



**Rabobank**

*Media Release  
July 15, 2011*

## ***Stowport's Simplot success – local farmer named 2011 Young Potato Grower***

Praised for his industry leadership and technology innovation on-farm, potato farmer of Stowport in north-west Tasmania Justin Shephard has been awarded the 2011 Rabobank Simplot Young Potato Grower.

Developed to promote and support exceptional young growers with a bright future in the industry, potato farmers from around Tasmania gathered to hear the announcement of the various Simplot awards held at the annual dinner held at the Ulverstone Rowing Club on Thursday 14 July.

Chosen from a select group of nominees, Mr Shephard was presented his prize in front of an audience of approximately 200 including growers, contractors, cool storage owners and industry stakeholders.

Mr Shephard said winning the award was a bit of a shock, "but in a good way".

"It's nice to get a bit of recognition from the industry as we've put a lot of work in to our enterprise," he said.

Mr Shephard, in partnership with his wife Catherine, runs a diverse farming business on 200 hectares growing poppies, carrots, onions, pyrethrum wheat, along with 200 head of beef cattle. The Shephards grow three different processing potato cultivars including JR2, Russett Burbank, and Ranger Russetts.

With a significant focus on farming technology, the Shephard's have been involved with a quality assurance program over a number of years, and have recently implemented a detailed mapping and budget program to track all aspects of the business with the introduction of trialling the use of a palm computer with a GPS reader to map paddocks for record-keeping. The aim is to improve crop management along with monitoring gross margins and costs for each cropping enterprise. Although in its early stages, this will prove helpful in delivering future positive results for the Shephard's farm business.

Mr Shephard continues to make a significant contribution to the potato industry. In 2010, he took part in a three-week study tour of England with Serve-Ag and has spent eight years on the Tasmanian Farmers and Graziers (TFGA) /Simplot Growers committee.

Mr Shephard said he would recommend all potato growers serve a term on the TGFA/Simplot Growers committee to gain a better understanding of the potato industry and the challenges that the growers and Simplot face each season.

As part of the award, in 2012 Mr Shephard will undertake the Rabobank Farm Managers Program – a course specially designed to strengthen the operational and strategic business management skills of tomorrow's farm leaders. The program, which is now in its sixth year, is modelled on the bank's highly-respected Executive Development



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Program and covers topics including leadership, business planning, financial and economic management and succession planning.

Mr Shephard said, "I'm looking forward to doing the business program and learning something different and something new to bring back to the business".

Rabobank Rural Manager Devonport Chris Russell, who attended the Simplot dinner, said Mr Shephard was a deserved recipient of the award due to his positive attitude and contribution to the potato industry.

"Justin's motivation and interest to be involved in local committees and his enthusiasm for what he does proves his passion and leadership in this industry," Mr Russell said.

"Such willingness to not only discuss ideas but make things happen shows he's the right sort of person to lead an industry."

As the main sponsor of the Simplot Young Potato Growers Awards, Mr Russell said Rabobank saw the awards as a good opportunity to acknowledge the good work of the potato industry and to give back to the agri-community.

The aim of the dinner is to thank the growers and their workers for their effort during the year in getting good quality potatoes to the factory for processing. The best growers and contractors from the Ulverstone, Scottsdale and Midlands areas are awarded and acknowledged to the Tasmanian potato industry, as well as the Young Grower of the Year.

"As a leading lender to the agricultural sector, we believe it's essential to recognise future leadership in agribusiness," Mr Russell said.

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