



**Monaro Farming Systems
2010 Annual General Meeting
10th Sept 2010**

Reports and Meeting Papers

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Agenda

MFS Spring Field Day / AGM and Lunch

The Monaro Farming Systems AGM on Friday the 10th September 2010 will commence at 8.30am at the Country Club, Nimmitabel.

Program

- 8.30am Grassgro demonstration – optimizing your time of lambing
Oli Cay - Pineleigh, Bungarby
- 9.15am Prospects for Spring, Matching Feed Supply with Animal Demand – using GrassGro® model
Stuart Burge – Senior Pasture Agronomist, Cooma
- 10.00am morning tea
- 10.30am Monaro Farming Systems AGM, including reports
- 11.00am Official Launch of MFS GrassGro Project (FarmReady)
Dr Mike Kelly MP – Federal Member for Eden-Monaro
- 11.15am Official Launch of MFS Research and Development Business Plan
Steve Whan MP- Member for Monaro, Minister for Primary Industries
- 11.45am Guest Speaker – **Dr John Webb-Ware** – Senior Consultant Mackinnon Project (Faculty Vet Science – Werribee) – *Stocking Rate vs Lambing %*
- 12.30pm Lunch



Pictured: Darren, Marianne & Peter. NAB's Agribusiness Team on the Monaro, Snowy Mountains & Far South Coast.



With over 150 years of experience servicing primary producers and secondary processors, NAB Agribusiness Bankers on the Monaro & Far South Coast use their local and industry knowledge to better understand and service farming businesses along the supply chain.

To find out how we can help you achieve your agribusiness financial goals, talk to your local NAB Agribusiness Manager today.

Darren Steinke (Monaro & Snowy Mountains) Ph 6450 1066

Peter Hales (Far South Coast & Monaro) Ph 6492 7666



Chairman's Report – David Mitchell

It has been another rewarding year for Monaro Farming Systems particularly in the areas of funding and finance. MFS received over \$175,000 in grants over the past twelve months. This has been a monumental shift in operations giving us the ability to start new projects. Add the formation of financial systems by Chris Blencowe and Nancy Spoljaric, we are in a strong position.

Project Officer

Nancy has continued to grow into her various roles as MFS Project Officer. The feed back from members, sponsors, funding bodies and the like, confirm that we have a very likable professional. I would like to thank Nancy for her commitment, competence, integrity and flexibility this year.

MFS Events

The events program this year has improved offering more flexibly, delivering relevant information that is timely. A webinar showed that MFS is prepared to try new technology in the delivery of information, provided in four locations across the Monaro it was generally considered as a success and will be a very cost effective model in the future. In the coming years the events program will be largely linked to current RD&E projects. Thank you for NSW Infrastructure & Investment for supporting MFS events in particular, Doug Alcock and Phil Graham. (See events summary).

MFS Research Development and Extension Projects

After two and a half years the MFS RD&E Business Plan is complete and will be launched at the AGM. This has been a long process, initially receiving ideas from members in late 2007, those ideas going to a think tank in 2008, and then recently put together by Richard Simpson (CSIRO), Richard Taylor and Nancy Spoljaric. Updated annually, this plan will be the road map for MFS and hopefully for RD&E on the Monaro. I would like to thank everyone who played a part in brining this plan together, a good outcome for the Monaro. MFS stronger financial position has given us the ability to start three new projects with another three to start soon. This has been extremely rewarding to see these projects get off the ground particularly the cash injection into the Grass Gro project. (See project reports).

MFS Partnerships

We continue to grow the relationships with our five partners to add value and strengthen MFS objectives and operations.

Thank you again to the MS&A team for their professional secretarial, staff management support, in particular Mike Stephens, Jim Shovelton, Jen Mackey Jenny Brophy.

The Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority (SRCMA) supported MFS this year with \$20,000 for the Project Officer position. Negotiations continue with the CMA, to see if MFS and the two CMA's (Southern Rivers and Murrumbidgee) can formulate some sort of long term partnership. With good will from all parties there should be agreement in the near future. Thank you Pam Green, Bret Miners and the rest of the team for your continued support.

The partnership with NSW Infrastructure & Investment has strengthened this year with Phil Graham accepting a board position and Doug Alcock's heavy involvement with the Grass Gro project. It's vitally important that we get this relationship right, in the last year we have come a long way in developing a strong partnership.

We continue to work closely with Boyce Chartered Accountants and Sydney University (SU). Lachlan Ingram (SU) has worked on the RD&E Business Plan and Jono Forrest assisted by Dimity Fish, put on a great show, (not dancing) - a Farm Accountancy Workshop in February. Boyce continues to help MFS on numerous occasions by providing meeting and training rooms and printing various materials. These partnerships and the others are very important to MFS.

MFS Sponsorship

Our sponsors this year, National Australia Bank, Lambpro, Commonwealth Bank and Telstra have all committed for another year, in particular I would like to mention NAB for their fourth year of sponsorship at the gold level. Thank you to all our sponsors for your support.

MFS Board

The new board structure has work extremely well this year with diverse expertise and spread of work load. Our two invited directors have meshed into the team bringing a wealth of experience and outside perspective. Chris Blencowe has committed most of his time developing the financial systems with Nancy. This has strengthened the organisation dramatically, allowing us to demonstrate to funding bodies our financial competence. Thanks Chris for your effort and input this year.

Phil Graham has added to MFS, in particular a technical understanding of grazing systems which is seldom matched and knowledge of government and the public service. Thanks Phil for effort this year especially your technical support.

Oli Cay and Lisa Phillips have hit the ground running to tackle different areas. Oli, thank you for your input into the Communication and social issues plan, Soil Club, Grass Gro and SRCMA Partnership. Lisa thank you for your input into the Communication and social issues plan and sponsorship work.

Mike has continued to be the corner stone of the board, thank you for your continued effort in all areas. I would like to welcome our new producer directors Ron Horton and Alan McGufficke, I hope you enjoy it as much as I have.

Richard Taylor will be retiring from the board this year. Richard has been working on the completion of the RD&E Business Plan and numerous other projects. I would like to thank Richie for his contribution to MFS over the last three years, his intellectual capacity in farming systems should not be underestimated.

As I step down as chairman, I would like to thank everyone for their support over the last three years – Nancy, members, board members, sponsors and partners. The establishment of this organisation would not have been possible without that support, particularly from Mike Stephens. In the early days it was all about rolling with the punches, Mike and I certainly took a few on the chin. I believe that MFS now has a solid foundation to build on and it was pleasing to hear the other day as I said to Oli Cay “I think it’s a goer”, he replied “but there is still a lot to do”...

Just remember what MFS is all about – It’s about working together to develop knowledge in farming systems so we can compete in a global market place.

David Mitchell
MFS Chairman

Financial Report – Chris Blencowe

Standard Profit & Loss

	<u>July 2009 to June 2010</u>
Income	
Government Grants	36,286.36
Membership	17,156.36
Non-Member Registrations	81.82
Other Industry Grants	63,024.38
Sponsorship	5,000.00
Training Income	810.00
4-0400 · Reimbursed Expenses	<u>247.50</u>
Total Income	122,606.42
Expense	
Advertising	508.49
Board Meetings (Teleconference)	1,872.20
Catering	2,404.50
Contract Work	22,801.52
Materials / Capital Items	1,111.55
Office Operating Costs	
Internet	1,336.30
Phone	1,470.67
Postage	317.68
Stationery	359.72
Office Operating Costs - Other	<u>167.03</u>
Total Office Operating Costs	3,651.40
Office rent	606.00
Balance brought forward 08/09	7,000.00
Subscriptions	1,000.00
Sundry	95.45
Training	8,586.36
Travel, Accommodation & Meals	2,038.65
wages	<u>25,926.05</u>
Total Expense	<u>77,602.17</u>
Net Income	<u><u>45,004.25</u></u>

****Please note, out of the total net income of \$45,004 - \$40,436 is income in advance and the funds already committed to specific projects leaving \$4568 in the operating budget as of 30th June 2010****

Balance Sheet – July 2009 to June 2010

	<u>June 30, 2010</u>
ASSETS	
Current Assets	
Chequing/Savings	
Monaro Farming System-FarmReady	19,635.00
Monaro Farming Systems Inc	43,568.99
Total Chequing/Savings	<u>63,203.99</u>
Total Current Assets	<u>63,203.99</u>
TOTAL ASSETS	<u>63,203.99</u>
LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	
Other Current Liabilities	
25500 · GST Payable	-166.96
Total Other Current Liabilities	<u>-166.96</u>
Total Current Liabilities	<u>-166.96</u>
TOTAL LIABILITIES	<u>-166.96</u>
NET ASSETS	<u>63,370.95</u>
EQUITY	
30000 · Opening Bal Equity	18,366.70
Net Income	45,004.25
TOTAL EQUITY	<u>63,370.95</u>

Project Reports

MFS Project 08-1 - Grass Gro

Project Leader: Oliver Cay

Project Manager: Jim Shovelton / Nancy Spoljaric

Project Collaborators: Doug Alcock (NSW I&I)
Andrew Moore (CSIRO)
Brett Miners (SRCMA)

Project Funders: Southern Rivers CMA, Woolworths/Landcare Australia, FarmReady DAFF

Project Aims

CSIRO has developed a unique decision support program called GrassGro® which has been used extensively in other parts of southern Australia. The core of the program is a dynamic model of pasture production based on soil type, rainfall and climate data and pasture species for any given site.

GrassGro® can assess the effect of management options on gross margins, pasture and animal production, supplementary feeding as well as a series of environmental indicators such as persistence of species, ground cover, drainage etc.

GrassGro® is a unique decision support tool which can assist primary producers and advisors in identifying key profit drivers in their enterprise in the context of temporal variations in pasture growth and supply. As such GrassGro® provides powerful facility for analysing risk (climatic, economic and environmental) over both the short and long term.

MFS Project 08-1 aims to integrate the use of GrassGro3® modeling into farm planning.

Project achievements to date and future plans:

- Soil cores collected and analysed for 10 strategic Monaro soil types (Nimmitabel, Mila, Bibbenluke, Kybeyan (2 sites), Corrowong/Jimenbuen, Delegate, Little Plains, Bungarby, Berridale
- CSIRO Soil Scientist Dr Andrew Moore has characterized the soil samples from the two Monaro grassland sites at Berridale and Bungarby and integrated them into the model to develop native pasture parameter sets (poa and stipa mix).
- Doug Alcock is using this soil data to generate base “farm systems” based upon each soil type, which will form an accurate representative farm system from which future scenarios can be based.
- Three interactive sessions have been conducted with MFS members to identify key management questions for the Monaro. Some of the issues analysed include time of lambing and comparison of lamb finishing systems
- Tactical simulations will be run at strategic times each year of the project to enable producers to plan during critical periods. Key times identified are autumn and spring.
- GrassGro software has been purchased and MFS has organized and coordinated a two day training program for 16 individuals (majority producer members and extension staff) in the use of the GrassGro3® model. This training was delivered by CSIRO. This core group has had one refresher

session since the training and will be meeting regularly to identify core issues and run through model analysis as well as ground truth the base farm systems for the various soil types. The outcomes from these sessions will be passed on to other members via the generation and transfer of relevant reports and face-to-face presentations.

- The project aims to develop the most effective delivery system which will ideally collate the relevant questions, run the right reports from a central location, add professional interpretation onto the reports and then email/send out to the whole member base.

Issues that can be explored through Grassgro...

The first GrassGro session (34 attendees) explored several Monaro specific issues including;

- looking for optimal systems for time of lambing and stocking rate;
- seasonal variations in pasture growth and how to manage risk profiles at various stocking rates;
- tactical simulations applying historical weather data to seasonal patterns and making predictions;
- taking a position on preparation for supplementary feeding based on your predicted pasture growth and stocking rates;
- understanding pasture growth and quality and how to integrate with meeting market specifications and windows;
- demonstrating how GrassGro can bring global-scale climate modeling down to farm-scale impacts and adaption's ie. the session looked at the projected climate change impacts on physical production systems ie. pasture production, timing, heat & cold stress, economic impacts, risk, contracted growing seasons etc;
- adaption strategies such as new pasture species, animal management strategies.

Nancy Spoljaric
Co-Project Manager

MFS Project 09-3 - Cereal Variety Evaluation Trial

“Spring Sowing Varietal Evaluation of Wheat, Barley and Triticale for High Rainfall Zones of SE Australia”

Project Leader: John Jeffreys

Project Manager: Nancy Spoljaric

Project Funder: GRDC (Grains Research & Development Corporation)

Project Collaborators: Agritech (Crop Research Contractors), John Jeffreys (MFS), Damian Rudd, Brendan Rudd (MFS), Greg Condon (private agronomist, Grassroots agronomy), Dr John Kirkegaard, CSIRO Crop Scientist

**Final Report sent to members April 2010

Exerts from the Income Analysis Report...

Spring sown cereal trials were conducted by the Monaro Farming Systems (MFS) group in 2009 to review suitable varietal options within existing wheat, barley and triticale lines. Trials were established at Cooma on Damian & Anna Rudd's property and on Delegate Station owned by John Jeffreys and family. This is the first time that independent, validated research has been conducted on the Monaro looking at short season cereal crops and their potential profitability.

Long season cereals such as winter wheat and triticale are the dominant crop sown for grazing and grain recovery. Forage brassica is another crop type sown in the region specifically for grazing to finish lambs or feeder cattle, also providing an opportunity to clean up degraded pastures prior to sowing perennial species such as phalaris and sub clover. Spring sown cereals are therefore regarded as a suitable follow-up crop after forage brassica to extend the crop phase for cleaning up weeds and supply feed grain for on-farm purposes or cash sales.

The integration of these crops in a mixed farming system with pasture has become critical to ensure profit from both grazing and grain enterprises. However getting the balance right under variable climatic and market conditions remains an ongoing challenge for producers and the industry.

The trial results were disappointing due to low yields and high screenings, primarily because of dry conditions through spring. Unseasonably hot winds during November also contributed to the low yields which, when combined with the dry subsoil and high biomass, meant many of the varieties were unable to form viable grain and fill properly.

Despite the difficult season, the trial has highlighted a number of **key factors** from which producers in the region can benefit:

- Cropping involves significant investment in inputs and operation costs. Ensure the risk profile is managed by reviewing factors such as previous crop, soil nitrogen and in particular, available soil water which is critical when sowing spring cereal crops. If in doubt, adopt a lower risk livestock enterprise.
- Avoid sowing spring cereals after forage brassica when the subsoil is dry. In dry seasons the brassica stubble is best fallowed through for sowing winter wheat or pasture in the following autumn. In-crop rainfall for spring cereal crops is still critical for achieving profitable crops, but without subsoil moisture the risk is increased.
- Barley can still achieve moderate yields when sown in spring despite dry seasons. Buloke, Hindmarsh, Tulla and Flagship all yielded better than many of the wheat varieties and provide a high energy feed grain for producers to retain on farm.

- Short season wheat varieties such as Waagan and Lincoln offer an alternative to barley. Long season wheat varieties should be avoided for spring sowing to reduce the risk of flowering during warmer temperatures in late spring and early summer.
- Paddock selection is critical when spring sowing cereals, especially in relation to soil nitrogen. Short season cereals do not need to produce a bulky canopy from high soil N. Unlike winter wheats which are grazed, biomass in spring cereals needs to be managed so that the available moisture is utilised more efficiently for grain production (grain numbers and size), rather than for excessive tiller production.
- Assuming input costs of \$300/ha which includes contract sowing, spraying and harvest rates as well as local fertiliser and herbicide prices, the majority of crop types and varieties returned a negative gross margin in this trial.

Crop	Variety	Yield t/ha	LSD*	Grade	Screenings %	Protein %	Price \$/t	Gross Income \$/ha
Barley	Buloke	2.0	a	F1	12.6	13.5	\$185	\$361
Barley	Hindmarsh	1.7	ab	F1	13.4	13.3	\$185	\$316
Wheat	Waagan	1.4	bcd	HPS1	16.5	14.8	\$201	\$283
Wheat	Axe	1.2	cde	AGP1	5.2	14.4	\$212	\$263
Wheat	Lincoln	1.3	cde	HPS1	19.3	16.1	\$203	\$260
Wheat	Gladius	1.2	cde	AGP1	7.8	15.8	\$213	\$258
Barley	Tulla	1.5	bc	F2	16.4	15.7	\$170	\$255
Barley	Flagship	1.5	bc	F2	20.0	16.2	\$170	\$253
Wheat	Ventura	1.0	de	AGP1	8.1	14.7	\$211	\$211
Wheat	Livingston	1.0	de	HPS1	10.7	16.1	\$202	\$206
Wheat	Espada	1.0	efg	AGP1	8.6	15.3	\$212	\$204
Wheat	Gregory	1.0	def	HPS1	10.7	14.0	\$201	\$197
Wheat	Hunter	1.1	de	Feed	12.1	15.7	\$185	\$194
Triticale	Jaywick	0.6	fg	Feed	6.9	16.3	\$200	\$114
Triticale	Speedee	0.6	g	Feed	9.0	16.0	\$200	\$110
Wheat	Preston	0.6	fg	Feed	6.2	15.8	\$185	\$105

Prob (F) **0.0001**

***LSD (P=0.05)**

0.426

Note: yields followed by the same letter do not significantly differ.

CV

25.8

Note: high CV indicates variability within results (data not reliable).

Prices derived from Southern Tablelands on-farm values, January 2010 using Grain Trade Australia standards for 2009/2010 season (acknowledgement: Tony Matchett, Delta Grain, Harden)



MFS Project 10-5 Perennial Pasture Trials (Legumes – their place on the Monaro)

Site Producers: Brad Yelds (Cobana), Richard Taylor (Bellevue)

Project Coordinator: Nancy Spoljaric

Project Funder: CHAF (Central Highlands Agribusiness Forum)

Project Collaborators: NSW I&I (Luke Pope), Stuart Burge (Private Agronomist), Jim Shovelton (MSA), Lachlan Ingram (Sydney University),

Background

Pasture production on the Monaro is generally believed to be below potential targets based on average rain fall received. In particular, legume production is poor and without this nitrogen re-cycling benefit, resultant grass production is often poor.

Achieving the optimum legume mix/balance for the basalt and granite soil types of the Monaro as well as analysing the role of perennial legumes in a grazing system have been identified as key priorities for members of MFS.

Trial Aims

The trial's will test the following hypothesis;

- *What are the optimal, appropriate species mixes for the predominant granite and basalt soil type based on persistence and animal production?*
- *Which legume species demonstrates the best growth, yield, feed quality, persistence/longevity and nitrogen fixation abilities for these soil types?*
- *Trial will also benchmark the potential of lucerne and other legumes to maximise financial grazing benefits, including a simple economic analysis to assess the financial grazing benefits by using a combination of measuring grazing days, on-ground monitoring and feed availability.*

Brad Yelds – “Cobana” site

This trial aims to “value-add” to an existing local trial “Monaro Grasslands Research & Demonstration Project” run by NSW I&I which is evaluating a variety of perennial legumes and grasses to assess their adaptation, production and persistence in the Monaro region. Several species have shown significant potential in these cutting trials. However further evaluation under various grazing management strategies is now needed to fully assess their capacity and role in a pasture based system.

Trial Design

Sowing rate / ha	species
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Treatment 1 (phalaris based, conservative control mix)

3 kg	holdfast GT phalaris
5kg	stamina GT6 lucerne

Treatment 2 (higher production mix)

3kg	leura sub clover
3 kg	seaton park sub clover
5kg	kingston ryegrass
½ kg	Australian Phalaris

Treatment 3 (fescue based)

5kg	resolute fescue (winter active fescue)
2kg	leura subclover
2kg	seaton park sub clover
250gms	kuratas Caucasian clover strip
250gms	talish clover strip (Eric Hall, Tasmania TIAR)

- this trial was sown on the 29th of April 2010 and two germination assessments/counts have been done to date
- pasture cuts and grazing will commence once pasture height/mass has reached an appropriate level

Richard Taylor – “Bellevue” site

Trial Design

Paddock 1 – pure Lucerne, sprayed out end of May 2010

Paddock 2 – lucerne/phalaris mix, spray and sow end of Aug 2010 – chemical treatment 1

Paddock 3 – pure phalaris, spray and sow end of August 2010 – chemical treatment 2

This trial will also compare two chemical tmts to look at the more effective chemical to restrain phalaris to allow better lucerne establishment.



**Cobana” Pasture Trial Site following first spray April 2010*

MFS Project 10-6**Monaro Mums – the role of the ewe on the Monaro**

Project Leader: Alan McGufficke

Project Manager: Nancy Spoljaric

Project Funder: MFS (at this stage)

Project Collaborators: Doug Alcock (NSW I&I), Phil Graham (NSW I&I), Meat & Livestock Australia

Background

The Monaro sheep industry has traditionally been based on Merino ewes. With a buoyant sheep meat industry and integration of cropping and grazing, there is an opportunity to rethink how the Merino ewe and other ewe bases can be used.

The Monaro Mums Project was developed to investigate the following issues;

1. Is the current model of running a Self Replacing Merino Flock (SRMF) the best model from a business point of view?
2. Is the current use of the Merino ewe delivery to the flock's potential optimized from a financial perspective?

Monaro Farming Systems recently hosted a successful day for approximately 40 producers to explore the whole issue of the most profitable use of breeding ewes.

Speakers included Phil Graham and Doug Alcock (NSW Industry & Investment), David Sackett (CEO Growth Farms Australia) and Hamish Dickson (Productive Nutrition, SA).

The speakers covered issues ranging from the average net profit (\$/Ha/100mm) for wool, dual purpose and prime lamb enterprises over the last 10 years to changes in profitability, productivity and terms of trade for these enterprises over the last 40 years.

The amount of variation within enterprises was shown to be much more than the variation between enterprises. Variations in profits \$ per dse (dry sheep equivalent) within the prime lamb and wool enterprises can vary up to \$60 per dse and profit \$/ha can vary up to \$150/ha within different merino breeding enterprise's.

GrassGro® modeling was used to demonstrate the impact of changing variables such as market prices and ewe replacement costs etc on the wool vs meat enterprise's.

GrassGro® demonstrated the differences in profit \$/ha for prime lamb versus terminal versus merino enterprises and the profit and risk profiles for each enterprise.

The modeling was specifically calibrated to Monaro conditions, using soil and native pasture data validated for local conditions.

Stocking rates, profit \$/ha, weaning %, and % pasture utilised were compared for the various breeding ewe enterprises. This enabled a critical analysis of the effects of major profit drivers such as stocking rate on profit and the sustainability of stocking rate across each enterprise considering ground cover targets.

Some comments from participants included...

“people were really thinking about how it was relating to their operation. GrassGro® showed it's true worth now that we have information relevant to the Monaro and it was the reason we saw audience participation”

“The continuing work with GrassGro® will drive a lot of future questions and issues for everyone”

“the day was of great value. I think it outlines the key points to think about with regards to enterprise choice. The main message I received was do what you do best before looking over the fence to change.”



MFS Project 10-7 -	Soil Club – whole farm soil fertility management
Project Leader:	Ron Horton
Project Manager:	Nancy Spoljaric
Project Funder:	Central Highlands Agribusiness Forum (CHAF) training fund, Community Action Grants / CFOC (pending), MLA – Producer Demonstration Site (pending)
Project Collaborators:	Richard Simpson (CSIRO), Phil Graham and Luke Pope (NSW I&I)

Background

The Monaro has contrasting soil types which differ substantially in their intrinsic fertility and fertiliser requirements. There are now new soil tests and decision support tools available (P calculator tool) and soil 'critical' nutrient requirements have been revised in recent years. An opportunity exists to raise general awareness of the new developments in soil fertility management and to assist management decisions by adopting objective guidelines for soil fertility management that are tailored to the soil types of the Monaro and recognise associated issues such as low clover content and pasture composition.

Globally, fertilizer costs are increasing. Phosphorus is crucial to the productivity of Australian farms but it is forecast that "peak phosphorus" may occur within 25 years. It is imperative that farms use scarce nutrient resources more effectively. However, a major issue for our farmers is interpreting the soil nutrition and soil health knowledge that is available. This project addresses our need to increase the effectiveness of soil fertility management for productive agriculture and improved environmental outcomes.

Issues & objectives

There is already a wealth of soil nutrition knowledge available. The major issues for farmers are usually the planning and sustained implementation of a soil testing program on farm, knowing how to correctly interpret soil test information, and how to translate this into a cost-effective fertiliser investment.

MFS is aiming to address these issues by the formation of a "soil club". The soil club will aim to encourage participants to put a structure around their annual soil management programs while using the MFS network to send out reminders regarding critical soil test dates etc. Using this group, centralization framework of the farmer group, soil fertility data from individual farms can be collated, trends and patterns can be plotted and documented, value-adding onto existing information and providing critical data to producers throughout the region.

MFS has the organizational structure to address all three of the major issues outlined below for its members and to provide incentives that encourage regular soil testing by holding timely workshops and negotiating bulk soil testing discounts.

- (i) Need to increase awareness of the new PBI soil test and revised interpretations for P, S and K soil tests and apply new decision support tools for P management.
- (ii) Can the new P-management tool be adapted to guide S-fertiliser applications for soils where they are the primary fertiliser?
- (iii) Can Monaro farmers use and/or adapt the new fertiliser cash flow tool to provide useful fertiliser benefit-cost analyses
- (iv) Integrate the use of the GrassGro3® program that recognizes the large differences in soil fertility requirements of the major Monaro soil types and which, consequently, can assist management decisions by Monaro farmers.

Project achievements to date and future plans:

-approach laboratories to try and attract a group discount for soil testing (batch tests)

-inform soil club members of the new approach to managing soil fertility ie. integrating the use of calculators which match pasture requirements with stocking rates/animal requirements

-hold initial “hands on” workshop in October 2010 which will help graziers interpret existing tests, educate participants on how to collect soil samples correctly and at the strategic times of the year and will give participants a new plan/strategy for their whole farm in terms of managing soil fertility

-this initial workshop will lead into the formation of a “soil club” which will meet on a regular basis with the following aims;

- empower members to ask the right questions;
- use the calculator tools correctly;
- target individuals fertilizer applications and get the balance right between stocking rate and soil fertility with built-in ongoing, consistent monitoring so individual producers know the direction their soil is going;
- back this up with a test-strip fertilizer trial to visually provide responses;
- use the Soil Club to validate the Industry standard, set “critical values” for phosphorus use to prove that the targets are real.
- Increased numbers of land-managers utilizing objective soil test information and wider adoption of fertilizer and management recommendations for native grasslands arising from the Monaro Grasslands trials (NSW I&I). *(Uptake of these findings by local landholders has been poor to date due to the issues this project will address.)*

MFS Project 11-9 -

Building Resilience within the Family Farm Business

Project Leader: Kate Waldren

Project Manager: Nancy Spoljaric

Project Funder: Community Action Grants (Caring for our Country)

Project Collaborators: Lyn Sykes (Communications Specialist, High Resolutions), Rob Napier (Napier Agrifutures), Mike Stephens (MS&A)

Background

Rural farming families continue to face increasing challenges imposed by the constant exposure to market uncertainty, climate variability as well as continuing un-seasonal weather patterns and drought conditions. This places increasing pressure on the family unit to ensure the farm business remains competitive and viable in the market place as well as maintaining the balance between family and business goals and values.

Planned Activities and Goals for the Project

The planned forums are aimed at achieving the following;

- promotion of more strategic thinking and encourage a more systems based approach to business ie. setting goals, writing a business plan, documenting practices and enterprise performance, teamwork and redefining roles within the family;
- enabling skills to develop key business strategies and guidelines for making decisions, resolving conflict, recognising partner & spouse contributions, managing change etc.
- encourage the planning and follow-through of inter-generational succession which will help to motivate young people to enter and/or remain in agriculture

1st Forum – Feb 2011

- information session on the future of family farming and what we can do to ensure sustainability in the long-term,
- half-day interactive session on the topic of ***“Rural Families in Business Communicating to Improve Productivity”***
- this workshop aims to increase participants understanding of principles of good communication, decision making skills, maximising family contributions to the business and skills to increase business returns through more effective communication

2nd Forum

- Follow up from Forum part a/b based on a clear direction which has been developed with participants during the first forum sessions.

3rd Forum

- 1 day interactive workshop on **Human Resource Management** – this workshop will deliver a complete Human Resource Service package, providing a holistic approach to managing the people involved within a business including strategies to attract and retain staff, optimising performance of staff and effective staff working relationships to maximise the efficiency of your farming business.

Publication of manual - Following the first year of the project, a booklet will be developed and published which will provide a reference for “family communications specifically relating to improving business returns and strengthening the family unit”.

MFS Project Support - CSIRO – High Rainfall Zone dual-purpose cropping project

Project Leader: John Kirkegaard (CSIRO)

Project Collaborators: John Jeffreys (Delegate Station.), Nancy Spoljaric (MFS), Agritech,

Project Funder: Grains Research Development Corporation (GRDC)

Background

This trial designed and conducted by CSIRO is looking at the grain and graze potential of both cereals and canola at two different sowing dates (ie. early and late sowing). The trial is comparing 10 different cereal and canola varieties (incl hybrids). The plots will be grazed periodically prior to flowering / maturation and yields harvested. The trial aims to demonstrate the grazing potential of these dual-purpose crops in specific windows during the growing period which can be combined with a harvestable yield potential. It is hoped the best suited varieties for this purpose, will be demonstrated.

The sites have had biomass cuts done for sowing 1 (May 13th and 24th August) and sowing 2 (24th August).

Results to date...

Cereal data

Crop type	Variety	Biomass (t/ha) 13 May
Barley	Urambie	1.7
	Yambla	2.4
Triticale	Endeavour	2.3
Winter wheat	CS106	1.8
	Mackellar	1.7
	Revenue	1.7
	Naparoo	1.7
Spring wheat	Preston	2.0
	HRZ03	1.5
	Bolac	2.4

Notes

- (1) barley and triticale have produced more early biomass than wheat
- (2) acid-tolerant Yambla barley has outperformed Urambie barley
- (3) spring types have started to elongate which may explain higher biomass

Canola data

Crop type	Variety	Biomass (t/ha) 13 May
Fodder rape	Winfred	2.1
Winter canola hybrids	Taurus	2.3
	CBIW208	2.3
	CBI306	2.6
	CBI406	2.1
Winter canola open-pollinated	Maxol	1.5
Spring hybrid	46Y78	2.1
	Hyola60	1.5
Spring conventional	Garnet	2.0
Spring TT	Marlin	1.2

Notes: (Winter types are favoured for this early sowing time as spring types will bolt early)

- (1) Winter canolas have produced as much biomass as the fodder type (Winfred)
- (2) hybrids generally outperform OPs
- (3) Garnet has done well as usual for an OP
- (4) TT varieties have low vigour



Projects Pending.....

MFS Project 10 - 4 – Weight Gain in Shorn Prime Lambs

****This trial planned for 2010 has now been postponed to 2011 due to un-expected events and prior workload commitments****

Project Leader: Richard Taylor

Project Manager: Nancy Spoljaric

Project Funder: MFS

Collaborators: Doug Alcock (NSW I&I)

TheTrial

Proposed start date January 2011, MFS will be initiating a trial looking at weight gains of X-bred lambs, shorn vs un-shorn. There will be one site at Kybeyan / Nimmitabel, one at a lamb feedlott and data will be supplied from a trial conducted at Boorowa in 2010.

The trial will primarily assess the economic benefits if any of shearing X-bred lambs using live weight gain as a measurable indicator.

MFS Events Summary 2009 / 2010

❖ **27th Aug 2009 – AGM**

Doug Alcock (NSW I&I) – Sheep Supplementation Strategies / Creep Feeding of lambs / General Q&A

David Thomason (MLA Marketing manager) – Change in Consumer Habits & Choices

Mike Stephens (MSA) – Monaro Rainfall & Climate Patterns

❖ **5th November 2009 – Webinar**

Prof Julian Cribb “The Coming Famine; risks to global food security”

Sandy McEachern (Holmes & Sackett) “Keys to Sheep Enterprise Profitability in the Near Future”

❖ **5th December 2009 – CSIRO Dual Purpose Cropping Trial – High Rainfall Zone**

Dr John Kirkegaard – CSIRO – Farm walk and discussion of cropping research priorities for this region as well as trial design and expected potential of “grain and graze” canola and cereal varieties.

Dr Hugh Dove – CSIRO – Discussion of animal grazing interactions in dual purpose crop windows

Walter Kelman – CSIRO

❖ **16th February 2010 – Farm Accountancy Workshop - Boyce**

Jono Forrest and Dimity Fish – Boyce Chartered Accountants (annual farm accountancy schedule, spreadsheets, budgeting, reports, enterprise accounting, accessing finance)

❖ **7th May 2010 – GrassGro Breakfast**

Doug Alcock (NSW, I&I) - Introduction to the GrassGro model, how it can be used in your farm management as a decision making tool, understanding the questions it can answer & reports it can generate, look at model runs / scenarios using Monaro specific soil & pasture data

❖ **14th May 2010 – Monaro Mums Afternoon – future role of the Monaro ewe**

David Sackett (Growth Farms Aust.) – sheep production, what really matters

Doug Alcock & Phil Graham (NSW, I&I) – economic comparative analysis of ewe enterprises on the Monaro, making enterprise choices and shifts

Hamish Dickson (Productive Nutrition) – key profit drivers & constraints in finishing lambs

❖ **24th, 25th May 2010 – MFS GrassGro Training Course – delivered by CSIRO**

Understanding key model concepts, Building farm systems, designing issues, customizing reports, tactical analysis

❖ **29th July 2010 – GrassGro refresher**

Using GrassGro model to answer the issue of “time of lambing”, setting up a base farm system, designing an issue and running an analysis. Discussion of future delivery system for GrassGro reports to wider member base.

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Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority

NSW Industry & Investment

Mike Stephens & Associates

Sydney University

Boyce Chartered Accountants

(**provides meeting/training rooms, printing services, audit advice)



The University of Sydney

Project Funders

Southern Rivers Catchment Management Authority

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Community Action Grants (CFOG)

Central Highlands Agribusiness Forum / Evergraze

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