



Rabobank

*Media release
May 27, 2014*

Five Australians join Young Farmers Master Class to address global F&A challenges

Five leading young Australian farmers will join a group of 40 emerging farm leaders from around the world in the Netherlands next week for the first-ever **Rabobank Young Farmers Master Class**.

Hosted by global agricultural banking specialist Rabobank, the Master Class is aimed at developing the skills and knowledge of younger farmers, who will be key in ensuring productivity gains are made across the global food and agribusiness sector in future years.

Over the course of one week, the Rabobank Young Farmers Master Class will set the scene by analysing global food security issues at play covering topics including Innovation, Big Data (the role of technology in the future of farming), Social Media, Succession, and Best Farm Practices.

Rabobank CEO Australia and New Zealand Thos Gieskes said Rabobank's Young Farmers Master Class is designed to address the themes impacting on the future of farming, in context with the up-and-coming leaders of the agricultural sector.

"The world population is forecast to grow from seven billion today to over nine billion in 2050 – not only is the population growing bigger, it is growing older and wealthier as well," Mr Gieskes said.

"To feed more, longer-living, wealthier people, farmers have to increase global food production by at least 70 per cent. This is why Rabobank has organised the first ever Young Farmers Master Class specifically for young farmers, as they are tomorrow's agricultural leaders and therefore vital in contributing to a secure food future."

Mr Gieskes said as the leading global food and agricultural bank, Rabobank recognises the challenges and opportunities facing the next generation of farmers.

"We believe farmers – and particularly the next generation of farmers – will play a vital role in the shared responsibility of meeting the future demand for food," he said.

"As a global bank supporting the F&A sector around the world, we see the shared responsibility farmers are facing to produce more, with less. The Young Farmers Master Class will provide a platform to participants to interact and exchange knowledge with leading experts, food scientists and global peers.

"Connecting these young minds via the Master Class is one way we can contribute to the betterment of the F&A sector for long-term success."



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Five farmers from around Australia have been chosen to share their backgrounds and experiences with agriculture with other leading primary producers from other countries across Europe, North America, Africa and Asia.

Representing Australia are young farmers: Liverpool Plains grazier Kate Davidson from Gunnedah NSW, tomato grower Jamie Jurgens from Bowen in far north QLD, dairy farmer Tom Acocks, from Shepparton VIC, grain grower Erin Green from Carrawingee Farms near Nawaba in the WA Wheatbelt, and James McShane, a fine wool grower from the Lower Marshes in Tasmania.

James McShane is an innovative young farmer who is keen to share his perspectives at the Young Farmers Master Class. James, along with his wife, Tahnee, runs an enterprise with 5000 fine merino sheep, as well as 200 beef cattle and some timber plantations as well as working native forests.

Having recently become the sole manager and decision-maker for the farm business, James is very eager to engage with other likeminded farmers from all over the globe who share similar interests in agriculture.

“Bringing together 40 young, enthusiastic minds that think ‘outside the square’ to discuss topics such as agricultural innovation, technology and science – I am sure we will cover some very exciting ground,” James said.

“I expect we’ll all come away with a lot of enthusiasm and some thoughts and ideas that could have the potential to benefit others in agriculture across the board.”

James is certainly passionate about innovation and technology advances in agriculture, which prompted him to create Farmware, a tablet and smartphone app for farmers to record and manage data to track stock movements, crop rotations, and chemical inventory.

“As Australian farmers, we’re competing in a global market place which is heavily subsidised in other part of the worlds, and this can affect our competitiveness,” James said.

“Australian farmers are very efficient but we need to continue to push the envelope with efficiencies on-farm so we can get that edge on our competitors. Mobile technologies and precision agriculture contribute to those efficiencies.

“We created Farmware to help producers become more efficient and effective with their record-keeping. By recording things on the app there and then in the paddock or in the yards, it saves time by eliminating double entries back in the office at the end of the day. And it’s all backed up online so you won’t lose your information which can be managed by multiple users on multiple devices.”

James said that when it comes to food production, issues surrounding traceability and accountability are very important. Therefore, good record-keeping systems have a role



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to play in how producers address these demands from consumers and others in the industry.

“While in the Netherlands next week, I am looking forward to seeing how other producers are managing these sorts of realities and I am sure the conversations around farm technology will be quite interesting,” he said.

“I expect that from a technology point of view, almost everything we will do in the future will be very integrated when it comes to managing finances, production data, quality assurance and compliance.

“As a result of this, I expect there will be more integration of the systems that handle this information. Devices that we use to manage that data will be more sophisticated and that is very exciting.”

James was a finalist in the 2013 Australian Farmer of Year Awards for his forward thinking and tech-savvy approach to farming. He also holds a degree in Applied Science in Agriculture.

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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 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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