

Cultivating aspiring farmers

“Making it possible for people who want to be farmers to be farmers.”

The back story:

A discussion when buying suits for a wedding led to Cultivate Farms. Tim Hicks grew up in south east NSW on a family sheep and cattle farm but didn't get to inherit the property. He pursued outdoor careers before he came up with the concept of crowd funding to provide start-up capital or land for young farmers.

When preparing for his brother's wedding, Tim shared the idea with old friend Sam Marwood. Sam grew up in a large dairy farming family and was told when he was eight that the farm wouldn't be his. With a career in environmental science, Sam is also an entrepreneur and charity founder (Edge Pledge).

Tim and his wife Tegan now run grassfed beef home supply business Hicks Country Beef, with 200 breeding cows and 300 sheep on leased land earmarked for urban development at Albury, NSW.

How does it work?

Participating in Cultivate Farms is a three-step process.

Firstly an aspiring producer registers their interest with Cultivate Farms and explains their business plan and skills and capabilities.

The second step is taken when the applicant is approved for the Cultivate Farms process and must demonstrate their commitment by filling gaps in their education and skills to meet the challenges of modern-day farming. At the same time they are supported to develop a farm-business plan and find the mentors and advisors to provide a solid foundation to their farm.

A third and final step is the match-making process. Cultivate Farms seeks the right farming land – often owned by farmers wishing to retire or take a break – and finds investors to establish a viable enterprise.



Cultivate Farms co-founders Tim and Tegan Hicks with their children Belle, George, Thea and Rosie.

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“Lots of farmers want to retire but they don’t want to necessarily sell the land base, but they also don’t want it to be mismanaged or sit dormant,” Sam said.

“This creates a win-win for everyone where the older generation are still earning an income from their asset base while the younger generation are getting a foot hold into they otherwise wouldn’t have.”

On the fast-track:

Cultivate Farms will use the support of the MDC Producer Innovation Fast-Track to “unpack” its business model and test if it, and the online platform, are the best means of matching aspiring farmers with landholders and investors. The partnership will also allow targeting of a wider group of investors, particularly self managed superannuation funds.

“It’s hoped that in 10 years’ time it’s the automatic choice for match making between people who want to move into farming and those who want to move out,” Sam said.

Get on board: Register your interest as an aspiring farmer, investor or land holder at www.cultivatefarms.com

About Producer Innovation Fast-Track

Producer Innovation Fast-Track is an initiative developed by MLA Donor Company (MDC) to enable producers to be actively involved in driving the innovation agenda. This program identifies the industry trailblazers and provides the support and expertise required to build their innovation capability.

An evolving pilot program, Producer Innovation Fast-Track is designed to accelerate the development and adoption of innovation and capability that have the potential to significantly improve farm and value chain performance. It provides the expertise, co-funding and support to producers who are innovators, early adopters, AgTech entrepreneurs or future value chain leaders.

Further information

Visit mla.com.au/fasttrack or contact

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