise.shaw@rabobank.com

Jess Martin
Media Relations
Rabobank Australia & New Zealand
Phone: 02 8115 4861
Email: jess.martin@rabobank.com