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final report

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More Beef from Pastures SA – State Extension Coordinator 06/07

Abstract

The More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) program in SA incorporates the appointment of a Development Officer to coordinate and assist in increasing the use of Meat & Livestock Australia's (MLA) MBfP program amongst South Australian cattle producers. This role involves the conduct of awareness activities to both the producer and service provider sectors.

The MBfP program supports the 2005-2015 Beef Industry Strategy – Directions for South Australia. The strategy provides direction for growth over the next decade. One of the key themes within the strategy is implementing responsible production systems on a reduced land base. In anticipation of increased competition from other enterprises in key production areas, the strategy has a target of achieving a 15% increase in production on a 10% reduced land base.

In reaching the above targets, over 20 forums with more than 300 participants were conducted within the SA Beef Industry. The focus of these forums was underpinned by the modules in the MBfP producer manual and included pasture utilisation, meeting market specifications and cattle genetics.

Executive Summary

The MLA More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) program is positioned primarily as an awareness campaign and aims to direct producers to learning, information sources and services appropriate to their individual needs and location. The state coordinator was part of a national team, lead by an MLA-funded coordinator to develop material and presentations suitable for delivery of the MLA MBfP program activities within their state.

The purpose of the program is to assist producers to identify and manipulate key profitability control points in all aspects of their business. How to improve the utilisation of pasture is the centre piece of the program and this lead on to the larger perspective through interrelated modules on:

- setting the strategic direction of the beef enterprise;
- tactical control of stocking rate;
- optimising pasture growth and quality;
- cattle genetics;
- maximising weaner throughput;
- management of cattle health and welfare; and
- meeting market specifications

Project Objectives

By 30 June 2007:

1. Attend MLA MBfP national extension team meetings coordinated by the MLA MBfP national extension coordinator (estimate 3-4 workshops/year):
 - a. to develop and quality assure as part of a team, MLA MBfP extension material and presentations for the delivery at national and/or local forums
 - b. develop generic templates for specific workshops and short forums;
 - c. coordinate extension events;
 - d. co-ordinate co-branding of all program deliverables to appropriately recognise the contribution of MLA, state departments, and other program partners; and
 - e. lead the further development of extension products, including courses, and tools associated with the MLA MBfP program.
2. Allocate the equivalent of 55 days of staff time to this project.

3. Assist the development of applications for Producer Learning Network (PLN) and PIRD grants by producer groups and intermediaries for submission to MLA (funding ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000 pa)
4. Contribute to the review of PLN grant applications
5. Coordinate 1 major workshop for intermediaries per year sponsored by MLA, initially to update them on the MLA MBfP program, and subsequently to provide technical updates on R&D output.
6. Work closely with Service Providers (e.g. Livestock Agents and Agriculture Consultants) to develop systems which will allow them to enhance the use of the MBfP package with their clients.
7. Assist Service Providers in the use of MBfP package in the form of assisting with the organisation and facilitation of forums or workshops (e.g. Cost of Production workshops).

PIRSA and MLA have been working together to promote MBfP in South Australia over the last two years, and we have now reached a time when some real benefits can be achieved with further commitment and expansion of the project.

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1 Background

The MLA More Beef from Pastures (MBfP) program is positioned primarily as an awareness campaign and aims to direct producers to learning, information sources and services appropriate to their individual needs and location. The state coordinator works as part of a national team, lead by an MLA-funded coordinator to develop material and presentations suitable for delivery of the MLA MBfP program activities within their state.

The purpose of the program is to assist producers to identify and manipulate key profitability control points in all aspects of their business. How to improve the utilisation of pasture is the centre piece of the program and this lead on to the larger perspective through interrelated modules on:

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2 Project Objectives

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 - b. develop generic templates for specific workshops and short forums;
 - c. coordinate extension events;
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9. Allocate the equivalent of 55 days of staff time to this project.

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11. Contribute to the review of PLN grant applications
12. Coordinate 1 major workshop for intermediaries per year sponsored by MLA, initially to update them on the MLA MBfP program, and subsequently to provide technical updates on R&D output.
13. Work closely with Service Providers (e.g. Livestock Agents and Agriculture Consultants) to develop systems which will allow them to enhance the use of the MBfP package with their clients.
14. Assist Service Providers in the use of MBfP package in the form of assisting with the organisation and facilitation of forums or workshops (e.g. Cost of Production workshops).

3 Methodology

The methodology utilised during the reporting period is summarised as:

The Development Officer will:

- Hold at least monthly information and awareness sessions for Service Provider/ Consultant groups including
 - Agri-business consultants
 - Livestock Agents
 - Universities/ TAFE
 - Banks
 - NRM Boards
- Organise MLA training seminars for interested Service Providers/Consultants when required
- Assist in organising trained facilitators for producer workshops being held by Service Providers/Consultants at least monthly.
- Coordinate at least one major MBfP expo per year sponsored by MLA, to update stakeholders on the MBfP program and subsequently provide technical updates on R&D output.
- Provide Service Providers and Consultants with the necessary resources and assistance for them to transfer MBfP knowledge to their clients.

4 Results and Discussion

A detailed list of forums conducted in South Australia is included in the appendix.

The following is a summary of the numbers of attendees and types of forums conducted.

| | Producers | Service Providers | Government |
|-------------------------------------|------------|-------------------|------------|
| Cost of production workshops | 3 | | |
| On-going beef groups | 7 | | |
| Field days | 4 | | |
| Service provider forums & workshops | | 4 | |
| Government | | | 3 |
| Total forums | 14 | 4 | 3 |
| Total attendees | 300 | 30 | 35 |

Summary of evaluation scores from producer forums

| Evaluation Category | Score (%) |
|---|-----------|
| Event operation | 95.4 |
| Presentation clarity and understanding | 90.9 |
| Overall satisfaction | 97.1 |
| Did you learn something today? | 80.0 |
| Will you change something in your own business? | 92.0 |

These activities included a number of larger 'field-day' events including the MLA Meat profit day at Lucindale and the SE Field days. In addition, several events were carried out in conjunction with other organisations, such as the CRC for Beef Genetic Technologies and Rural Solutions SA.

A major component of the activities included workshops with service providers, with the main activities being the key one day service provider workshop with the Elders Ltd head office staff in Adelaide. The larger events were evaluated on the day, with MBfP representatives collating the information.

As a result of the service provider forums, it is expected that this component of the program will develop further into the next few years as consultants become more aware of More Beef from Pastures.

5 Success in Achieving Objectives

Objective 1

Attend MLA MBfP national extension team meetings coordinated by the MLA MBfP national extension coordinator (estimate 3-4 workshops/year):

All MBfP coordinator meetings were attended.

- July – Melbourne
- September – Hobart
- December – Sydney
- February – Mansfield (Vic)
- May – Sydney

In addition, any teleconferences between coordinator meetings were also 'attended'.

Objective 2

Allocate the equivalent of 55 days of staff time to this project.

A minimum of 55 days was spent working on the MBfP project.

Objective 3

Assist the development of applications for Producer Learning Network (PLN) and PIRD grants by producer groups and intermediaries for submission to MLA (funding ranging from \$2,000 to \$15,000 pa)

During the 06/07 period, the Coorong Beef Group and the Kangaroo Island Beef Group submitted PLN/PIRD project proposals (for \$15,000 each) to MLA via the SA MBfP coordinator. Both of these projects were successful in application and are now well underway in implementation.

Objective 4

Contribute to the review of PLN grant applications

During the process of the above applications, the SA coordinator was involved in both the initial submission and subsequent review process.

Objective 5

Coordinate 1 major workshop for intermediaries per year sponsored by MLA, initially to update them on the MLA MBfP program, and subsequently to provide technical updates on R&D output.

During the 06/07 period, 4 key service provider workshops were conducted. The major workshop for this period involved the explanation of the MBfP program to the livestock staff of Elders Ltd. Attendees included the national livestock manager from Elders' head office, in addition to a number of regionally based livestock managers. This workshop has led onto further activities with the Elders Company, including a number of 'cost-of-production' workshops.

The other service provider forums held involved workshop on the MBfP program with a number of organisations and groups, such as:

- The University of Adelaide, Animal Science Department
- The Adelaide and Mt Lofty Ranges NRM board
- Rural Directions (Clare)
- Rural Solutions SA
- Elders Ltd
- Solly Business Services, Naracoorte
- PIRSA Agriculture and Wine division

These forums are resulting in follow-up activities, where providers are requiring help with operation of MBfP tools (e.g. The Feed Demand Calculator).

Objective 6

Work closely with Service Providers (e.g. Livestock Agents and Agriculture Consultants) to develop systems which will allow them to enhance the use of the MBfP package with their clients.

As with Objective 5, the SA coordinator is engaging with an increasing number of people within the Service Provider sector. This process not only involves awareness workshops, but also on-going support with the how the tools and information in the program can be adapted for use with clients. The use of the Feed Demand calculator by the University of Adelaide for teaching is an example of this occurring.

In addition, Elders Ltd is anticipating using the Cost of Production calculator, in conjunction with the procedures in the manual as a means of value adding to the service they provide to clients. This area of service provider contact will be an integral component of the MBfP program into the future within the SA Beef Industry.

Objective 7

Assist Service Providers in the use of MBfP package in the form of assisting with the organisation and facilitation of forums or workshops (e.g. Cost of Production workshops).

As stated in Objective 5, an increasing number of Service Provider organisations within SA are hosting or will host forums and workshops on the content and tools of the MBfP program. This includes:

1. Cost of Production workshops
2. Feed Demand and Supply workshops
3. Attendance at Field days
4. Involvement in other government agency projects in which MBfP can offer a high level of technical support, for example:
 - a. Technical workshops (e.g. Beef nutrition)
 - b. Seminars (e.g. PrimeTime forums)
 - c. Edge Network Prograze and Beef Cheque
5. Involvement in specific research program, such as the CRC for Beef Genetic Technologies, Beef Profit Partnership program. This is through the use of the Cost of Production and feed Demand calculators.
6. Increasingly, consultants are being engaged to deliver specific MBfP workshops within the service provider sector. For example, Solly Business Services at Naracoorte is delivering workshop to Elders, NRM groups and producer groups.

6 Impact on Meat and Livestock Industry – now & in five years time

The MBfP program supports the 2005-2015 Beef Industry Strategy – Directions for South Australia. The strategy provides direction for growth over the next decade. One of the key themes within the strategy is implementing responsible production systems on a reduced land base. In anticipation of increased competition from other enterprises in key production areas, the strategy has a target of achieving a 15% increase in production on a 10% reduced land base.

To achieve the 3% per annum productivity gain necessary to reach the above target the main initiatives identified are:

- Maintaining cost competitiveness with other enterprises,
- Improving pasture utilisation (currently around 30%) and
- Enhancing the application of alternative feeding systems to ensure consistent supply of cattle throughout the year

Adoption of the processes outlined in the MBfP program will certainly increase the chances of achieving the above and the necessary productivity gains

The employment of a Development Officer for the MBfP program provides a number of indirect and direct outcomes, which will benefit the South Australian, cattle industry.

- A greater acceptance, awareness and adoption of MBfP program by South Australian service providers and consultants will allow for a more consistent approach to extension for the SA cattle industry. Service providers and consultants may choose different ways to disseminate the knowledge, but the MBfP program is flexible to enable producers to receive the best up to date knowledge that is currently available.
- There is clear evidence from MLA that producers that have had exposure and training in the MBfP program are more likely to engage in on farm management practices that have a positive impact on improving productivity or reducing production costs.
- It is estimated that a 3% increase per annum in productivity for South Australian beef cattle producers would lead to approximately \$10 million increase in farm gate value and around \$30 million increase in final sales of beef products. Over the life of the Beef Strategy this would increase the annual value of the Beef industry to the targeted \$1.2 billion. Although it cannot be expected that the MBfP program will have an impact on all cattle producers, it is felt that by targeting the major service providers and consultants, a large percentage of producers can be influenced to engage in some positive change in their management practice.

7 Conclusions and Recommendations

PIRSA and MLA have been working together to promote MBfP in South Australia over the last two years, and we have now reached a time when some real benefits can be achieved with further commitment and expansion of the project.

For example Elders Ltd have recently been involved in discussions with MLA and PIRSA and are keen to explore the opportunities to promote this to their cattle producer clients. Although it is hoped that this program would become commercially viable for their business, it is essential that companies like Elders, who have exposure to a critical mass of South Australian cattle producers, do get some support to initiate this concept into their business. It is planned that the State Coordinator will provide Service Providers like Elders Ltd with the support they need to make MBfP an integral, effective and ongoing part of their business.

The last two years has laid an excellent foundation in exploring and initiating the most effective way of exposing South Australian producers to the More Beef from Pastures program. Due to this, it is anticipated that over the next two years, South Australia can achieve some excellent outcomes with both the More Beef from Pastures and Making More from Sheep programs.

8 Appendices – Forum activity schedule

| EVENT | PROPOSED DATE | LOCATION |
|---|------------------|----------------------------|
| Loxton Beef Group | 16/07/2006 | |
| Coorong farm improvement group | 25/07/2006 | |
| Eyre Peninsula Beef Group | 28/07/2006 | |
| Coorong Beef Group | 31-Jul | |
| EP Beef Group | 28-Jul | |
| PIRSA Livestock Team Meeting | 19-20 Sept | |
| EP Beef Group | 22-Sep | |
| KI Beef Group | 6-Oct | |
| Presentation to SABDT of 'plan of attack' of MBfP SA Strategy | Feb-07 | PIRSA |
| Outback Lakes 'COP' workshop - 1.5 day (15 People) | 2-Mar-07 | Producer |
| SE Field Days - Lucindale | 15-Mar-07 | Producer |
| Beef IDB Presentation | 21-Mar-07 | PIRSA |
| Meat Profit Day - Lucindale | 27-Apr-07 | MLA |
| Coorong Beef Group - COP follow-up | 1-May-07 | Producer (CRC) |
| Meadows Ag Bureau | 3-May-07 | Producer |
| Oodnadatta Beef Group - COP introduction | 14-May-07 | Producer (Outback Project) |
| Elders MBfP workshop - Adelaide | 2-May-07 | Service Provider |
| Elders - Gary Tapscott - MBfP Follow up with key client | 16-May-07 | Service Provider |
| NRM MBfP - Service Provider workshop | 22-May-07 | Service Provider |
| Rural Directions - Service Provider workshop | 25-May-07 | Service Provider |
| EP Beef Group - Market Specs Field Day | 27-Jun-07 | Producer |

| ACTUAL ATTENDANCE | CONTENT | PRESENTERS |
|----------------------|---|---|
| 10 | CoP and ongoing sessions from MBfP | Tim Prance |
| 10 | CoP follow up forum and how to use the feed demand calculator | Ben Hebart |
| 15 | CoP, setting directions, and ongoing sessions from MBfP | Ben Hebart |
| 10 | COP followup | Ben Hebart |
| 15 | COP introduction (Setting Directions) | Ben Hebart |
| 12 | COP, Rainfall to Pasture, Feed Demand Demo | Ben Hebart |
| 15 | COP followup, Feed demand, Pasture growth | Ben Hebart |
| 15 | COP followup, Drought management, Bee Enterprise | Ben Hebart |
| 12 | Presentation to SABDT of 'plan of attack' of MBfP SA Strategy | Ben Hebart |
| 12 | Outback Lakes 'COP' workshop - 1.5 day (15 People) | Ben Hebart |
| 50 | SE Field Days - Lucindale | Ben Hebart |
| 11 | Beef IDB Presentation | Ben Hebart |
| 50 | Meat Profit Day - Lucindale | Ben Hebart |
| 10 | Coorong Beef Group - COP follow-up | Ben Hebart |
| 8 | Meadows Ag Bureau | Ben Hebart |
| 10 | Oodnadatta Beef Group - COP introduction | Ben Hebart |
| 15 | Elders MBfP workshop - Adelaide | Ben Hebart, David Falepau, Stephen Faigan |
| 3 | Elders - Gary Tapscott - MBfP Follow up with key client | Ben Hebart |
| 7 | NRM MBfP - Service Provider workshop | Ben Hebart |
| 5 | Rural Directions - Service Provider workshop | Ben Hebart |
| | EP Beef Group - Market Specs Field Day | |