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Catch up with CEO Cindy Cassidy

It's beginning to look a lot like harvest ... oh, and Christmas!

After a staggered start to the region's harvest we've all been faced with a myriad of challenges thrown at us by the weather. Managing these challenges and everything else harvest brings certainly tests any farming family or enterprise, but they're challenges we are all facing together. Here's hoping you've had a clear run over the past few weeks and are able to enjoy some of the celebrations the festive season brings along with it.

This being our first edition of The Link since our hugely successful FarmLink Open Day, it would be remiss of me if I didn't mention it. Thanks to the support of our members, partners, trade display exhibitors, local volunteer groups, board and staff, we were able to pull together a day which provided an opportunity for you to see how the trials are progressing here at TAIC, and hopefully take some knowledge back to apply in your farming operations.

Just on 200 people attended the day, and going on the feedback we have received

both on, and since, the open day we seem to be providing an event which everyone is embracing. Remember, we are always open to suggestions, so feel free to give us a call, or drop in at TAIC.

The open day was just one event in what was a busy, busy 2015. The team at FarmLink has really enjoyed working with our collaborators on projects which will help our members enact change on their farms to increase productivity and sustainability. Getting to know our members better, and what they do, is an ongoing focus for us, and we look forward to continuing to do so into 2016. We are currently inviting 2016 memberships, and urge all of our members to spread the word about FarmLink.

We've also been supported by a range of partners throughout the year, some who have continued their loyal support of FarmLink and some new ones who have observed what we are doing and the important role we play in the agricultural sector in southern New South Wales and

wanted to join in. We value the support of all of our partners and look forward to growing this area of FarmLink in the near future.

As far as projects go, a number will continue on into 2016, while there will be a few new exciting ones being introduced too – as we like to say – watch this space!

Happy Harvest, Merry Christmas and best wishes for a safe and relaxing festive season for you all – see you in 2016 ready and raring to go!

Regards,

Cindy

PS - I have a new mobile number, so if I'm in your contacts, you'd better update it to 0438 566 768.

Meet the Director: Lyndon McNab



FarmLink Director
Lyndon McNab

Lyndon McNab is this edition's feature of the Meet The Director section.

Lyndon grew up on the family farm with his three siblings at Canowindra, featuring grain, lucerne hay production and farm contracting.

He has been farming now for the last 25 years; he runs his own farm at Quandialla producing hay and grain and has been working in partnership with his parents in Canowindra. Lyndon started with FarmLink on the steering committee for the Crop Sequencing project and following that has increased his involvement by joining the board of Directors and is a member of the Research, Development and Extension committee.

Board of Directors

Each member of the FarmLink Board of Directors brings their own unique skill set to the organisation, combining business management and agricultural skills to ensure a positive direction into the future.



CEO
Cindy Cassidy



Chair
Darryl Harper



Deputy Chair
Rob McColl



Director
Rob Patterson



Director
Lisa Anderson



Director
Ron Heinrich



Director
Lyndon McNab



Director
Bernard Hart



Bayer's Angus MacLennan discusses blackleg management during the canola theme of the open day.

Reflecting on an outstanding Open Day

FarmLink's marquee event - our annual Open Day - was an outstanding success thanks to a strong show of support from members, partners, researchers and collaborators for the September 11 event.

A mix of members, students and partners joined in the day's four themes of Wheat, Canola, Livestock and the Ladies Agronomy Tour, as they enjoyed hearing about trials and projects being conducted at Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre, as well as the opportunity to talk to researchers themselves about the process and various results.

The day began with the official opening was performed by Michael Bullen, Deputy Director General of NSW Department of Primary Industries, while other addresses

came from Commonwealth Bank's Tim Harvey and Tobin Gorey, along with Sheep CRC CEO, James Rowe. The Biosecurity Farm Planning Pilot project which FarmLink is working on with Riverina Local Land Services and local landholders during 2015/16, using funding provided by the Australian Government through the National Landcare Program, was also launched during the morning.

An influx of trade stalls operated throughout the day, while local volunteer groups assisted with logistics and catering. The open day concluded with refreshments and an opportunity for farmers to discuss what they had experienced during the open day, with plans already underway for the 2016 event.



Beckom farmer and FarmLink member, Mike O'Hare (right) was pictured with AGT's James Whitley after the release of AGT's new wheat breed, Beckom, named in honour of the O'Hare family.



Livestock handling demonstrations were an addition to this year's open day.



Michael Bullen, Deputy Director General of NSW Department of Primary Industries officially opens the 2015 FarmLink Open Day.



Author - Murray Long, ClearView Consulting

Murray is currently conducting the livestock operations at Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre

"To Bullet proof or not to Bullet proof"; This is the question?



The sheep industry is currently going through a phase not seen before, where not only have we seen sustained profitability in lamb production, but the level of technology within the industry rivals that of the cropping sector. We can now accurately monitor all aspects of sheep production and genetics to the point where we can theoretically design sheep to specifically suit any management strategy.

In relation to genetic fat levels, we have almost come full circle since the days of the small frame, early maturing genetics that delivered a 16-18Kg carcass at fat score 5. The push for heavier carcass weights and reduced fat levels eventually resulted in many sheep producers complaining about a whole range of problems, including the inability to finish lambs, through to a loss of fertility and do-ability. The fact that we can now accurately measure genetic fat and consequently select for it, has led to a whole new discussion around just what levels we need to incorporate into our genetics. We are not talking about the amount of fat that we can accumulate by overfeeding, we are considering the level of fat in the genetics of the individual animal as determined by generations of performance recording.

What we do know is that high levels of genetic fat are essential in ensuring the individual animal has a higher resilience to tough conditions and provides improved ability to rebound from a 'setback' much faster than animals that are 'genetically lean'. The pastoralists from many years ago were well aware of this trait and generically labelled it "do-ability". Research conducted at "Pendarra" White Suffolk Stud some years ago also showed that sires with relatively 'fatter' genetics produced progeny with higher

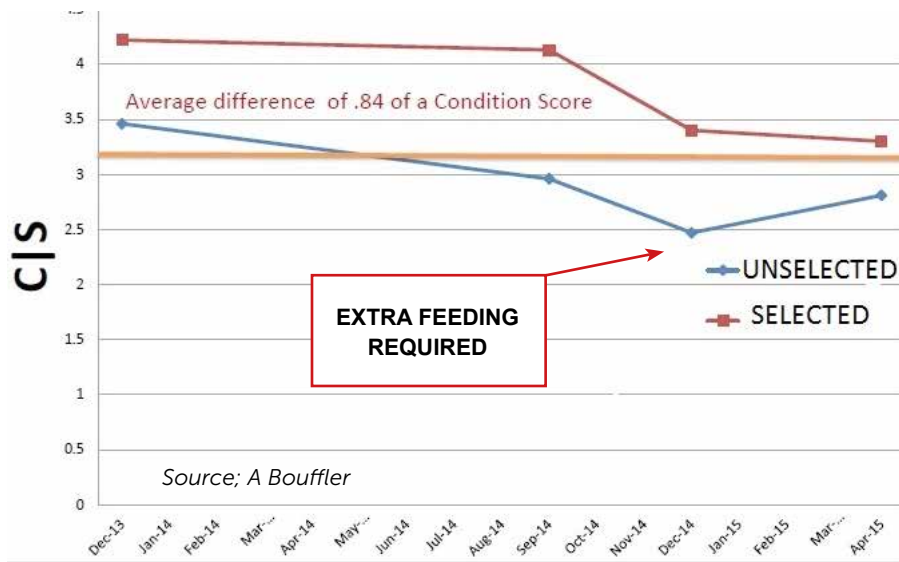
levels of feed efficiency, findings that have only recently been confirmed.

Recent discussion has been around the issue of linking genetic fat with an increase in fertility. While a direct link with fertility is difficult to determine, simply because the whole aspect of fertility is hard to measure, there are some factors that give good credibility to this claim. There has been plenty of research showing the benefits of higher levels of genetic fat in relation to increased lamb survival and fertility under feed limiting conditions, but the question has been asked - "Is it right to use this measure as a substitute for selection of higher fertility?" The short answer is, if you want to select for a trait, you do just that, select directly for that trait, however as fertility is very difficult to measure accurately, can we use genetic fat as an insurance policy for fertility and lamb survival?

The feeling of many in the industry is - Yes!

It is well known that relatively higher birth weights are essential in ensuring high lamb survival rates and this is heavily dependent upon the Condition Score (CS) of the ewe at all times but especially at lambing. Condition Score 3 is the minimum figure reported to ensure ideal lamb birth weights and survival and also has a subsequent impact on the survival of both the ewe and weaners.

The relationship between higher levels of genetic fat and Condition Score are well accepted and observations by Andrew Bouffler demonstrated that by selecting for higher levels of genetic fat in Merino ewes, he was able to maintain a higher condition score when compared to ewes with no selection for genetic fat. The advantage was almost one CS which would have a significant



Comparison between a flock selected for YFAT against a flock with no selection pressure for YFAT.

NOTE: YFAT highly correlated with Condition Score.

effect, not only on the potential for lamb survival and fertility, but also the cost of feeding the ewes to ensure CS 3 and therefore good lamb survival rates. The increase in CS of the unselected ewes after December 2014 in the above graph was due to the fact they had to be supplementary fed to increase body CS while the selected ewes required no supplementary feeding.

There is no doubt that selection for higher levels of genetic fat provides an insurance policy against tough seasons with no penalty in good seasons. We will never get back to the genetically fat levels we experienced many years ago, as we now have genetics with superior growth potential, but we can now also balance selection between traits to ensure the best genetics for both management and targeted markets. We do not need to continue down the path of lean genetics, not only is it detrimental to fertility and fecundity, but also adversely affects meat eating quality and wool production.

Selection for higher levels of genetic fat provides a credible

insurance policy for your flock, and while nothing will guarantee your flock is bullet proof from all that the climate can throw at it, it is perhaps the one area in sheep genetics that is getting plenty of attention for the right reason. We did become too lean in our quest for large lean lambs, thankfully the trend has turned and we can now look forward to ensuring that our sheep flock is more easily managed, more profitable and able to cope with the whatever the seasons deliver.

Genetic fat is one of the best tools we have to bullet proof our sheep flock against tough seasons and make the task of managing sheep a lot easier and more profitable.



NAB's bright outlook supported by weak currency

The following outlook was contributed by FarmLink partner, NAB



The weak Australian dollar (AUD) is underpinning a bright outlook for most major agricultural commodities into the remainder of the financial year according to National Australia Bank (NAB), which provides banking services to more than a third of FarmLink members.

Regional Agribusiness Manager for the Riverina, Nicole Killen, says while global wheat supply is forecast to increase - which will keep a lid on prices - locally the weak AUD is expected to provide some support.

"NAB's current forecasts put the AUD at USD 0.70 at the end of 2015 and USD 0.68 in the first quarter of 2016 and this will provide on-going support to agricultural prices," Nicole said.

"This is reflected in the NAB Rural Commodities Index forecast, which we expect to flat-line in AUD terms in the September quarter 2015 before increasing until the September quarter 2016.

"However, the AUD is expected to rise in the second half of 2016 and this is likely to dent the Index somewhat."

The latest forecasts from NAB Agribusiness place the wheat harvest at 23 million metric tonnes, slightly lower than last year, and for wheat prices to average 10.9 per cent higher in 2015-16 compared with last financial year.

"Our production outlook has been clouded by the late onset El Niño. While we previously highlighted the risk of El Niño to Australia's 2015 wheat crop, its impacts are only now ramping up heading into summer and we now believe the major climatic risk is for graziers and summer crops," Nicole said.

NAB's weighted Feed Grain Price Indicator rebounded 8.2 per cent in October, reflecting generally higher prices among major feed grains in domestic markets.

The prospect of strong El Niño conditions coming into summer could see elevated domestic feed grain demand as graziers look for additional supplementary feed.

NAB Agribusiness is Australia's largest lender to agricultural businesses and has been supporting Australian farmers for more than 155 years.

"The NAB Agribusiness team use their local and industry knowledge to understand the unique economical needs of farmers and agribusiness, which means they are in the best position to help customers take advantage of opportunities," Nicole said.



NAB's Nicole Killen

"The local Riverina team is one of the largest in Australia. We have six Agribusiness Managers based in Wagga Wagga, six in Griffith and two based in Deniliquin, giving our customers access to a significant amount of expertise in the region.

"My team is now focussing on working with clients to gain insights into how they can improve their businesses. We are currently completing a trend analysis on business performance in the Riverina going back up to ten years which will also provide valuable insights for customers.

"Our bankers are able to approve many important transactions locally, giving our customers an added advantage and reassurance in a competitive operating environment."

Agribusiness View provides the latest insights from NAB Agribusiness. Visit nab.com.au/agriview to sign up as well as to find the contact details for your nearest NAB Agribusiness Manager.

Important Note: Any advice in this editorial has been prepared without taking into account your objectives, financial situation and needs. Before acting on this advice, you should consider its appropriateness to you.

About NAB Agribusiness

National Australia Bank (NAB) Agribusiness is Australia's leading Agribusiness Bank and has been supporting Australian farmers for more than 155 years. NAB employs more than 550 agribusiness banking specialists in 110 metropolitan and regional locations Australia-wide. With their local and industry knowledge, our Agribusiness team understand the unique financial and environmental needs of farmers and businesses beyond the farm gate - whether they provide inputs into agriculture or process, distribute or market primary produce. NAB also has a specialist Agribusiness Asia Desk to help Australian farmers make the most of the rapid growth in demand for high quality produce in Asia. We deliver a flexible range of agribusiness products and services by listening to and working with our customers, to tailor the best packages and advice for their businesses. For further information please visit www.nab.com.au/agribusiness.



The FarmLink family

Growing the FarmLink Family

FarmLink is currently inviting memberships for 2016.

A recent roadside letter box drop has invited farmers from throughout Southern New South Wales to become a part of the FarmLink family in an effort to grow our membership base, and in-turn increase the ability to attract more of your Research and Development levies back to SNSW.

FarmLink is about the future of farming – productive, profitable and sustainable farms and farmers. We are committed to delivery of innovation for farmers in southern NSW and supporting them in the implementation of change on their farms and in their farm businesses. We believe that strong farm businesses create vibrant local communities.

We recognise a FarmLink Farmer member as more than just the individual – we see the membership encompassing male, female, young, old, family member and employee – and we welcome them all to the FarmLink family.

Our current loyal members will soon be receiving invoices for 2016, and we look forward to continuing to work together in the year ahead. Included with the invoice will be an opportunity to list up to eight members of your farming organisation and their contact information, so they too can receive the benefits of being a part of FarmLink. Please take the time to provide the information!

We have approximately 320 members involved in agriculture in SNSW representing 300+ farming, advisory, research and other agribusinesses. Our membership package

targets all of the people involved in the success of the farm business along with the advisors, financiers and researchers who bring specific expertise to key business decisions. Our Membership is in four categories – with Farmer, Future Farmer, Researchers & Advisors and Corporate memberships on offer. Our Farmer and Researcher & Advisor packages are valued at \$250 (+GST), while our Future Farmer package is offered free to university Agriculture and Vet science students. Our Corporate package is valued at \$1000 (+GST) and includes the Farmer member benefits as well as additional inclusions.

FarmLink currently partners with CSIRO, NSW DPI, LLS, UA, Bayer, DAFF, AgGrow Agronomy, St Anne's Central School, AGT, PacSeeds, CSU, and the Graham Centre to conduct RD&E activities at nine demonstration and/or field trial sites across our region including the Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre, where FarmLink's office is located.

We have projects focused on weed and herbicide tolerance management, soil micronutrient deficiency, carbon sequestration, stubble management, strategic tillage, crop sequences, subsoil acidity and early sowing.

The strength of FarmLink continues to grow with its membership and collaborations, as do the benefits to members. When we looked at the investment being made in member services we found that for \$250 members have access to nearly \$700 of tangible value in the form of FarmLink publications, events and information. ON TOP of this there is the value of \$1.9mill of

your R&D levies being invested in local RD&E in SNSW through FarmLink along with the network of farmers, advisors, researchers and other agribusiness professionals that FarmLink gives you access to.

The FarmLink teams invites you to renew your membership and encourage your friends and neighbours to join, so they too can have the FarmLink knowledge and confidence to embrace innovation and enact change on their farm to improve sustainability for the future of their farming enterprise. Anyone who would like to join the FarmLink family, can become a member via our website at www.farmlink.com.au/become-a-member, or simply give the FarmLink office a call on 02 6980 1333.

Kelly Chain changing the approach to tillage

Temora Truck and Tractor Services has recently come on board as a FarmLink bronze partner, and presented the following editorial about one of the many products they would be happy to talk to farmers about.

The Kelly Diamond Disc Chain Harrow is a unique product that is changing the way people approach tillage. A shallow tillage operation is economical with both time and money. Disc Chains are light and flexible yet do an unprecedented job of levelling paddocks and preparing a seedbed. Stopping deep disturbance allows the soil to repair naturally. It is well noted that the less soil disturbance there is, the better the soil structure. It is also well established that tillage reduces soil organic carbon levels.

Disc Chains were built to accelerate breakdown and keep stubble and residue on the surface of the soil. With the soil surface protected and a ready food source, soil biota can't help but flourish. Increased organic activity, increasing carbon levels and reduced tillage go hand in hand.

One of the key reasons for tillage is weed control. All systems need some balance, our forefathers showed that tillage alone is not a sustainable way to grow crops. Not surprisingly we are discovering that chemicals alone are not the answer either.

The Disc Chain provides an exciting weed control option that brings some balance back into modern farming.

Even and shallow tillage is the type that seeds love. As a planting tool, especially for small seeded crops, the disc chain excels. PJ Green of Geelong make a purpose built air seeder kit for the Disc Chain Harrows that combines precision metering and distribution with the perfect seedbed for brilliant results.

Australia is the marketplace most dear to the hearts of those at Kelly. Knowledge and experience from the ever expanding overseas business helps inform the continued improvement and development of products. Kelly Engineering's exports to the USA represent almost half of Australia's farm machinery export to that country. Growing demand in Canada, Africa, New Zealand, Europe and Eurasia fuel Kelly's expansion and opportunity to learn.

Kelly Engineering demonstrate continuous improvement and relevance as their trophy cabinet grows each year. Following earlier recognition with National Telstra Business awards and National Exporter awards, the company has added, EY Entrepreneur of the Year 2014, Impact Awards 2015, Manufacturing Export awards 2013, 2014 and Brand SA Hall of Fame induction.

The Booleroo Centre company places great importance on quality and reliability, striving always to improve the level of service and the quality of product offered to customers. As a locally invented and manufactured product the Kelly range represents much of what is great about Australia, strength of character, versatility and reliability.

The staff at Temora Truck and Tractor are available to talk to you about including the Kelly Chain in your farming operations. They can be contacted on 02 6977 1098.



Unique facilities available for your function



FarmLink is in the position of being able to offer a unique suite of facilities suitable for hosting a range of conferences, seminars, workshops and demonstrations at Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre (TAIC), which FarmLink manages in partnership with Temora Shire Council.

The facilities located on the 650 hectare property located between Trungley Hall and Barmedman roads, Temora, have attracted a number of organisations looking for the flexibility to host indoor seminars, in conjunction with outdoor or paddock demonstrations and trials.

The team at FarmLink can also arrange

catering to suit, as well as offering resources to assist with presentations.

Two separate rooms are available for hire, including the Seminar Room which can seat up to 70, or for smaller gatherings, the Meeting Room catering for up to 16. Resources such as a projector, screen, whiteboard, internet access and microphone can also be made available on request.

Outdoors, the space of TAIC offers the ability for machinery displays and demonstrations to be held providing hands-on experiences for participants, a combination truly unique to FarmLink and TAIC in the local area.

Enquiries about and bookings for the facilities can be made to FarmLink Office Manger Lisa Goesch on 6980 1333 or lisa@farmlink.com.au

Commonwealth Bank Agribusiness Team Members

FarmLink has enjoyed a partnership with principal sponsor Commonwealth Bank Agribusiness over many years, and is continuing to strengthen the relationship between the two entities, aimed at developing strategies which will benefit FarmLink members across the region. We're continuing to introduce members of the Commonwealth Bank Agribusiness team via The Link, and in this Summer edition would like you to meet Jonathon Uphill.



Jonathon sees the opportunity of being available to meet on-farm at short notice as an important part of his role as an Agribusiness Executive.

"Nothing beats face to face discussion."

On a personal note, Jonathon hails from Queensland where he completed his schooling and university studies, enjoying summer all year long! He is now based in

Wagga Wagga, where he is married with three children, and when he's not spending time with them, the avid golfer can be found on the first tee.

When it comes to agriculture today, Jonathon sees bullish commodity prices, positive flows of investment in the industry, and technology enhancements as ensuring exciting times ahead.

And if there was one thing he could control in the future, what would it be?

"Time...and my golf ball..!"

Farmlink Partners

Principal Partner

CommonwealthBank



Silver Partner



Bayer CropScience



Bronze Partner



agribusiness



Corporate Member



Legal advice generously provided by





Trial plots call for trial plot headers and the TAIC trial site has been buzzing with a variety of trial operators harvesting and collecting trial data.



It's that time of the year ... chaser bins and trucks moving grain out of the TAIC paddocks.



The Managing Ewes Pre-Joining and Marketing Lambs Through Summer, held at TAIC in late October, was a huge success.



CSU staff and Murray Long prepare sheep for the grazing part of a hard seeded legume trial which is underway at TAIC.



Kalyx staff recording harvest data from the trial paddocks at TAIC.

Out on the Farm

An update from Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre (TAIC)



It's been all hands on deck in the paddocks at TAIC, as collaborators spread across the trial sites collecting data as they embark upon harvest 2015. Many plot headers have been working their way through 1000s of plots in trial paddocks.

Harvest in the TAIC commercial paddocks has not been without its challenges, juggling the erratic weather conditions while waiting for it to be harvested. Wind had an adverse on the direct headed canola, with some shattering occurring on that horrible Friday, but yields in the barley paddocks were much more satisfying, averaging around 5t/ha.

In other areas, controlled grazing has begun in the hard seeded legumes trial, which is a FarmLink/Charles Sturt University collaboration.

Closed for Christmas

FarmLink's office at Temora Agricultural Innovation Centre will be closing for a short break over the Christmas period.

Our doors will close at 12 noon on Christmas Eve (Thursday, December 24) and re-open on Tuesday, January 5, ready to launch into 2016.

We wish everyone a safe and productive end to harvest and 2015, and an relaxing time with families and friends over the festive season, ready to embrace whatever it is 2016 brings us in the agricultural sector.

Merry Christmas from the team at FarmLink!



Diary

2015

December 24 – FarmLink office closes 12 noon

2016

January 5 – FarmLink office re-opens

March – FarmLink Annual General Meeting

Current Projects

FarmLink is currently collaborating on 16 projects covering a myriad of topics which have the potential to impact on the way farmers enact change in their farming systems.

Current projects:

- GRDC Crop Sequencing (CSP-00146)
- GRDC/Department of Agriculture Cropfacts Soil Carbon (AOTGR1-955086-42)
- GRDC Early Sowing (CSP-00178)
- GRDC Harvest Weed Seed ManagementTBA
- GRDC Managing Subsoil acidityTBA
- GRDC Micronutrient Deficiency (DAS000146)
- GRDC Regional Soil Testing (DAN0000168)
- GRDC Stubble Initiative (CSP-00174)
- GRDC Strategic Tillage (DAN00152)
- FarmLink Moisture Network and Yield Prophet
- Mirrool Creek Landcare Moisture Probe Education
- FarmLink/St Anne's Ag Elective Program
- Murray Long/FarmLink Livestock Efficiency and Productivity Research
- CSU/FarmLink Canola Allelopathy
- CSU/FarmLink Hardseeded Legume Systems Trial
- CSU/FarmLink Hardseeded Legume Grazing Trial

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Our major project funding partner is

