

Simple first steps... if you are considering leaving the farm

INTRODUCTION

While there are a number of responses farmers can make to manage change, perhaps the most traumatic is leaving the farm, which will most likely involve a sense of loss, making grieving necessary. How you react to this loss will depend on many things.

It is important to work through feelings as they are likely to get in the way of sound decision making and clear thinking. These emotional reactions can also change over time. You and members of your family may feel sad, angry, frightened, relieved or even guilty. This is all normal.

Even though you and your family are going through the same changes, be aware that individuals will cope in different ways because everyone has different levels of life experience and coping thresholds. It is very important that you involve everybody affected by major decisions so their ideas and feelings can also be considered.

Speaking with professionals can also help.

A USEFUL CHECKLIST BEFORE MAKING ANY MAJOR DECISIONS

- ✓ Have you discussed the issues and options with everyone involved (including the children) to find out what they think or feel?
- ✓ Have you agreed on some options to explore further?
- ✓ Have you considered the financial, health, environmental, personal, family, relationship and happiness aspects of these options?
- ✓ Have you sought out professionals who have expertise concerning the options you are considering?
- ✓ Have you developed a clear decision which everyone understands and agrees to follow through? If not, are you prepared to carry the burden alone?

If you do decide to leave the farm it can be useful to spend some time in favourite places on the farm, either alone, or as a family and say 'goodbye'. Perhaps you could take photographs of special places to later prompt happy memories.

Remember that things beyond your control may have contributed to thinking about this decision, so you are not to blame and you need to give yourself time to accept any changes.

FORMAL RECOGNITION OF YOUR SKILLS AND KNOWLEDGE

For people wanting to explore off-farm work opportunities, or perhaps study or retrain through TAFE, a college or university, it is important to know about Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) or Recognition of Current Competencies (RCC). RPL and RCC mean you don't have to go through the process of learning things a second time, and you can get credit for what you already know.

You may have been in charge of the books and the budgeting in your family farm business, yet have no formal business management qualifications; or you may have maintained all the farm machinery but you don't have formal qualifications or a certificate. By getting these skills recognised you can expand your future career and employment options.

Going through the RPL and RCC process aims to recognise the skills and knowledge you have gained in one or more of the following:

- formal study through education or training;
- informal study for fun or personal interest;
- life experience;
- work experience;
- company-based training;
- industry-based training.

To gain RPL or RCC you usually have to pay an assessment fee or administration charge and provide evidence of knowledge and skills, usually by completing some paperwork. It may also involve attending an interview. Remember that you will probably have lots of skills gained both on and off farm over the years which can be recognised and used in other areas, so seek advice about RPL and RCC and collect information about the job or course you would like to do.

SOME PLACES TO START ARE:

MYFUTURE

Helps you to make career decisions, plan your career pathway and manage work transitions. It provides a range of information on career options, education and training, work, contacts, funding and more. www.myfuture.edu.au

NSW DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

A Primefact that may be useful is *Financial management during drought recovery* (Primefact 48).
Ph: 1800 025 520, www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

TAFE NSW Ph: 13 16 01, www.tafensw.edu.au

COMMUNITY COLLEGES www.communitycolleges.nsw.edu.au

AUSTRALIAN ASSOCIATION OF CAREER COUNSELLORS

For career counsellors in your area: Ph: 1800 222 390, www.aacc.org.au

RURAL FINANCIAL COUNSELLORS (RFCs)

RFCs assist farmers and small rural businesses seeking confidential, free, independent financial advice and information. They can help with government and non-government assistance schemes and referrals to other services. RFCs are found across NSW. To locate a counsellor near you: Ph: 1800 686 175 or visit: www.affa.gov.au/financialcounselling

AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT FISHERS AND FARMERS ASSISTANCE LINE

Provides advice on a range of programs and services offered by Centrelink. Ph: 1800 050 585, www.centrelink.gov.au

AAA FARM HELP SUPPORTING FAMILIES THROUGH CHANGE

The Australian Government's key program for helping farm families in financial difficulty plan for the future. The program emphasises the use of strategic information, analysis and advice to support decision making. The assistance provided through Farm Help is flexible and can be tailored to meet the needs of each farm family.

Future Options – Ways Forward for Farm Families is a free CD-ROM/video profiling six families as they look at how best to manage changes in farming including deciding to leave.
Ph: 1800 686 175, E: aaa@daff.gov.au, www.daff.gov.au/farmhelp



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JOB NUMBER 7216

Disclaimer: The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (January 2007). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of New South Wales Department of Primary Industries or the user's independent adviser.