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An eNewsletter from Farm Business Management Section

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FarmBis News

Welcome to the third edition of the FarmBis e-newsletter.

Developing a range of new and comprehensive skills is essential in order to compete as a successful producer. FarmBis provides financial assistance to primary producers and land managers to attend approved education and training activities. There are a broad range of activities supported through FarmBis, aimed at improving the business management skills of primary producers.

This edition of the FarmBis e-newsletter highlights the value of continual learning, and updates progress on the Targeted Industry Initiative. This edition also continues the theme of previous editions by focusing on a specific agricultural industry. This edition examines the horticulture industry and its use of the FarmBis programme.

FarmBis is a joint initiative between the Australian Government and participating states and the Northern Territory.

In the 2007-08 Budget, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry, Peter McGauran, announced that a new national FarmBis programme, funded by the Australian Government, will commence in New South Wales, Victoria and the Australian Capital Territory from 1 July 2007. The programme will be extended to other states and Northern Territory from July 2008, after the completion of the current FarmBis programme. Further information about the new programme will be included in the next edition of the FarmBis e-newsletter.

Benefits of Training

There are some great benefits that can occur by participating in FarmBis supported training. As responded by a 2006 survey of FarmBis supported training participants, 95% of participants believed that the training they had attended met their needs, better equipping them to deal with the challenges facing their business. The majority of training participants also believed the incorporating of course learning's into their business practices, would benefit their enterprise's sustainability, profitability and productivity.

To find out how to apply and more about the benefits of FarmBis supported training, visit <http://www.farmbis.gov.au/>

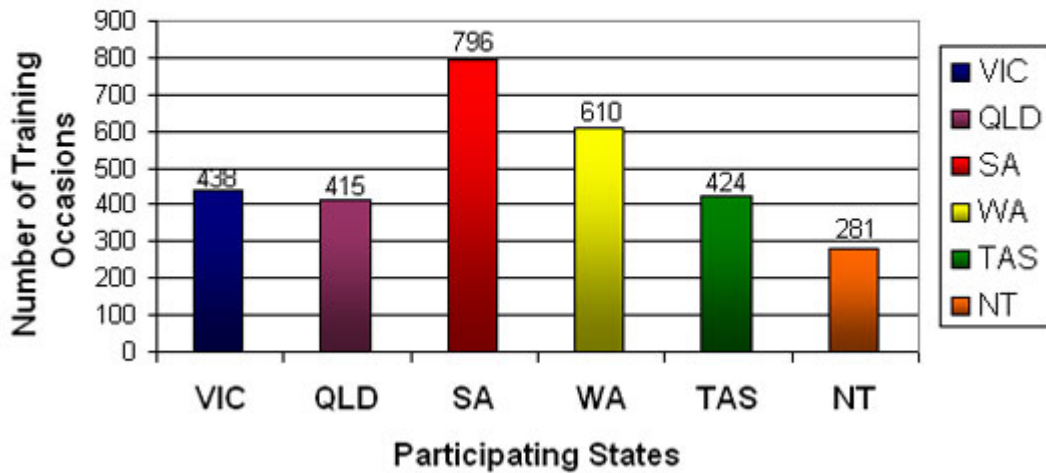
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Industry Snapshot - Horticulture Industry

The horticulture industry is the third largest agricultural industry in Australia, with 25,000 people employed in growing or processing fruit, vegetables and nuts for both domestic and exports markets. Australia's horticulture industry has long enjoyed a domestic and international reputation for quality, primarily because of the high standards maintained in all stages of the supply chain.

The horticulture industry continues to be one of the largest users of FarmBis supported training, with 2964 training occasions from Jan 2004 to Dec 2006. South Australia and Western Australia had the highest uptake of training in the horticulture industry, as depicted below.

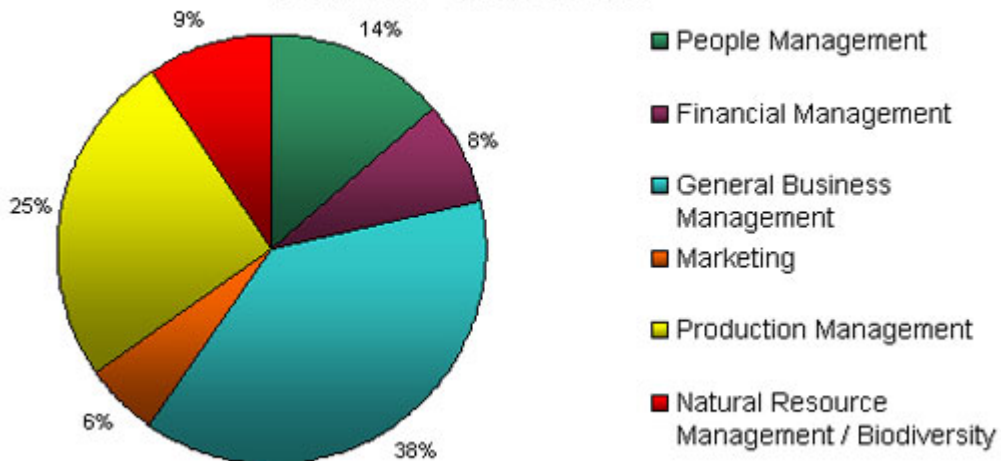
AAA FarmBis - Participation By State - Horticulture Industry 1st Jan 2004 - 31st Dec 2006



The most popular courses for horticulturalists have been:

- Business Management, which includes:
business systems analysis, quality assurance, strategic planning, information technology and its application, risk and change management
- Production Management, which includes:
plant and animal nutrition, management of plant, animal, fish and insect resources in production, and incorporation of new techniques for sustainable production
- People Management, which includes:
OH&S, industrial relations, leadership, communication, selling, human resource workplace management, meeting and decision-making skills

AAA Farmbis - Training Categories - Horticulture Industry 1st Jan 2004 - 31st Dec 2006



To find out more on courses, training providers and locations in your state, visit www.farmbis.gov.au

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Case Study – Orchardist calls on mining training culture

Regular training was a normal part of working life for James Fernley before he left the mining

industry seeking a lifestyle change. Moving to a property near Donnybrook, Western Australia meant a new challenge and the start of a lot more training as James and his wife Michelle set about learning how to become viable primary producers.

"I got into horticulture by mistake really... the property we purchased had apricot trees on it and we saw potential."

The Fernley's also realised that if they wanted to make it profitable they needed to turn the orchard around in a hurry. "The only way we could do that was to go off and learn," James said. "We knew nothing about producing commercial-grade fruit and it was a big leap for us."

After seven years, they farm four hectares of orchard with more than 8,000 trees, which makes it one of the more intensely planted apricot blocks in the Western Australia.

James says he has relied heavily on training to develop the business. "I see a value in going out and learning new ways of doing things even if I think I'm doing things the right way. I suppose I always feel there is a better way of doing it. In mining I was continually being trained and retrained in areas just to facilitate that exact thing ... there is always a better way of doing it."

"My training has given me the power to see beyond the small failures that we have suffered at times."

James has been a significant user of FarmBis supported training. He says training will remain an important part of his farming future.

"I certainly think training has been instrumental for us, it has enabled us to fast track improvements to our farming methods. We have a lot of confidence in the systems that we have implemented and training has played a big part in this. I don't think we would have got to where we have without it," he said. "Training has given us more control over our destiny."

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Case Study – Skilling up Staff

Wendy Erhart of Withcott Seedlings, Queensland says:

"The skills shortage showed us it was easier to upskill our existing people than find new people. Now our business is even more solid because of the management training they've received."

"Training has helped our staff to confront and overcome challenges in their everyday work life, find solutions to problems, as well as giving them the confidence to perform better in their roles."

"Any money we invest in training is offset by greater efficiencies but also by decreased turnover of staff. Training has enabled our staff to accept greater responsibilities, creating the time we need to be innovative managers."

"Training is essential if you want to be a sustainable business – environmentally, economically, and emotionally. It's a huge value add to a business."

"I wouldn't be as happy nor my business as profitable without training, and I wouldn't have the choices I have for the future. Training has given me choices and time."

Third generation Caboolture grower Gavin Scurr of Pinta Marketing says

"At first, I went to training courses. But as the business grew it made sense for our key people to be up to speed as well."

"Training is an opportunity to involve people in our business, it's an opportunity for us to show an interest in our people and show them how important they are to us. The more our people are involved, the more they accept ownership of our success."



"Some people say you can't afford to train people because they may go, but what if you don't train them and they stay?"

"Training is fundamental to where you want to be and where you want to go as a company, and it's ongoing, it's continual."



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Current News from the States

QUEENSLAND

Industry Focused Training

Nine targeted industry initiative projects in Queensland are being rolled out across the State across a range of industry sectors. As a result of these projects there will be a much more strategic approach to training in rural industries. Each project has a FarmBis Networker aligned to it in order to maximise the opportunities for promotion and ongoing training delivery.

FarmBis Supported Training Database

The FarmBis website has been updated and it provides improved access to the information required by producers to make informed decisions about their training requirements. At present 129 training providers are registered with FarmBis in Queensland and details of the training they offer can be found on the searchable training database.

For further information on courses available and details of your FarmBis Networker, visit <http://www.farmbis.qld.gov.au/>

TASMANIA

Train to Gain ... Improve your Business

Tasmanian primary producers are taking full advantage of training opportunities using funding support from FarmBis.

In the first two years of the current AAA-FarmBis program, 2,600 producers have been supported to attend over 73,000 hours of eligible training in business management and natural resource management.

The biggest user group to date, have been growers in the vegetable industry, followed by producers in the sheep, beef and dairy industries. Just on 10% of FarmBis funds have supported training in the wild catch fishing industry, with the southern rock lobster industry being the major players in this group.

Over the last 12 months, FarmBis has also provided matching funds for 6 projects in the Targeted Industry Initiative. These include the Future Farmer Skill Study, a Training Brokerage for the Tasmanian Pig Industry and Matching Training Needs and Opportunities in the Seafood Industry.

More information about activities in Tasmania can be found at <http://farmbis.dpiwe.tas.gov.au/FarmBis.nsf>

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

Targeted Industry Initiatives

To date, six industry initiatives have been conducted in the areas of mixed grain and livestock, rural women, Non English Speaking Backgrounds in horticulture, pigs, youth, small properties, aquaculture and fishing. Two more industry initiatives in the areas of fishing and a virtual classroom are currently being conducted.

Various workshops and surveys have been conducted as part of the projects, enabling primary producers to share their knowledge and experiences of training and help shape the future of what training will be offered to them in the coming years.

More information on FarmBis activities in South Australia can be found at www.farmbis.sa.gov.au

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

FarmBis Helps Target Training Needs

Western Australian FarmBis has undertaken a twofold approach to the Targeted Industry Initiative.

Industry groups are offered grants for the assessment of member training requirements. The groups then provide FarmBis with a report on the priority training areas, at which point courses are tailored to meet the training of their members. This approach ensures that training offered is demand driven by the membership.

Alternately incentives of an increase in rebates of 15% on eligible training costs, have been offered to individual primary producers for completing a training needs analysis. Upon completing a needs analysis participants are contacted by letter acknowledging their efforts, identifying their priority training areas, and referred to current courses to assist them to gain training in these areas.

For more information on these and many other training courses or on FarmBis in WA, visit the website at www.farmbis.wa.gov.au

VICTORIA

The Victorian FarmBis program has seen 3,714 participants go through a total of 3,965 subsidised training occasions from January 2005 until March 2007, with 99.5% intending to implement the knowledge gained from the training in the operation.

The livestock and grain industries have the highest participation rates in FarmBis supported training.

A new national FarmBis programme, funded by the Australian Government, will commence in Victoria in the 2007-08 financial year.

For details on the programme in Victoria visit www.farmbis.gov.au

NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Real Benefits of FarmBis Supported Training

FarmBis supported courses have helped Ian Baker to manage Jabiru Tropical Orchards a family owned and run mango orchard. The business supplies the domestic market, in addition to supplying mangoes to Japan under the quarantine protocol, one of only two such facilities in Australia. It has a permanent staff of 6 and employs up to 140 casuals during the harvest season. It is one of the largest mango enterprises in the NT and Australia.

Over a two year period a number of courses were arranged through FarmBis, to deal with issues confronting the business.

"These were conducted with the Directors and key staff in the business. They were conducted as short courses with additional activities required outside of the courses."

"FarmBis made it much more attractive to deal with the critical issues facing the business and deal with the issues professionally, rather than being confined by the capabilities within the business."

The Northern Territory has a number of training opportunities available as part of the FarmBis programme. Visit the website at www.farmbis.gov.au and click on "NT" for more information on courses available and how to apply.

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