

## MAKING THE MOST OF EVERY OPPORTUNITY

In this case study we take a look at a young South East couples journey into farming, and learn a few lessons that farmers of any age can take on board. Mundulla young farmers Matt and Janine Neumann are establishing a sound future for themselves based on teamwork, dedication and education. Purchasing a 325 hectare farm in the Kongal area in the Upper South East four years ago, Matt and Janine took on a fair amount of risk and to offset the risk they have invested heavily in training and education to ensure they have the necessary skills to match their positive attitude to farming. The farm has irrigated lucerne and clover seed crops as its mainstay enterprises but oilseeds, cereals and prime lamb production also play an important role. Because the farm is relatively small by district standards Matt also undertakes hay contract work and assists his parents in their horticulture operations.



### Finding mentors

At the time of purchasing my own farm I joined the yearlong South Australian "Ignite Mentoring Program" that was run by Rural Solutions SA. I was one of forty young farmers from across the state that was linked to an industry mentor to work on a range of issues within their businesses. I was linked with Naracoorte Agribusiness Consultant Ken Solly and have continued to work on a wide range of issues ever since. Meeting up and working with Ken has been a real turning point for both Janine and I and we are extremely grateful for all the time, ideas and encouragement that Ken has given us. We now feel that we in greater control of our future and have greater confidence to tackle the bigger issues that we are now facing.

Looking over the fence at successful farmers During the ignite program Ken took me on a tour of successful farming business across the South East and this opened my eyes to some new ways of doing things.

Following this Ken and I sat down and I gained an insight into a range of decision support computer spread sheets that he uses with his farming clients and then he gave me copies of them all which I have found beneficial to use back in my business.

### Further Study, and getting a handle on financial management

At the completion of the "Ignite" program, South East TAFE was offering a Diploma in Agriculture in which I enrolled so I continued on a steep learning curve. The fact that Ken was one of the key lecturers in the diploma program was also a strong reason for joining in and I have never regretted signing up.

Whilst studying I have not only improved my financial management knowledge but I have come in contact with a whole range of industry experts who have delivered parts of the Diploma and they are now useful business contacts as well.

### Having a go

During the first year of the Diploma program I decided to apply for Nuffield Scholarship to further my knowledge in Supply Chain Management so I called on Ken to overview my application and to help me with interviewing skills. Ken assured me that many people miss out on their first attempt at a Nuffield but if they decided to try a second time they usually win through. This happened to be the case and with some additional coaching and some intensive mock interviewing prior to the national interviews. I was subsequently awarded a scholarship in 2011 to study overseas.

Whilst waiting to commence my Nuffield scholarship I also become involved in a Lifetime Ewe Management program which has enabled me to improve my condition scoring of my ewes, assess my pastures better and set up well planned feed budgets for my prime lamb flock.

Looking outside your own backyard, and developing networks Early in 2012 I took to the skies to participate in the first leg of the Nuffield Scholarship, the Global Focus tour. This allowed me to gain a better context of Australian agriculture on the world stage. In California I gained a first-hand insight into how wireless irrigation management is linked to pumping stations and moisture probes with the information collated sent to an iPad.

I am now installing this technology on one of my irrigation blocks which will allow me to irrigate with off peak electricity and improve water efficiency. Meeting and learning from other Nuffield scholars from around the world was also a highlight and I have stayed in touch with many of the since returning home.

It is such a valuable learning network to be part and I can't wait to undertake the second half of my scholarship in 2013.

During this time I will be focusing on marketing, business structures and deriving greater value in the supply chain for a whole range of agricultural commodities. In applying for a scholarship my broad reasons were to challenge myself and expand my horizons and I have certainly done that.

### Strength in recognising the value of all the farm business participants

I also recognise the important role that Janine has played in supporting me whilst I pursues all these opportunities. Not only has she had the responsibilities of our two young sons Ethan and Ryder, she has continued to have significant input into child care and pastoral care activities in the Tatiara. Having studied theology Janine has many unique qualities and she is of tremendous support to what we want to achieve, Matt claimed.

### Enthusiasm and asking for help – Ken's thoughts

When questioned about Matt's drive and enthusiasm Ken said he believed that at the completion of his Nuffield scholarship Matt will have had the equivalent of a university education all through researching and seizing his own opportunities. It is a fine example of how

you can be on a fast learning curve and at the same time run a successful business Ken continued. The key has been that Matt is not afraid to ask for help and everybody is willing to help him because he is such a positive young farmer, very appreciative and is a "can do" person Ken concluded.



## PROPERTY INFORMATION

Farmers Matt & Janine Neumann

Location Kongal

Property Area 325 Hectares

Enterprises Irrigated Lucerne and Clover seed, oilseeds, cereal & livestock

Rainfall Approximately 450mm