Thank you for taking the time to participate in this survey. Your participation is voluntary and you may stop at any time.

About this survey

We believe the future for Australian agriculture is bright and we are calling on you to be an active advocate of our industry.

The Regional Australia Institute (RAI) is undertaking research about ‘21st Century Farmers’ in partnership with Rural Bank and Rural Finance and invite you to take part in our inaugural survey into the practices of our nation’s farm businesses.

Your response is very important to help us create a picture of the skills and experience invested into Australian farming businesses, to raise awareness of their social and economic contribution to communities across Australia and to understand the aspirations and needs of 21st century family farms into the future. The insights will shape and influence future initiatives for the benefit of Australian farmers; from financial service solutions through to advocating for agricultural and rural policies and investments with policy and decision makers.

The survey asks you to identify and consider the structure and practices in place within the farm business that you manage or work in. It will take approximately 20 minutes to complete and you will need to have financial information such as annual turnover, operating costs, financing costs and annual profit to complete the survey.

Your responses to this survey are confidential, and all information provided in the survey will be de-identified and aggregated before reporting. A consolidated and complete report will be shared with participating industry groups and available on www.ruralbank.com.au.

Your community could benefit too

To thank you for your time and the insights you have provided, all participants who complete the survey by 04/11/2016 will go into a draw to WIN one of two $500 grants to go towards your nominated community group or activity. At the end of the survey, we will ask you to nominate your chosen group or activity.

If you would like more information on this survey, or on the ‘21st Century Farmers’ project in general, please contact the RAI’s General Manager Policy and Research, Kim Houghton at the Regional Australia Institute on 02 6260 3733 (Kim.Houghton@regionalaustralia.org.au).

Completed versions of this survey should be sent to Regional Australia Institute, Level 2, 53 Blackall Street Barton ACT 2600 for inclusion in the research.

We appreciate your time and value your input.

Yours sincerely

Alexandra Gartmann
CEO/Managing Director, Rural Bank

Jack Archer
CEO, Regional Australia Institute
We appreciate your time and value your input. Eligibility

Are you actively involved in a farm business?

- Yes (continue on to questionnaire)
- No (Thank you for your interest, however we are seeking information from people involved in Australian farm businesses only)
Part 1: You and your farm

To ensure we understand the nature of the farming business you are involved in, we have some questions about you and the farm.

Q1: What is your current role in the farm business?

You may select more than one applicable option.

- Farm owner/proprietor
- Farm manager
- Working family member
- Employee
- Other (please provide details):

Q2: Is the farm business a family farm business? (A family farm is a farm owned and/or operated by a family. The principals of the business are related by kinship or marriage and family members provide much of the labour and capital. It contrasts with farms operated as collectives, commercial trusts, non-family corporations or other forms of business.)

- Yes
- No

Q3: What business structure does the main farm business have?

Please select one option.

- Partnership
- Company (Pty Ltd)
- Trust
- Individual (sole trader)
- Other (please provide details):

Q4: What is your background in farming?

You may select more than one applicable option.

- Several generations of farming (part of a farming family)
- Studied agriculture post school
- I grew up in a farming community
- No previous farming background
- Other (please provide details):

Q5: How many years have you been employed in or managing a farming business?

Q6: What is your age group and gender?

- 20 to 24 years
- 25 to 29 years
- 30 to 44 years
- 45 to 54 years
- 55 to 64 years
- 65 years to 74 years
- 75 years and over
- Male
- Female
- Prefer not to specify
Q7: What is your highest level of education?

- Year 10
- Year 12
- Certificate or diploma
- University qualification
- Other (please provide details) ______________________

Q8: Which of the following farm production activities did you undertake in 2015-16?

You may select more than one category.

- Beef cattle farming
- Sheep farming
- Dairy cattle farming
- Horse farming
- Other livestock farming
- Cropping (e.g. grains, cereals, other)
- Intensive animal farming (including feedlots, piggery and poultry sheds)
- Cotton growing
- Wine grape growing
- Grape growing for all other uses (excluding wine)
- Stone fruit growing
- Orchard fruit growing
- Other fruit growing (bananas, pineapples, strawberries, all other fruit)
- Vegetable growing
- Nursery, cut flowers and cultivated turf production
- Sugar cane growing
- Nut growing
- Olive growing
- Other (specify): ______________________

Q9: What was the area of land operated by the farm business in 2015-16?

- Owned _______ hectares
- Leased _______ hectares
- Share-farmed _______ hectares

Or

- Owned _______ acres
- Leased _______ acres
- Share-farmed _______ acres

Q10: What is the postcode for the business's main farming property?


Q11: Not including yourself, how many people worked on the farm in 2015-16?

- Family members full time (Min 38 hours a week) _______
- Family members part time (Less than 38 hours a week) _______
- Non-family employees full time _______
- Non-family employees part time _______
- Contractors _______
Q12: What was the average annual gross turnover (total farm related income) of the farm business over the last 5 years?

**Select one option**

- [ ] up to $100,000 pa
- [ ] $100,000 to $250,000 pa
- [ ] $250,000 to $500,000 pa
- [ ] $500,000 to $1 million pa
- [ ] $1 million to $2 million pa
- [ ] $2 million to $5 million pa
- [ ] $5 million or more pa
- [ ] Not sure / don’t know

Q13. Thinking about the farm’s performance over the last 5 years, what has been the typical ratio of Farm Operating Costs (variable costs such as stock, feed, seed and fertiliser and overhead costs such as equipment, leasing, administration, management) as percentage of Total Farm Related Income?

**Farm Operating Costs as % of Total Farm Related Income**

- [ ] Over 70%
- [ ] 70% to 55%
- [ ] Under 55%
- [ ] Not sure / don’t know

Q14. Thinking about the farm’s performance over the last 5 years, what has been the typical percentage of Financing Costs (such as interest, bank fees or commissions) in relation to Total Farm Related Income?

**Financing Costs as % of Total Farm Related Income**

- [ ] Over 15%
- [ ] 15% to 7%
- [ ] Under 7%
- [ ] Not sure / don’t know

Q15. Thinking about the farm’s performance over the last 5 years, what has been the typical level of annual Farm Business Profit (annual gross income less annual expenses)?

**Annual Farm Business Profit**

- [ ] $0 or less
- [ ] $0 to $100,000 pa
- [ ] $100,000 pa - $250,000
- [ ] $250,000 - $500,000
- [ ] Over $500,000
- [ ] Not sure / don’t know

Q16. What is the farm’s current equity position (ratio of value of liabilities/debts to assets)?

**Current equity**

- [ ] Under 40%
- [ ] 40% to 59%
- [ ] 60 to 75%
- [ ] Over 75%
- [ ] Not sure / don’t know

Q17: Does the farm business provide the primary income for your household or is it a secondary income source?

- [ ] Primary income source
- [ ] Secondary income source

Q18a: Do you earn off-farm income?

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No

If Yes proceed to then Q18b, otherwise proceed to Q19.

Q18b: Approximately what percentage of your total family income (total farm related income plus off-farm) is derived from off-farm activities?

- [ ] 10
- [ ] 20
- [ ] 30
- [ ] 40
- [ ] 50
- [ ] 60
- [ ] 70
- [ ] 80
- [ ] 90
Q18c: Where is the off-farm income derived from?

You may select more than one category

Other uses of farm assets such as

- Contracting out
- Farm-based tourism
- Carbon farming/environmental values
- Other (please specify) __________________

Other income

- Family members in professional employment (e.g. school teacher, nurse)
- Family members in clerical/administrative type employment (e.g. office worker, sales)
- Family members in labour related roles (e.g. machinery operators, carpenter)
- Family members running other businesses
- Other (please specify) __________________

Part 2: Current Farm management activities

To understand more about the farm’s operations, the following questions relate to current farm management activities.

Q19: Farm management involves many aspects, which of the following are currently in place in the farm business?

You may select more than one applicable option.

- Strategic plan for the farm business
- Management plan
- Budget
- Production plan
- Occupational health and safety (OH&S) plan
- Operating procedures
- Marketing plan
- Risk management strategies
- Training and development plan
- Accreditation and licences management
- Regular farm performance benchmarking
- Specialist external advice
- Competitor analysis
- Succession plan
- Other

Q20: How important are the following approaches in achieving business success for the farming operation?

Select one number for each statement.

1 = not at all important, 2 = somewhat important, 3 = important, 4 = very important, 5 = most important

1 2 3 4 5 Ensure farm has a long term future 1 2 3 4 5 Diversify into new markets
1 2 3 4 5 Improve profitability 1 2 3 4 5 Contribute to the community
1 2 3 4 5 Run business more professionally 1 2 3 4 5 Achieve rapid growth
1 2 3 4 5 Diversify into new products/ sectors 1 2 3 4 5 Stick to what we know and do it well
1 2 3 4 5 Enjoy work and stay interested 1 2 3 4 5 Change only when we have to
1 2 3 4 5 Ensure farm stays in the family 1 2 3 4 5 Prepare property for sale
1 2 3 4 5 Innovate and take measured risks
Q21: Which of the following are used to measure the farm’s financial performance?

You may select more than one applicable option.

- Return on capital
- Business equity
- Ratio of financing cost to income ratio
- Operating profit per hectare
- Farm business profit
- Farm cash income
- Costs per hectare
- Profit per ha per 100mm rainfall
- Other

Q22: Which of the following business structures and practices apply to the farm business?

You may select more than one applicable option.

- Formal Board of Directors
- Formal Advisory Board (regular meeting with ongoing group of advisors)
- Informal Advisory Board (ad hoc meetings as required)
- Sole proprietor
- Family-led business management team
- Non-family-led business management team
- Family constitution or code of conduct
- Partners or Shareholders agreement
- None of these

Q23: What is the age group and gender of the management? (please advise number of people in each age and gender category)

Under 30 years ____  30 to 44 years ____  45 to 54 years ____  55 to 64 years ____  65 years or over ____

Male ____  Female ____

Q24: Do you use technology on your family farm business?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

Q25: In which areas is technology having an impact on the farm businesses?

Circle one number for each statement

1-5 scale: 1 No impact, 2 Some Impact, 3 Moderate impact, 4 Significant impact, 5 Immense impact

1 2 3 4 5 The way we manage the business
1 2 3 4 5 Business processes
1 2 3 4 5 The way we interact with customers
1 2 3 4 5 Costs of doing business
1 2 3 4 5 Our ability to expand into new markets
1 2 3 4 5 Competitiveness of our products and service
1 2 3 4 5 The level of competition we face
1 2 3 4 5 Our ability to expand into related industries
1 2 3 4 5 The way we market our products
- I don’t use technology
- Don’t know
- Other (provide details):
Q25: Are there other areas of your farm business where technology is having a significant or immense impact?

Q26: When thinking about the farm business, what is the approach to taking on new technologies and innovative practices?

Please select the most applicable option.

- We stick to what we know how to do, and do it as well as we can
- We are innovators and are willing to take the necessary risks to implement/try new products and services
- We don’t want to be the first to try unproven products or systems but we try to be close behind and competitive
- We do not follow a specific program or plan for utilising new innovations or technologies
- We only adopt new innovations or technologies when faced with strong threats

Part 3: The farm’s future

Farming is a dynamic business and many farmers are thinking about the future as well as their current operations. This final part of the survey asks questions specifically about future planning.

Q27: When thinking about the farming business you’re working in, where do you think the farm’s future lies?

- Scaling back (getting by, looking to exit)
- Consolidate (e.g. satisfied with current scale but looking for efficiencies)
- Investing in the future (reallocating assets for long term financial security and broadening income options)
- Go for growth (short and medium term growth)

Q28: The challenges facing the farm’s future over the next 5 years are likely to be:

You may select more than one applicable option.

- Water (quality, availability)
- Land degradation (erosion, salinity)
- Pests (weeds, native animals, introduced species)
- Seasonal conditions, climate and climate variability
- Land availability and affordability
- Maintaining or lifting productivity
- Raising capital
- Managing finances
- Commodity prices
- Access to markets for our produce
- Cost of business inputs
- Price volatility
- Other (provide details):
Q29: How important are the following opportunities for the farm’s future?

Circle one number for each statement
1-5 scale: 1 not at all important, 2 somewhat important, 3 important, 4 very important, 5 most important

1 2 3 4 5 Diversification of production and farming activities
1 2 3 4 5 Increasing the scale of our production
1 2 3 4 5 Improving the efficiency of our production
1 2 3 4 5 Differentiating our products
1 2 3 4 5 Value adding to primary products
1 2 3 4 5 Improving links and access to customers
1 2 3 4 5 Human Resources

Q30: How do you intend to be involved in the farm business in the next 5 years?

You may select more than one applicable option.

☐ I am committed to farming for at least this period
☐ I intend to take on more responsibility
☐ I intend to take over the management of the farm
☐ I intend to leave the farm
☐ I intend to purchase the farm
☐ I intend to sell the farm to retire
☐ I intend to hand the farm on to a family member and close associate (succession)
☐ I intend to lease land out to another operator but retain ownership
☐ Other (details): __________________________
☐ I am not sure

Q31: Considering your current farm management practices identified in part 2, which of the following do you plan to have in place in the farm business within the next 5 years?

You may select more than one applicable option.

☐ Strategic plan for the farm business
☐ Management plan
☐ Budget
☐ Production plan
☐ Occupational health and safety (OH&S) plan
☐ Operating procedures
☐ Marketing plan
☐ Risk management strategies
☐ Training and development plan
☐ Accreditation and licences management
☐ Regular farm performance benchmarking
☐ Specialist external advice
☐ Competitor analysis
☐ Succession plan
☐ Other

Q32: Considering your current business structures and practices identified in part 2, which of the following do you plan to have in place within the next 5 years?

You may select more than one applicable option.

☐ Formal Board of Directors
☐ Formal Advisory Board
  (regular meeting with ongoing group of advisors)
☐ Informal Advisory Board (ad hoc meetings as required)
☐ Sole proprietor
☐ Family-led business management team
☐ Family constitution or code of conduct
☐ Partners or Shareholders agreement
☐ None of these
Part 4: Industry and Community

Farming businesses do not operate in isolation – they are integral to the sustainability of the industry and local communities. We would like to gain some thoughts on the industry and community issues of importance to you.

Q33: When considering the key industry and community themes identified below, please rank their importance to you and your family from 1 (most important) to 6 (least important).

- Supporting young farmers
- Community sustainability
- Good health and wellbeing
- Educational opportunities
- Increased opportunities for women in agriculture
- Sharing information and knowledge
- Succession planning
- Innovation/technology
- Any additional comments

Q34: Considering the key themes identified (Supporting young farmers, Community sustainability, Good health and wellbeing, Educational opportunities, Increased opportunities for women in agriculture, Sharing information and knowledge, Succession planning, Innovation/technology) are there any others you believe are important to you and your family?

- Yes. Please list:
- No

Q35: When considering your bank/farm finance provider, please rank the importance of the services to you and the family from 1 (most important) to 9 (least important). [will randomise order]

- Industry knowledge/expertise
- Local branch/presence
- Mobile banking / personal visit
- Personal relationship with staff
- Depth of product offering
- Sharing of industry insight/information
- Involvement in my community
- Competitive fees and interest rates
- Ease and variety of transactional capability (i.e. online services)

Q36: What products, services or support should your bank or finance provider offer that they don’t presently provide to you as a customer?

- Yes. Please list:
- No

Q37: Are you a Rural Bank or Rural Finance customer?

- Yes
- No
Q38: Any additional comments

For the chance to win one of two $500 contributions to a community group or project of your choice, please provide details of the group or project below:

Group or project name:
Contact information:

Thank you very much for completing our survey – your input is invaluable

Your responses to this survey are confidential. All information provided in the survey will be aggregated and de-identified before use as part of this research project.

If you are happy for our research team to follow up with you directly please provide a name and phone number or email address. This information will not be linked to your responses.

Name ____________________________

Phone number ____________________________

Email address ____________________________

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