



Rabobank

*Media release
June 24, 2014*

Business planning equals success – WA farmer takes home management prize

Western Australian farmer from Mount Barker Andrew Slade has been named the 2014 Rabobank Farm Managers Program award winner.

Receiving the \$2000 cash prize at the Rabobank Farm Manager Program graduation dinner held in Melbourne, Andrew was awarded for his dedicated, strategic and streamlined business planning approach to the family farming enterprise.

Andrew said that the Rabobank Farm Managers Program made it clear to him how a simple farm business plan can help to create a strategic direction for the business.

“As part of our family farming operation, we had already been undertaking weekly meetings and annual reviews however I felt it was necessary to set more defined goals and identify the strengths and weaknesses within the business,” Andrew said.

“Together with the input of the family members, we identified that a farm business plan should be developed and split into business growth goals, production and process improvement along with family and staff expectations.”

The first part of Andrew's project was to determine the current business performance, the second was to identify areas where they thought they could improve operations using benchmarking as a comparison and third was to use this information to determine realistic business and productivity goals.

Andrew used the skills and knowledge gained from attending the Farm Managers Program in 2013 to help him assess his current business performance. With this information, he could make decisions about profitability and enterprise mix and start to create a strategic plan including a one-page business plan and drive his business in a more efficient way. The results have been transformational for the farm business which encompasses prime lamb and beef, turning off 10,000 prime lambs and 800 beef cattle annually, along with a 1,000 hectare cropping program which is split half-and-half between cereals and canola.

With the recent purchase of additional land and a change in enterprise proportions after the results of the farm review, the cropping program has increased from 1000 hectares to 1600 hectares in order to capitalise on higher profit margins and the potential benefits of chaff collection as a feed source for their livestock operation.

Returning to the farm after he attended the University of Western Australia to study a Bachelor of Agricultural Science, Andrew has since been responsible for managing and running the lamb and beef feedlots. He has become the stud principal of the Glenridge Park Maternal Breeding Program, specialising in Greeline Maternal Composites and Cheviot genetics for prime lamb production.



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Andrew said attending the Farm Managers Program allowed him to fully capitalise on the potential of his farm operation.

“It was definitely a worthwhile investment for myself and our business,” he said.

Rabobank Business Programs manager Nerida Sweetapple said the challenge of the management project is to demonstrate that the participant has used the tools, theories, ideas or inspirations from the program to make improvements in their business and in their understanding of their own management capabilities over the 12 months after the program.

“Andrew put his business under the microscope, learned more about what drives their enterprise and asked himself how he could improve performance and his own skills as a manager,” Ms Sweetapple said.

“Andrew stood out because of the clear processes he had developed for understanding the profitability of each aspect of his business – the way he had applied the frameworks he was taught to improve those parts of the business that needed it and the changes he had made as a result which are translating into bankable outcomes for the farm.”

Ms Sweetapple said the Rabobank Farm Managers Program teaches farmers the core skills of good business management directly related to agricultural enterprises – it covers all aspects from self management, managing others and managing a business but overall it is the clarity and confidence that the participants gain from having undertaken the program that is so very powerful.

“With vision and belief in your ability and the ability to make better decisions, young farmers can plan their futures, look at how to grow their business and cement their careers in agriculture, securing not only their future, but ours too.”

In its ninth year, the prestigious Rabobank program continues to offer young farmers, from across Australia and New Zealand from a range of agricultural sectors, the opportunity to develop and enhance their business management skills. Participants take away many new skills and techniques with a commercially-driven perspective on farm management, and gain the ability to put systems and structures in place to manage growth.

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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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