UWA Industry Forum

Healthy Farming-Stronger Communities?

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Rachel Bagshaw
Executive Officer
Mingenew-Irwin Group
NACC

- It covers some 7 million ha
- A population of ~ 56,000
- Includes 13% of WA farms and 24% of all farmland in WA
- Has 4 sub regions
Mingenew-Irwin Group (MIG)

- Covers some 320,000 ha
- Full members are farming business within the Mingenew, Irwin and West Morawa shires or within 50km of MIG HQ
- 95% of farmers in Mingenew are members
MIG Mantra

“To promote and develop economic and environmentally sustainable agriculture through research, planning, monitoring and demonstrating best practice”
Proactive Farmers

• Grower owned and driven groups like MIG, Liebe, Facey etc are one of the surest signs that agriculture is being proactive in securing the economic and social prosperity of rural communities
Healthy Farming-Strong Communities?

MIG believe there is no question!
Healthy Farms =

- Families staying in the community
- Employment
- Support to local business
- Schools staying open
- Town facilities/supportive shire councils
- Economic prosperity
Healthy Farms =

- Promotion & adoption of Best Management Practices (BMPs)
- Reduced risk to the natural resources that support agriculture
- Reduced legislative threats
- Happier neighbours
- Happier residents around the Irwin River estuary in Dongara
Why Healthy Farms?

- MIG has been working on EMS for 9 years
- Initially funded through GRDC to develop an EMS from scratch
- It was a big task!
- Cameron Weeks, Anna Ridley, Rachel Bagshaw, MIG farmers and other experts (all with limited knowledge at the time)
Why EMS?

• An EMS is a methodical way of managing all farming activities that *could* or *do* have a negative impact on natural resources
Why EMS?

Because MIG farmers were sick of this:
And this...

Farmers cause Â£500m of environmental damage
By Paul Peachey

Wednesday, 19 June 2002

Farmers are increasingly escaping without penalty for environmental crimes despite causing unnecessary damage to the countryside put at Â£500m every year.
The Changes
The Northern Agricultural Catchments Council (NACC)
The peak natural resource management (NRM) body for the Northern Agricultural Region

What NACC does
- Provides leadership on NRM issues
- Brings Government and the community together
- Manages the regional strategy

HEALTHY FARMS
STRONGER COMMUNITIES
EMS Cycle

Plan

Continual Improvement

Check

Review

Do
Why EMS?

- Clear requirement for environmental improvement
- Agriculture has a major impact on the environment
- ‘Clean and Green’…Proof!
- Legislative pressure
  - Be proactive to help keep the ‘big stick’ at bay
Why EMS?

• Growing consumer concerns about impacts of food production
  – As consumers worldwide become wealthier, the price of food becomes less important and the ethics of how it was produced increases

• There is community expectation for environmental stewardship
EMS Standard

- AS/NNZ ISO14001

“The overall aim of the standard is to support environmental protection and prevention of pollution in balance with socio-economic needs”
MIG Goals

- Develop simple to use EMS
- Simple record keeping
- No / low cost auditing to ensure use
- Incorporates NACCs catchment targets
- Continual inclusion of new technologies or methods into BMPs
EMS Example

Farm Activity: Spraying
Cause: Chemical excess, incorrect disposal
Hazard: Soil & groundwater contamination
Objective: Minimise occurrence of cause
Target: Adhere to Chemcert standards
Actions: Build appropriate wash down bay, only mix as much as required etc
Monitoring: Chemical mixed vs crop sprayed, recorded
EMS → Healthy Farms

• Lets face it...EMS ISO 14001 doesn’t sound that great!
Healthy Farms

Involves 5 key programs:
What’s Involved?

- Promotion of Clean & Green to Customers
- Farm Safety
- Quality Assurance
- Community Engagement
- Chemical Accreditation
- Best Management Practices
- NACC Regional Targets
- Comprehensive Database of Environmental Efforts
- Funding Incentives i.e. Envirofunds, New Project Initiatives
- Whole-of-Farm Best Management Identity

Healthy Farms Tool Box
EMS Farm Mapping

Healthy Farms: Stronger Communities
EMS

- 50% members with EMS
- Catchment targets
- Introductory EMS workshops
- Audit Workshops – run through self-review process
Farm Map

• Record of on-ground works to achieve targets
Better Farm IQ

• Majority of landholders with EMS have completed Better Farm IQ

• Audit agreement formed between CBH and MIG

Benefits
  - Saves time
  - Reduces cost to farmer
  - Adds credibility
ChemCert

- Standards in place to adequately manage chemical use
- Updated relevant chemical information into the EMS Manual – and provided information to the Spray in Grain Manual
- Regular contact – update information regarding chemical use
- MIG encourages accreditation and supports local workshops
Farm Safe

• Farmers keen to be updated in this area – especially in regards to employing staff and ensuring the farm environment meets safety requirements
• While keen, still apprehensive about what they might get ‘made’ to do
• Workshops started being held last year
• On farm audits beginning to occur – not as scary as thought!
Promotion

• Promote efforts to wider community
  – Encourage further uptake of best management practices
  – Show others how our farmers are using sustainable practices
Extract Benefits

• Development of new projects
• Attract environmental funding
• Work with Grain Pool to identify premium-paying markets and/or maintain market access
• Locally...early discussions to work with Irwin Valley to have all their suppliers with Healthy Farms accreditation
Benefits

• Better whole of business management
• Proof of good management
• Succession planning tool
• Whole of catchment management
• Local “brand” marketing
• Protection of “clean and green image”
• Protection against legislation
Challenges

• Keeping the interest and momentum without any obvious monetary benefit
• Improving monitoring and record-keeping
• Maintenance of EMS
• Getting “the next 20% of farmers”
Healthy Farms Recognition

• Farm Gate sign

This is a Mingenew-Irwin Group “Healthy Farms” property

Integrating
• Environmental Management Systems
• Quality Assurance
• Chemical Accreditation
• Farm Safety

www.mingenew-irwin.asn.au
The Real Thing
Thank You

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– Mingenew-Irwin Group
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