



Rabobank

**Media Release
March 11, 2014**

Succession a key focus of young farmers' business management program in Year of the Family Farm

With 2014 the International Year of the Family Farm, the pressing issue of farm succession will be a key focus of this year's Rabobank Farm Managers Program.

The program – which is designed to strengthen the operational and strategic skills of tomorrow's farm leaders – will cover succession planning for farm businesses, along with a range of topics including leadership, business planning and financial and economic management.

Applications are now open for the 2014 Farm Managers Program, which will be held in Victoria in June.

Now in its ninth year and modelled on Rabobank's highly-respected Executive Development Program, the Farm Managers Program is open to all progressive young farmers from across Australia and New Zealand from a range of agricultural commodities.

Rabobank acting CEO Peter Knoblanche says the Farm Managers Program is an excellent platform for young farmers looking to step up and take on more responsibility with their operations, giving them the confidence to add value and have impact on-farm.

"There comes a time in many families when the younger generation begins to integrate into the family farming business, taking on more responsibility with management decisions," Mr Knoblanche says.

"The aim of the program is to support the younger managers and provide them the business knowledge and tools to succeed. With succession planning a big focus for many agricultural families, and being the International Year of the Family Farm, the Farm Managers Program is a great opportunity to focus on succession and ensure the next generation is in good stead to manage the challenges ahead with regard to running the enterprise in future."

Mr Knoblanche says that farm succession is not just an issue for the farming families involved but it has a direct and long-term impact on future food production. "We need farmers to run our farms."

According to a recently-released Rabobank publication, 'The Future of Farming', in most productive, developed food and agriculture-producing countries, more than half of the farmers are above the age of 55.

"In Australia and New Zealand – and certainly in other countries in the world – most farms are family-run operations, owned and operated by one family and often passed down from generation to generation," Mr Knoblanche says.



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“The ‘family’ in family business is the source of its greatest strength and potential for its greatest downfall. Addressing this issue properly for the future sustainability of these operations is key.”

Northern Tasmanian farm business manager Bradey Davis, 26, runs an intensive cropping operation with potatoes, onions, carrots, poppies and prime lambs near Deloraine in the north of the state. As the winner of the 2012 Simplot Young Potato Grower Award, Bradey was sponsored to participate in the Rabobank Farm Managers Program and says he has gained key skills to help him run the business more efficiently.

A third-generation farmer, Bradey began taking a management role in the family enterprise six years ago. In 2009, he and his family purchased land to expand their farm business and increase their scale.

“When I first started out about six years ago, one of my long term goals was to become the best producer in my region,” Bradey says.

“After the program, my goal was to be a better manager – that means not just managing our business but being a good manager of myself and others.”

The overall focus is to improve the farm but also the quality of life, Brady says.

“Positive thinking is an important part of my management approach,” he says.

“One of the guest speakers on Rabobank program spoke about controlling your thoughts to help you keep a positive outlook,” he says.

“There can be challenging days in farming so it’s important to remain positive and get the best out of yourself and others.”

Looking ahead, Bradey says 2014 will be a big year.

“I am putting the lessons of the Rabobank program into good use on-farm, building on the good work we’re already doing to meet our yield goals, and I am also working on building up my contract business,” he says.

Brady says the contract business is a way to help justify machinery and equipment purchases and add another layer to the business, diversifying income streams – a lesson picked up from the Rabobank program. “We will continue to work on maximising efficiency on this property and focus on the next opportunity to keep growing,” he says.

“The FMP is a great course and I had an absolute blast attending last year. I would recommend it to anyone who wants to take the next step and improve their management skills that will translate into results back home.



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“The connections you make with others on the program are extremely valuable too, giving you a great network of contacts of people in the same situation as you. You can't measure how valuable that can be over the long-term.”

Applications for the 2014 Rabobank Farm Managers Program are open until 28 April. Only 36 applicants will be offered places on the program which will be held at the Grange Cleveland Winery, Lancefield, Victoria from Monday 16 to Friday 20 June, 2014.

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

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 42 countries, servicing the needs of approximately 10 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 93 branches throughout Australia and New Zealand.

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