



**Rabobank**

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February 28, 2013*

## ***Stepping up – Rabobank Farm Managers Program opens for applications***

Young South Australian farmers interested in stepping up to the next level of strategic farm business management are being invited to enrol in the 2013 Rabobank Farm Managers Program.

Announcing the opening of applications for the 2013 Farm Managers Program, Rabobank state manager SA James Robinson said strong business management skills are becoming increasingly important for primary producers to successfully manage and grow their enterprises.

“Rabobank’s farm business management programs support the strategic development of Australian and New Zealand agricultural business,” Mr Robinson said.

“Developed to suit the specific yet diverse needs of young farmers, the program addresses strategic management, planning, and business goal-setting in an agricultural context, aimed at helping set the direction for farm business sustainability and profitability in the long-term.”

The Rabobank Farm Managers Program, which is now in its eighth year, is modelled on the bank’s highly-respected Executive Development Program and aims to strengthen the operational and strategic skills of tomorrow’s farm managers, covering topics around leadership, business planning, financial and economic management, and succession planning. It is open to all progressive young farmers from across Australia and New Zealand from a range of agricultural commodities.

Taking on the management of the family farm, 2012 course participant Michael Heyes, 30, enrolled in the program with the aim of setting business objectives to ensure their operation would be in the best shape possible for long-term success.

As part-owner and farm manager of the ‘Heyes Family Trust’, Michael runs a mixed farming enterprise of potatoes and onions, poppies, cereals and Angus cattle across 400 acres in north-eastern Tasmania.

With increasing responsibility to take on the management of the family business, Michael said he applied for Rabobank’s Farm Managers Program in order to gain some core business skills to set some goals and bring about change for the future.

“We’re a family business focussing on the future generations and we’re out to succeed,” Michael said.

“Farm managing is what I am looking to do and we just want to be the best farm managers we can be which is why I looked outside the business for some further education.”



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Like many families in rural enterprise, Michael and his family are underway with their succession planning – a key area addressed in the Rabobank program.

“Succession planning is a complex time in any family business and I was amazed at how emotionally sensitive it can be,” he said.

“The good thing about doing the program is that I could see I was not the only one going through succession – everyone faces their own issues and there are ways to manage things to make sure you get the right outcomes.

“Change doesn’t happen overnight in a family operation but at least I’ve learnt ways to put goals in place and look at where we want to be in the long run.”

Michael said the Rabobank program had also opened his eyes up regarding skills that obviously associated with day-to-day farming, but were equally relevant to managing the business successfully.

“Being someone who is managing a business, I wasn’t aware from the outset how important things like communication, how to present yourself, and good people skills are when it comes to being a good manager,” he said.

“I also learnt a lot about effective time management. As a young manager, it’s quite easy to get swamped in little things but learning to delegate and set weekly and monthly plans has been great for us on an operational front.”

Applications for the 2013 Rabobank Farm Managers Program are open until 26 April. Only 36 applicants will be offered places on the program which will be held at the Grange Cleveland Winery, Lancefield, Victoria from Monday 17 to Friday 21 June, 2013.

Producers interested in an application form or any further information on the Rabobank Farm Managers Program should visit [www.rabobank.com.au](http://www.rabobank.com.au) or contact Rabobank business programs manager Nerida Sweetapple on 02 8115 4139 or email [bmp@rabobank.com](mailto:bmp@rabobank.com).

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