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Industries



# final report

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## More Beef from Pastures

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## **Abstract**

The More Beef from Pastures project is a MLA southern beef program initiative. The MLA More Beef from Pastures program is a package of information and resources that cover the key aspects of beef production and provide a pathway for southern beef producers wanting to lift the profitability of their beef enterprise. The program is a complete package of information for producers committed to implementing long term changes to their business operations. NSW Department of Primary Industries delivers the project on behalf of MLA in NSW. This is largely achieved through the provision of a state coordinator to administer and manage the project and coordinate the planning and conduct of activities.

## **Executive Summary**

During the contracted period 1 July 2006 to 30 June 2007 very significant achievements were made in NSW for the More Beef from Pastures project. Milestones and expectations were exceeded.

In total 1728 beef industry participants were involved in More Beef from Pastures events. This occurred through a variety of activities ranging from high profile awareness expos, field days, hands-on practical workshops (eg. Cost of Production and Prograze), seminars and conference attendances as well as involvement with other industry service providers.

The More Beef from Pastures project Producer Manual and Tools were demonstrated at many of these activities and participants made aware of how they could help in fine tuning the running of their beef business. In many cases introductory training in using the tools was provided.

Highlights of the year where More Beef from Pastures was the focus were:

- Presentation of four Expos in Orange, Inverell, Armidale and Cowra attended by 443 participants.
- Conference poster presentations to Beef Improvement Association of Australia and NSW Department of Primary Industries Extension Officer Conferences.
- Invited speaker for "The Land" newspaper journalist conference.
- Presentation to the NSW Beef Industry Committee and NSW Southern Australian Beef Research Council Committee.
- Field days and workshops for beef producers.

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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:

- 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

# 2 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. Direct producers to further information, services and training.

### 3 Methodology

As this project was largely directed at creating awareness amongst beef producers in regard to opportunities to improve the performance of their beef business, an emphasis in the contract period was placed on events that may achieve that.

The events presented in NSW in 06/07 could be largely classified into the following grouping:

- 3.1 One day Expo
- 3.2 Cost of Production Workshops and Event Presentations
- 3.3 Field Days
- 3.4 Significant Industry Events

### 4 Results and Discussion

#### 4.1 Expos

In the 06/07 year four one-day expos were presented in NSW — Orange October 27, Inverell February 2, Armidale March 8 and Cowra May 1. They were attended by a total of 443 industry participants. These Expos showcased the “Tools for the Time challenged”. This included the Cost of Production Tool, The Rainfall to Pasture Growth Outlook Tool and the Feed Demand Calculator. In addition, presentations by producer advocates were included to demonstrate how these tools can be successfully used to improve a beef business. Feedback from these events showed that they were extremely well received by both producers and industry representatives and consistently ranked 4 – 5 (1 – 5 scale with 5 being ‘very high’) on the event evaluations conducted amongst participants.

NSW DPI were co-partners in the delivery of these days and assisted in the organisation and presentation of the events. Agronomy technical specialists in pastures were also provided to present at these events.

#### 4.2 Cost of Production (CoP) Workshop and Event Presentation

CoP was the focus at 15 events attended by 500 participants.

At these events producers were introduced to the CoP calculator and encouraged to use it to take the first step in better understanding how their beef business was performing.

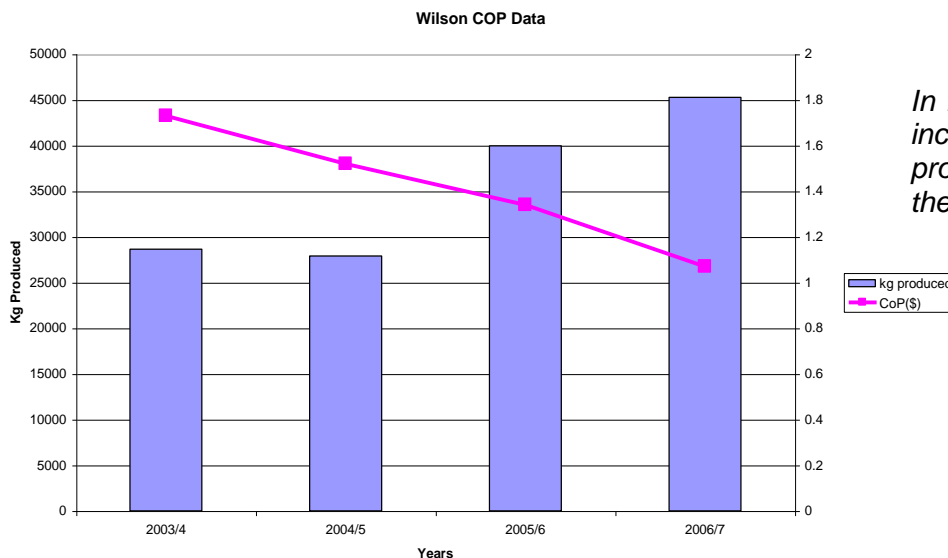
Detailed follow up evaluations have not been conducted to clearly determine how many subsequently did use the tool. However southern coastal NSW producers Trevor and Kay Wilson are an example of how valuable the CoP tool can be as a basis for improving profitability.



*Trevor and Kay Wilson from the Casino district in northern NSW attended a NSW Department of Primary Industries Cost of Production workshop and decided after working their CoP at \$1.73/kg of beef produced in 2003/2004 that they needed to decrease it and generate a margin for profit.*

*The Wilsons used the More Beef from Pastures CoP calculator.*

*Their CoP for 2006/2007 was \$1.07/kg.*



*In four years the Wilsons have increased their kg beef produced by 55% and reduced their CoP by 38%.*

In the Ebor/Hernani area of the NSW northern tablelands a group of 10 beef producers decided after attending a NSW DPI CoP workshop in 2004 that they would annually calculate their individual CoP and then collate the information across the group. The pooled data is used to benchmark within the group.

Data for the 06/07 year will be the third collated and used in this manner.

The value of calculating CoP and then sharing experiences in a group situation is very valuable as described by group members Ken and Christina Tagg. In an article published in the spring 2007 edition of MLA's *Prograzier*, Christine said "after the Workshop we became very interested in knowing what it cost to produce our beef, what it cost other people and whether we could benchmark that. Initially our costs were quite high compared to other group members and it was good to be able to see from other people's figures where cuts could be made or to justify why our costs were higher."



Christina Tagg

*“Our ultimate aim is to be more efficient, we can do this now that we have a clear understanding of our business and how we can boost profit, because we know what it costs us to produce each kilogram of beef.”*

#### 4.3 Field Days

Five significant field days were presented as joint ventures between MBfP, Beef CRC and NSW DPI. These events were attended by a total of 680 beef producers.

Other industry stakeholders eg. Australian Meat Holdings, Coonamble Veterinary Practice supported these days by provision of guest speakers.

Topics covered were directly linked to the MBFP manual and support tools. They were beef cattle genetics, market specifications, herd health and Cost of Production.



*Keith Hammond, AMH livestock buyer, Dubbo explains to producers attending field days at Gulgumbone and Coolah the importance of meeting market specifications. MBfP co-sponsored these days attended by 210 producers.*

87% answered yes to the question “will you make any changes in your business based on the information provided today?”

#### 4.4 Significant Industry Events

MBfP Trade Displays were organised and manned at Beef Improvement Association Spectaculars in Dubbo and Primex in Casino during the contract period.



## **5 Success in Achieving Objectives**

### Objective 1

Bill Hoffman, NSW state coordinator attended all the quarterly meetings in the 06/07 period. They were Melbourne (July), Hobart (September), Mansfield, VIC (February) and Sydney (May). The state coordinator also participated in teleconferences as required.

### Objective 2

NSW DPI dedicated 100 days of staff time to work on the MBfP project. This significantly exceeded the minimum 55 day required.

### Objective 3

Producers were directed to a range of information, services and training opportunities as required.

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

No formal evaluation has been conducted by NSW DPI as it was not included in the contracted services but responses recorded by event surveys at events show that a high level of producers said they would change something in their business as a result of what they were exposed to at the event.

## 7 Appendix

MORE BEEF from PATURES EVENTS July 1 2006 to June 30 2007						
Event	Host	Date	Location	Attendance	Content	Presenters (DPI)
Field Day	Yulgilbar Past	13/07/2006	Baryugil	250	CoP, Genetics	Hoffman
workshop	DPI	18/07/2006	Warrilda	15	CoP	Llewlyn
Conference	BIAA	26/07/2006	Tamworth	100	MBfP display/CoP	Hoffman
Field day	DPI /CRC	3/08/2006	Mallanganee	70	Genetics,Marketing	Hoffman, Parnell
Field day	DPI /CRC	16/08/2002	Copmanhurst	140	Genetics, Marketing	Hoffman, Parnell
meeting	NSW BIC& SABRC	20/09/2006	Sydney	15	MBfP update	Hoffman
Workshop	Inverell Ag Bureau	25/09/2006	Inverell	20	CoP	Rayner
Workshop	DPI Prograze	6/09/2006	Dorrigo	22	Feed Supply	Hoffman
Study Tour	Hunter Valley beef	12/09/2006	Mallanganee	55	MBfP overview/CoP	Hoffman/Blackwood
Expo	MLA/DPI	27/10/2006	Orange	150	MBfP tools	Want/Hoffman/Littler
Tech update	Elders Ltd	9/11/2006	Dorrigo	20	MBfP/CoP	Hoffman
Tech update	Elders Ltd	10/11/2006	Cooramba	18	MBfP/CoP	Hoffman
Tech update	Elders Ltd	10/11/2006	Grafton	25	MBfP/CoP	Hoffman
workshops	DPI	22/11/2006	Grafton	20	CoP	Hoffman
Expo	MLA / DPI	15/02/2007	Inverell	100	MBfP tools	Hoffman, McCormick
SCo and PA	MLA	19-22/02/07	Mansfield	30	MBfP	Hoffman
Workshop	DPI	26/02/2007	Hernani	20	CoP, Feed Supply	Hoffman,Harris, Lowien
BEEF Spectacular	MLA / DPI	7-9/03/07	Dubbo		MBfP awareness	Hoffman, Littler, McConochie
Expo	MLA / DPI	8/03/2007	Armidale	90	MBfP tools	Hoffman, Rayner
Conference	DPI	20-22/03/07	Hawks Nest	40	CoP, Feed demand	Hoffman
Expo	MLA / DPI	1/05/2003	Cowra	93	Rebiulding for Profit	Hoffman, Edwards
Meeting	DPI BOM	1/05/2008	Ballina	15	MBfP overview	Hoffman
Poster						
Presentation	DPI BOM & staff	1/05/2009	Wollongbar	35	CoP	Hoffman
Prograze	DPI	12/06/2007	Bellingen	15	CoP	Hoffman
Primex	Primex F/Days	15-16/6/07	Casino	30	CoP	Hoffman
Breeding Field Day	DPI	21/06/2007	Gulargumbone	50	Breeding, Marketing & Herd Health	McConochie, McKiernan & Hoffman
Breeding Field Day	DPI	22/06/2007	Coolah	70	Breeding, Marketing & Herd Health	Littler, McKiernan & Hoffman

