

Victorian Farmer

SPRING 2022

A woman with short brown hair, wearing a white long-sleeved button-down shirt and blue jeans with a patterned belt, stands on a dirt road. She is smiling and has her hands in her pockets. A brown dog is sitting on the road in front of her. The background shows a rural landscape with green fields, trees, and hills under a cloudy sky.

2023 NUFFIELD SCHOLAR

Tackling mental health on-farm

FAIR GO FOR REGIONAL VIC

An overview of key seats to watch during our State Election

HAPPY PLACE

Meet our youngest Branch President in the foothills of the Snowy Mountains

OUR SIDE OF THE GATE

Biosecurity tips in preparation for spring and summer tourist activity

Be part of something bigger.

VFF's partnership with Momentum Energy isn't just about giving members a good deal, it's about partnering with a company that's serious about our environment. The transition to renewable energy is inevitable – in the meantime, we can all steer clear of the power companies who refuse to quit coal as quickly as the planet needs them to.

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Hi everyone,

A big thank you for taking the time to read our latest edition of 'Victorian Farmer' and for those of you who are first time readers, welcome!

I usually like to begin with a preview of what's in store for this edition, however as I'm writing this, many of you are facing what looks to be some of our most devastating floods in decades.

My heartfelt thoughts are with all of you touched by what we are seeing.

It's impossible to know what lies ahead of us in the coming weeks and months, but we do know the impact will be significant and the recovery may stretch into next year.

Our regions and farmers are resilient, you never cease to amaze me. However, we will need support. That's where the VFF's role is so vital.

Our team has been working around the clock to not only support farmers on the ground, but also to provide information to our decision makers to ensure those impacted, get the helping hand needed, to get back on their feet.

As I'm writing this, we've just been able to secure what I hope is the beginning of more dedicated flood-relief packages for those impacted. It's a good start, but we know the repair bill, lost productivity, harvest, produce and more, will be enormous.

It's for that reason as an industry we need to have a serious forward-thinking view to the future. It's clear we're facing these devastating natural disasters more and more often and in response, we need



Floodwaters inundate farmland in Victoria's north.

to adapt our vital infrastructure and supply chains to cope with the shock of these calamities.

Amidst the chaos of what we're seeing, I've heard flood-proof swing fencing installed in the wake of the 2011 floods has stood up well. This is just one example of the type of future-proof infrastructure that we need, so we aren't as vulnerable.

That's just a snapshot of what we need decision makers to consider in the future for our industry.

For now, I urge you all to keep safe, look after each other and know the VFF is here to support Victorian farmers in any way we can.

Thank you,

Emma Germano
VFF President

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VFF HELPS SECURE MEAT IMPORT BAN TO PROTECT PRODUCERS

The Australian Government has banned personal meat imports in response to advocacy by the VFF and supporting organisations that sought to ban all food coming in with international travellers to Australia. The VFF directly raised its concerns over food coming into the Country with Federal Agriculture Minister Senator Murray Watt at the round-table held in late August.

The ban applies to all travellers coming into Australia from over 70 countries where Foot and Mouth Disease has been detected as well as, parcel deliveries. Only commercial importers are permitted to bring meat products into Australia from the list of restricted countries.

PROPOSED POULTRY CHANGES SPARK FARMER CONCERN

With the release of proposed national Animal Welfare Standards and Guidelines for Poultry, the VFF has expressed concerns that the phasing out of conventional caged systems will have significant ramifications for existing farm businesses as well as for food security.

VFF Egg Group Councilor Lou Napolitano said "the proposed changes are purely feelings based and not founded in science, which again will lead to more unwanted and unnecessary cost increases to consumers for no animal welfare gain."

The VFF is working through the standards and consulting with members, industry and government on specific concerns.

RED TAPE SLASHED IN WIN FOR FARMERS

Farmers will no longer need EPA licenses when using 5000 or more tyres to weigh down silage.

After more than two years of consultation between Dairy Australia, the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Environment (DELWP), the EPA and the VFF, the move will see the need for EPA licenses scrapped in favour of a registration system.

VFF President Emma Germano said the compromise "is a step in the right direction towards simplifying the process for farmers and avoiding costly and time-consuming red-tape."

The VFF thanks DELWP and EPA for the open and consultative process undertaken and looks forward to the new regulations being gazetted in the near future.

The VFF will continue working with all stakeholders to provide clear industry guidance to farmers prior to registration requirement being introduced on 1 July 2023.

VFF DAIRY FARMER TAKES OUT NATIONAL AWARD

VFF Member Sarah Parker has received the 2022 Rural Community Leader of the Year award at the Australian Farmer of the Year Awards ceremony held in Canberra earlier this year.

Sarah and her husband Raymond run a dairy farm and Illawara stud at Udera in the Goulburn Valley.

Sarah is passionate about giving back to her community and supporting the growth of those in the industry. She serves a range of organisations, working with them to improve conditions, advance causes, highlight issues and provide opportunities for people to get involved, grow their skills and knowledge and connect with others.

Fantastic work Sarah!

NEW POWERS AVAILABLE FOR FARMERS TO PROTECT ON-FARM BIOSECURITY

Farmers have a new tool to protect their properties and animals from unauthorised trespass and biosecurity threats following the implementation of the Livestock Management Regulations 2022.



Under the regulations, farmers will be able to have trespassers onto their property prosecuted, so long as a Biosecurity Management Plan is in place and warning signs are displayed on all farm entry points. The VFF worked closely with Agriculture Victoria to help develop the regulations which govern the content that must be contained in biosecurity management plans and displayed on warning signs.

The VFF encourages farmers to opt in and use these regulations to help protect their property from biosecurity threats and from unauthorised trespass. For information on the new regulations and for a full explanation on what you must do to protect your property, visit the [Agriculture Victoria website](https://www.vff.org.au/resources/news).



TELEHANDLER HIGH-RISK LICENCE TO BE DEVELOPED

After years of VFF lobbying, the Minister for Workplace Safety Ingrid Stitt has approved developing a High-Risk Work Licence specifically for telehandlers, encompassed in the existing non-slewing mobile crane licence (CN licence).

This provides telehandler operators with the flexibility to choose between obtaining a new telehandler HRWL by completing a new telehandler specific Unit of Competency or maintain the existing CN licence requirement. Telehandler operators would not be required to hold both licences.

"This is a great win for farmers and farm safety", said VFF Transport and Infrastructure Chair Ryan Milgate.

The VFF will continue to engage with WorkSafe to ensure the development of targeted and accessible training that meets the needs of telehandler operators across all industries.

For more news and updates, head to our website: www.vff.org.au/resources/news

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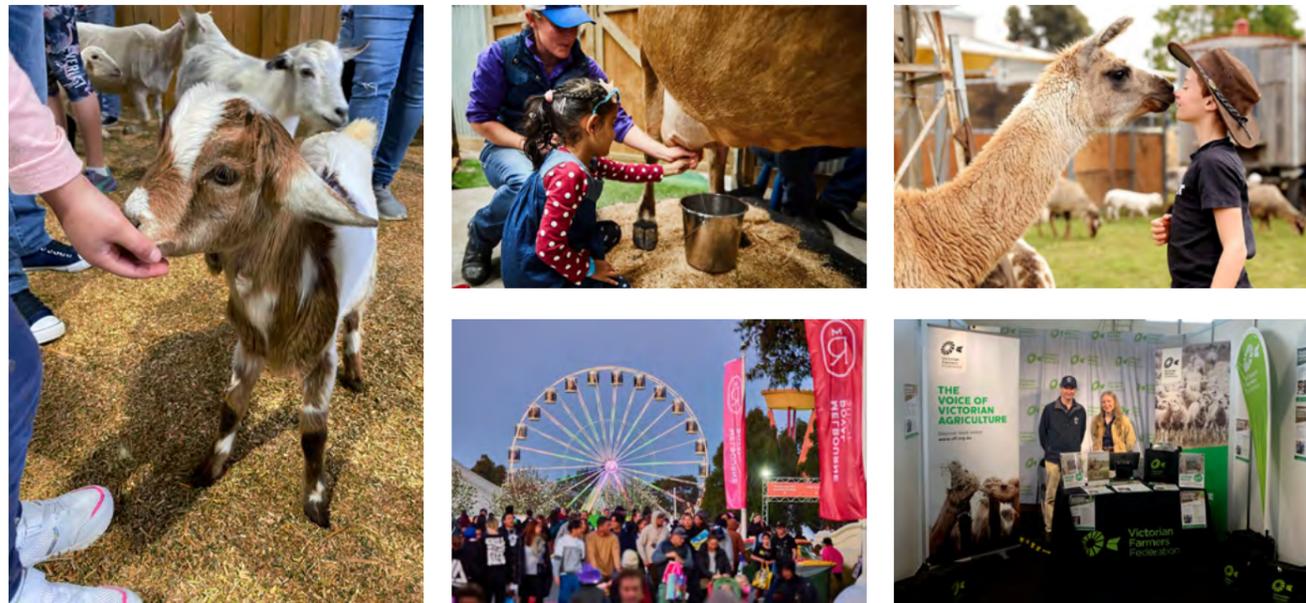
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Melbourne Royal Show

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2022 Symposium

Check out the highlights from our Symposium. **What an event!**



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A timeline of how to prepare for disaster season

Everyone loves the start of summer with its hot days, balmy nights and backyard barbeques.

But with the warmer months comes an increased risk of natural disasters – fire, heatwaves, floods and cyclones – across the country.

As we approach this summer season it's important to be ready and like it or not, disaster season is a part of our Australian summers.

We know that staying connected is especially crucial when disasters happen.

It's important to think ahead to make sure you can stay informed about conditions and connected with loved ones during an emergency.

Even if you don't live in an area of high risk for cyclones, bushfires or flooding, you may work in or travel through a high-risk area, so it's

important that everyone knows what to do in an emergency.

Whether you're well prepared or are more likely to get your gear together on evacuation day, we've got a disaster preparedness checklist for you.

Stay safe this summer.

To read more about how you can be prepared this summer season, go to exchange.telstra.com.au and search for disaster season.

Disaster preparedness checklist

The prepper: five weeks out

- Download emergency services apps
- Be alert to changing conditions
- Back up your data
- Save your emergency numbers as priorities
- Consider a satellite phone or repeater device
- Get a corded phone
- EFTPOS terminals are configured to use alternative connectivity in the event of a service disruption.

The just-in-case: five days out

- Consider investing in a fast phone charger
- Enable Wi-Fi Calling

The last minute: five hours out

- Charge your phone. Right now.
- Use local information sources
- Gather your Government agencies for emergency response information

Championing the needs of farmers

Incredible connectivity has the potential to transform a nation, but these dreams can only be realised if everyone can join in.

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In 2022, it is more important than ever to keep our customers at the heart of everything we do – especially when it comes to connectivity.

With innovation and customer at its heart, Telstra is proud to sponsor the Victorian Farmers Federation.





As the impending Victorian election edges closer, we look at the **key seats in regional Victoria** that will help decide who will hold power on Spring Street for the next four years.

In June 2022 the VFF launched its **Fair Go for Regional Vic** campaign which sought to highlight the issues that matter most to farmers and their communities when voting at the November election.

The VFF sees the election as an opportunity to put forward a positive agenda and vision for the community's future. That's why the VFF has called for a clear plan from the next Victorian government that focusses on key policy areas including road and rail investment, community support, protecting farmers' rights and the environment and supporting farm businesses to meet current and future challenges.

The VFF's strategy has also been to focus on key seats in regional Victoria that are of strategic importance to the Andrews Government and Matt Guy's Opposition. With many rural communities often overlooked at election time, there are a number of regional seats that could very well determine the outcome in 2022.

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rebecca Haycraft, Sam D'Agostino, Dairy Australia

Key seats to watch on election night

Ripon – ALP 2.7%

The Ripon electorate is vast and includes the major population centres of Creswick, Ararat, Maryborough, Wedderburn, Skipton, Bridgewater and St Arnaud. Agriculture and rural industry is vital to the prosperity and health of these local communities.

Louise Staley has been the Liberal MP for Ripon since 2014, but the recent redistribution makes it notionally Labor with an estimated margin of 2.7%. Before entering Parliament, Staley worked in finance and later farmed cereals and oilseeds at Wilarua. Martha Haylett is the Labor Party's candidate and grew up in Central Victoria before going on to have various roles in government, including a stint as an Advisor to Premier Daniel Andrews.

There are numerous local issues that are playing out across the electorate, but none more so than the issues surrounding the proposed construction of powerlines through high value farmland to the north of Ballarat. Local farmers are desperately trying to fight off the project and have instead advocated for the undergrounding of powerlines, a position fully supported by the VFF.

In the north of the electorate, access to stock and domestic water has also become an issue with the VFF supporting the proposed Southern Wimmera and Northeast Pyrenees Water Supply project.

Mildura – IND 0.3%

Mildura could very well come down to the wire in a tight three-sided contest between the sitting Independent MP Ali Cupper, the Nationals and the Liberals. Cupper won the seat in 2018 from the Nationals after having previously been a Labor Candidate. The Nationals have preselected former Swan Hill Mayor Jade Benham whilst the Liberals have chosen Mildura based Policeman Paul Matheson.

The seat is of great strategic importance to both the Andrews Government and the Opposition. Without winning this seat, it is unlikely that the Coalition could form government in its own right. If Labor is forced into a minority government, then they could very well rely on Cupper's support - in the same way that Steve Brack's received the backing of the former Mildura independent MP Russell Savage in 1999.

The impact of local government rates has been a key issue for farming communities in the electorate for many years with VFF members protesting rate hikes in 2018 before that election. This protest helped to deliver election commitments from both sides of politics to set up a review of Victoria's rating system. Cupper has been supportive of the VFF's campaigning and has separately given voice to the issue in Parliament and with the Government, highlighting the inequity in rates paid between country and city ratepayers.



Bass – LIB 0.7%

A three-sided contest awaits sitting Labor MP Jordan Crugnale, the Liberals' Aaron Brown and the Nationals' Brett Tesari in the coastal seat of Bass.

The seat envelopes Western Port Bay and includes Phillip Island, the entire Bass Coast Shire and growing suburbs on the edge of Cranbourne. This seat had been held by the Liberals for a long time but was picked up by Labor in 2018. The recent redistribution sees the Coalition sneak forward, but this is a battleground seat that Labor is keen to retain having made a substantial funding commitment to the Wonthaggi hospital.

Right to farm issues have been of serious concern to local farmers and the VFF Bass Coast Branch. Earlier this year the Andrews Government backed down from a plan that would see farmers have to obtain a permit to erect a post and wire fence, following strong VFF advocacy. Local government rates have also been a sore point for farmers having to compete with local land sales that have been pushed by tree changers moving to the Coast.

OTHER SEATS TO WATCH

Nepean – ALP 0.7%

This was a surprise win for Labor's Chris Brayne in 2018 and he has a lot of work to do to defend a challenge from the Liberal's Sam Groth. Agriculture is a relatively small, but important part of the Mornington Peninsula's economy with local farmers keen to see the local industry protected from development.

Eildon – LIB 1%

This large electorate spanning from Mansfield to the Yarra Valley and the outskirts of Melbourne has been held by sitting MP Cindy McLeish since it was created in 2014. The condition of State and local roads has been a key issue in this electorate for some time with tourist traffic to Mt Buller and local vineyards causing challenges for local road users.

Polwarth – LIB 2.5%

This traditionally safe Liberal seat centred around Colac and the Otways has become a tight contest following a redistribution that sees the areas around Mortlake move to the electorate next door. Labor have selected their former Party President Hutch Hussein to take on sitting MP Richard Riordan. If this seat doesn't fall to Labor at this election, future redistributions will make Polwarth even more of a battleground seat in the future.

Benambra – LIB 2.6%

Sitting Liberal MP Bill Tilley is under a genuine threat from Independent Candidate Jacqui Hawkins. Healthcare has been the dominant issue in this seat based around Wodonga, whilst the issues surrounding camping on licensed river frontages continue to be of great importance to the VFF and local farmers.

Shepparton – IND 5.3%

This seat had always been held by the Country/National Party until the Independent Suzanna Sheed won in 2014. In 2018, Sheed extended her margin over the Coalition with the Liberal Candidate Cheryl Hammer finishing second. Hammer fronts up for a second time with former Shepparton Mayor Kim O'Keeffe representing the Nationals. With the recent floods in the region, emergency management, support and recovery will be a key issue for the local community.

74,800
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JOBS THAT
MATTER.



FAIR GO
 FOR REGIONAL VIC

The Journey to Sustainability

Meredith Dairy is a **vertically integrated agribusiness**, managing a large land holding in western Victoria. The main activity is milking both sheep and goats and manufacturing specialist dairy products.

WORDS

Julie Cameron

PHOTOGRAPHY

Meredith Dairy

The company, a VFF Member, employs more than 100 staff and as well as the milking and dairy manufacturing, it also has cropping, prime lamb and a beef enterprise. The Meredith Dairy products are sold nationwide, including in corporate retail stores and exported, mostly to the USA.

Meredith Dairy's mission is to continually look for and implement improvements. The Meredith Dairy vision is to 'produce food sustainably'.

The company has initiated many environmental improvement projects, including reducing greenhouse gas production, reducing and recycling waste, and protecting natural assets.

Recently in business circles, the term sustainability has been replaced with acronym ESG (Environmental, Social and Governance) in recognition of need for sustainability to be viewed holistically. This ensures that environmental sustainability is working alongside social sustainability and governance sustainability, rather than just referring to the environment.

In 2020, Meredith Dairy applied for a grant through the State Government's **Agriculture Energy Investment program**, which is aimed at reducing energy costs on-farm.

Four share-farms which supply milk to the Dairy joined together and also applied for the grant. Both Meredith Dairy and the share farmers were successful.

The majority of the funding assisted the installing of a Combined Heat and Power (CHP) system at the Dairy's manufacturing facility. This CHP runs continually, generating electricity and heat.



The CHP system (pictured above) is fuelled entirely by waste timber in the form of woodchips, and allows a consistent generation of electricity and heating, (the site uses electricity and heat continuously, 365 days per year).

Meredith Dairy chose to pursue a woodfired CHP, because there was already a successfully operating wood-fired boiler installed to supply hot water to the factory. A need to increase production and a desire to become more energy self-sufficient, stimulated the investigation into the biofuel CHP unit. The unit would allow 100 per cent of the site's heat to come from sustainably sourced woodchips (including heat from the current woodfired boiler), together with a 70 per cent reduction in grid electricity demand.

At the time of investment, in mid-2021, it was estimated that the CHP would save approximately \$150,000 annually in electricity and LPG costs, giving a system payback of around four years.

Recent energy cost increases have further improved the business case for the project.

For the share-farm dairies, grant funding was directed towards energy-efficiency measures such as improved insulation, fans, pumps and heat exchangers. Solar photovoltaic panels were also installed at each dairy, reducing grid demand by approximately 30-35 per cent.

Energy savings, together with onsite generation of renewable electricity and heat, have been critical in increasing capacity of the factory and reducing the environmental impact for Meredith Dairy and its share farms. Investing in technologies and renewable energy initiatives will enable payback periods of between one and four years.

Other greenhouse gas reduction initiatives include annual tree planting projects and the use of cropping technologies which have established significant sequestration opportunities.



“ *The Meredith Dairy vision to ‘produce food sustainably’ is an ongoing journey. A warming climate, resource pressures and consumer trends are all challengers moving forward.* ”

Julie Cameron

Paddock surveys including soil organic carbon analysis, have identified areas with significant carbon storage and other areas for carbon capture opportunities.

Environmental initiatives also include waste management. Meredith Dairy identified **24 waste streams**, including farm waste, for example; silage wrap, and recycling and value-adding these materials.

Wastewater from the manufacturing plant irrigate tree plantations. The timber will be used for building material or woodchips for renewable energy. Other organic waste is composted and put back onto cropping paddocks, reducing the need for synthetic fertilisers. Whey is a significant waste product of dairy manufacture. It is high in nutrients and often acidic, making it difficult to manage via traditional effluent systems, yet if collected hygienically and processed, it has real value.

Meredith Dairy invested, and are shareholders, in a state-of-the-art drying plant in Geelong, Bellarine Foods. The whey is now processed at this facility, producing whey protein powder which has significant monetary value and is in demand internationally. The Geelong plant is also equipped to dry surplus sheep and goat milk enabling inventory control.

Whole farm planning has facilitated the rotation of cropping and grazing paddocks. Natural areas with significant native biodiversity or areas difficult to improve, are excluded from farm production. Approximately 20 per cent of the land holding is set aside for conservation or shelterbelts.

The farm has some special ecological areas which contain endangered or vulnerable biodiversity. These areas are managed with guidance from Corangamite Catchment Management Authority and Trust for Nature. Flora and fauna surveys have indicated areas requiring revegetation or biomass management but have also identified considerable recovery of natural assets.

The Meredith Dairy vision to ‘produce food sustainably’ is an ongoing journey. A warming climate, resource pressures and consumer trends are all challengers moving forward. By finding ways to identify and overcome vulnerabilities in our production systems, an emphasis on quality and improvements will be a continual focus. 🌱

The VFF is calling on the State government to reinstate on-farm energy grants and rebates to allow more Victorian farmers to improve their on-farm energy usage and environmental sustainability.



Ear to the Ground.

Victoria's sole 2023 Nuffield Scholar has never been afraid of hard work, and she won't stop until all farmers get the support they need, **one chat at a time.**

WORDS
Wendy Hargreaves

PHOTOGRAPHY
Rebecca Haycraft

Kiewa Valley dairy farmer **Sarah Crosthwaite** will have a crack at any job, so long as it's in the country with open skies and wide horizons.



She grew up on a farm near Deniliquin, starting her working life as a station cook before stints painting cattle grids and planting trees for a Landcare group.

Sarah also took a full-time job mulesing sheep, and then moved to collecting ram semen for a genetics company.

And after a decade of dairy farming and raising two kids with her husband Stuart, Sarah had an epiphany that would set her on a path to winning the prestigious Nuffield Scholarship for 2023.

"I was standing at the clothesline putting the washing out," Sarah says. "I remember it so clearly. My daughter Indie was at school and my youngest Otto was about to turn five and join her the following year. They're now 17 and 15, so it was a while ago."

"I stopped and stood there and realised that I didn't want to be a full-time farmer."

Sarah says she has always been happy to help with milking, feeding the calves and doing the books for the family's Kergunyah South property, but dairying has never been her passion.

"So in that moment at the clothes line, I started thinking about what I really wanted from life," Sarah says.

"I've always been a good listener, and I'm good at keeping secrets. People open up and tell me stuff, and I know they're not telling anyone else. Sometimes it's stuff they didn't know they wanted to share."

"It ended up being an obvious step for me. I decided to work in mental health, and took myself off to university at the age of 34 and got a Master of Social Work."

Sarah drove to La Trobe University's Albury/Wodonga campus three days a week, finishing the degree in four and half years.

Now 45, Sarah is a full-time Mental Health Clinician on the road in the valleys and mountain ranges of Victoria's north-east supporting farmers and rural communities impacted by natural disasters.

Her work is funded by government grants for communities impacted by the 2020 bushfires. This funding is due to run out next June.

Sarah hopes the Nuffield Scholarship will help her find a way to continue offering free mental health support for farming communities without being tied to disaster packages or government funding criteria.

"I have this vision, but when you sit at your kitchen table and have these big dreams, it's hard to do on your own," she says. "I would love to do exactly what I'm doing now, listening to people and helping them, so we can prevent acute mental health problems."



"At the moment, it feels like there are so many barriers, with all the funding red-tape and everything centralised in the cities. I want to do something about it. I'm not sure yet what that is, but I'm going to try."

As a Nuffield Scholar, Sarah will receive a \$30,000 bursary supported by the Gardiner Dairy Foundation to travel and research other farming communities around the world, investigating how they tackle mental health.

Sarah was one of 18 scholarship recipients for 2023, and the only Victorian. She plans to travel to the UK, Canada, France, New Zealand, along with other dairying regions in Australia.

"The Nuffield and the Gardiner Dairy Foundation have given me the platform to think globally, which is really exciting," Sarah says. "I want to find out if we're doing the best practice in Australia. Could we be doing things better, or are we leading the way?"

"I believe you're never too old to continue to learn, but if I'm really honest, I'm a bit overwhelmed by all the attention."

"My husband has been in the public eye in the dairy industry, and I've been quite happy to be in the background. When I applied for the Nuffield, it never occurred to me that somebody would want to write an article about me or take photos."

“*At the moment, it feels like there are so many barriers, with all the funding red-tape and everything centralised in the cities.*”

” Sarah Crosthwaite



“ You make a much better connection with farmers when you meet them in their environment. They’re more relaxed and willing to talk.”

Sarah Crosthwaite

“I’ve always preferred to play a supporting role. To be out the front is hard to get my head around. It’s not something I’d ever imagined.”

Sarah’s husband Stuart Crosthwaite is a fifth-generation dairy farmer and the chairman of Mountain Milk Co-op, formed by a group of local dairy farmers left stranded by 2016’s devastating milk price crash and subsequent liquidation of Australia’s largest dairy co-op Murray Goulburn.

“Times have changed, and we don’t have the big communities that we used to have in farming areas, but we still have a really strong community here,” Sarah says.

“The co-op isn’t just a way to sell our milk. You’re working with people who understand you and know what it’s like when you have a bad week.”

“We all support each other.”

Sarah admits her life has come a long way since she dropped out of school at the end of year 11.

“I had very low self-esteem at school,” she says. “I’m dyslexic, so I never feel smart, and of course, school was very different back in the ‘90s.”

“But I was never afraid of hard work and love being in the outdoors.”

“I’ve also got two older brothers and had a great relationship with my (late) dad, so I really enjoy the company of men. I’ve always loved talking to my Dad and my older brothers.”

Sarah lived in Melbourne until she was 10 years old, but she barely remembers her time in the city.

“My parents (John and Shirley Murray) did a tree change before it was known as a tree change,” Sarah says. “Dad was a stockbroker and could see the ‘88 stock crash coming, so he bought a small farm up in Deniliquin and ran a grain business and fat lambs.”

“I feel very lucky that I learned the skill of listening from my Dad. He was quite a deep thinker and a great talker. We would



sit up late into the night, discussing the world. The conversations were always really deep.”

These conversation skills – combined with a huge variety of agriculture jobs – are a winning formula in Sarah’s chosen career.

She believes mental health is the biggest issue facing rural communities, where people are often isolated from services that city people take for granted.

Sarah also worries that rural health policies can be created by people who live and work in the city with little understanding of rural life.

“My job is very stats driven,” Sarah says. “I’m expected to see a certain number of people a day, but I have to drive four or five hours in that day to see four or five people.”

“There’s no way we could ever hit the same quotas as people in a clinical setting, and yet we’re compared to them. It’s a system that’s geared towards people visiting clinics or health centres, but in my experience, farmers won’t go into town and visit a mental health clinic. They won’t even go and see their GP.”

“You make a much better connection with farmers when you meet them in their environment. They’re more relaxed and willing to talk.”

Sarah wants to see farmers approach their mental health as a **key plank in their business.**

“At our farm, we’ve always got bank managers, agronomists and insurance agents coming to talk about our business, but where’s the mental health support?” Sarah asks. “For any business to run successfully, you need to have mentally healthy people in charge.”

“Everyone gets stressed, but if you can get out and talk to somebody and do preventative work, when they’re starting to feel a bit bogged down, you can have a real impact. How many beers are you drinking a night? How about we reduce it by one or two? What are you eating? What time are you going to be bed at night?”

“It’s about asking questions and listening, and I honestly believe my whole life has prepared me for this job.” 🌱

The Future of Food

By 2050, the world's population is forecast to surpass **nine billion people**. To keep pace with population growth, the United Nations estimates that the global food supply will need to increase 50% over current volume to accommodate projected demand.

However, at the same time, climate change will threaten at least 36% of the four largest crop groups (rice, maize, wheat and soybean). In addition to producing enough food for an ever-increasing population and eliminating malnutrition, we'll also have to do it sustainably, cutting roughly 13 gigatons of greenhouse-gas emissions in order to curb climate change.

Solving this puzzle will require ingenuity, investment—and some hard compromises.

In a Morgan Stanley BluePaper, Analysts assessed sectors within the agri-food industry that, together, can help provide sufficient, healthy and low-carbon-impact food. After accounting for scalability, sustainability and investment opportunity, they identified four preferred sectors that investors should watch—seeds, precision agriculture, agri-food testing and aquaculture.

Sowing Seeds of Innovation

Seed innovation has driven the bulk of yield enhancements over the past 30 years, a pattern likely to continue.

"New projects have significant potential for reducing crop loss and optimising the use of key resources, such as nitrogen, land and water," says Vincent Andrews, who covers chemicals and agricultural products at Morgan Stanley. The report forecasts 5% to 7% annual growth for this segment over the next decade.

It's worth noting that although genetically modified (GM) seeds are one solution for producing sustainable food at scale, there are still concerns and limitations about their use, particularly around the impact of GM crops on biodiversity and non-target organisms.

Big Data Boosts Production

Precision agriculture, which uses technology and data to optimise the efficiency and productivity of farming, may also hold the key to higher yields and a more sustainable food system.

It can encompass a broad range of approaches, including satellite data, drones, sensors, automation and robotics. Both the EU and US have voiced support for this technology, but one drawback is high costs, generally making it more suitable for larger farms.

Better Testing at Every Stage

Agri-testing is another segment to watch. It covers many stages across the agriculture and food-supply chain, including agricultural crop analysis and inspection, cargo inspection of raw materials and end-to-end supply-chain integrity.

"While it is hard to estimate the addressable market or growth for supply-chain assurance, it is simple to quantify the risk within food supply chains," says Edward Stanley, who covers Business Services at Morgan Stanley. An analysis of just 16 examples of quality-control lapses, food-supply-chain failures and food-preparation errors among publicly listed entities saw a combined loss of US\$50 billion in market capitalisation over the subsequent three months, not to mention the human toll of suffering from eating contaminated food.

"Testing is a small price to pay to avoid or minimise the risk of such issues occurring or recurring," says Stanley. He expects the agri-food testing segment to grow 5% to 7% over the next decade to a market size of US\$52 billion.

Aquaculture Takes Sustainability Deeper

Improvements in food production aren't limited to terra firma. Aquaculture, better known by the term "fish farming," could meet the rising demand for seafood products, driven by population growth and increased fish consumption per capita.

Despite the low-fat protein products and less carbon-intensive production (compared to beef, for example), aquaculture isn't without its issues. Sustainable practices—such as limiting

the use of antibiotics, while using more sustainable feed, and preventing the escape of farm-raised fish—need wider adoption.

Yet, overall, the global aquaculture market could grow at a compound annual rate of 4%-5% over the next 10 years, reaching a market size of roughly US\$310 billion by 2030, largely driven by Asia-Pacific consumer demand.

Weighing the Alternatives

While the segments highlighted so far offer the greatest potential to increase food supplies—sustainably and at scale—there are some other areas to keep an eye on, including:

Vertical farming: which require little to no pesticides, less space and water than traditional farming and typically are in a controlled environment. While poised to grow 25% annually over the next decade, this segment may be limited to high-value crops, such as leafy greens and strawberries.

Alternative proteins: Plant-based burgers produce roughly 90% lower greenhouse-gas emissions and require 99% less water than their meat equivalents. Moreover, the newest generation of meatless burgers has even proven popular with meat-eaters, expanding the addressable market beyond what had traditionally been defined as vegetarian-only.

Organic food: will likely keep growing, Morgan Stanley forecasts 6% growth per year between 2020 and 2030.

READ MORE ONLINE AT:

www.morganstanley.com.au/insights

Please contact Morgan Stanley Wealth Management Australia Pty Ltd ("Morgan Stanley") for a copy of the BluePaper referenced above.

This article is not intended to reflect any recommendations or financial advice, nor is it an offer or solicitation in relation to any particular financial product. Although this information has been obtained from sources believed to be reliable at the time of publication, there is no guarantee to its accuracy, and information may be incomplete or condensed.



Here's the harsh reality of our industry

Global food supply will need to increase **50% over current volume** to meet the demand of **nine billion humans**.

And we'll have to do it sustainably by cutting roughly **13 gigatons** of greenhouse-gas emissions in order to curb climate change.

(GM) Genetically modified seeds

are one solution for producing sustainable food at scale...

HOWEVER

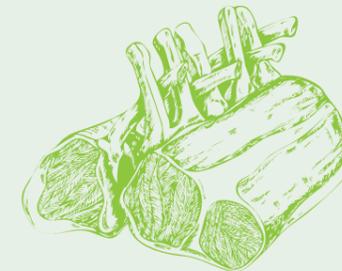
There are still concerns and limitations about their use, particularly around the impact of GM crops on **biodiversity and non-target organisms**.



36%

of the four largest crop groups will be threatened by climate change

THESE BEING RICE, MAIZE, WHEAT AND SOYBEANS

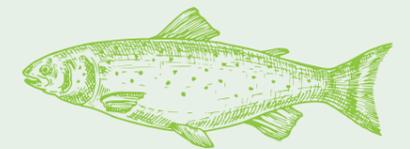


Agri-food testing

is predicted to grow 5% to 7% over the next decade to a market size of **US\$52 billion**.

INCLUDING

Agricultural crop analysis and inspection, cargo inspection of raw materials and end-to-end supply-chain integrity.



THE GLOBAL AQUACULTURE MARKET WILL BE WORTH

US\$310^B BY 2030



Organic food will grow

6% PER YEAR in popularity

between 2020-2030.



Happy Place

with **Amelia Mackinnon**

Where is *your* happy place on the farm?

WORDS
Wendy Hargreaves

PHOTOGRAPHY
Rebecca Haycraft

Grazier Amelia ‘Milly’ Mackinnon reckons there are **too many to count** at her family’s Tintaldra property, an idyllic 550ha stretch of land hugging the southern bank of the Murray River at the foot of the Snowy Mountains in Victoria’s north-east.

“How do I choose a happy place here?” laughs Milly, who at 28 recently became Victoria’s youngest VFF Branch President.

“Tintaldra is my home, and I love every bit of it. We’re right next to the river and the mountains, and I love the farm work. I’m always looking for ways to finetune the herd.”

“But if I had to choose one happy place, it’d be my menagerie... my feel goods.”

So what are Milly’s “feel goods”?



“They’re the animals that make you happy,” she explains. “Your breeders are your business, then you’ve got your feel goods. They’re with me for the long haul and I love them all.”

Apart from her three working Kelpies, Milly’s menagerie includes a Labrador called Poppy and two Jack Russells, Archie and Pepper, plus their six puppies.

Then there are six chickens, a rooster, four geese and soon-to-hatch goslings, four poddy calves, a Scottish Highlander cow and a pig called Piggy Sue. Milly also has two pet Brahmins with a couple of calves.

But her favourite “feel goods” are her 10 horses, particularly her aging ex-galloper, Dr Nipandtuck, and a gelding called

Desmond, a sure-footed bay she rode in the gruelling Mountain Cattlemen’s Association of Victoria riding event in early October.

Milly also dabbles in thoroughbred breeding with an unraced mare called Red Betty. Her first filly Barbaran won her maiden race at Wangaratta in May and shows great promise.

“I’ve got my farm work, and that always comes first, but my days start and finish with my menagerie,” Milly says. “It takes an hour every morning and an hour at night. I’m usually feeding in the dark.”

“People think it’s all a bit pathetic spending so much time on it, and some of them tell me what they think too, but they’ll never change my mind.”

Lucky for Milly, she’s not the only farmer on the property, five and half hours’ drive from Melbourne.

Milly works alongside her parents Al and Jo, along with her partner of eight years, Ed Durham, who she met while studying agriculture at Marcus Oldham College.

The youngest of four siblings, Milly is the fourth generation of Mackinnons to farm on Tintaldra’s spectacular river flats. They breed cattle and produce grass seed and grain on part of the original Tintaldra Station, first purchased by the Mackinnon family in 1910.

Milly is the livestock manager, running a genomics program for the family’s 350 Angus breeders, while Ed specialises in new crop technology for the seed business.

“We couldn’t be happier with how it’s all worked out,” says Al. “I don’t know of many daughters staying in agriculture. It’s wonderful.”

“But it’s really no surprise. We always knew Milly had an affinity for the land.”



“From a very young age, she was always outside with the animals. She has a **special way** with them.”

“And even though she has all these animals to look after, she’s very self-disciplined. The chores are hers, and she’s out there doing them night after night. It’s not a problem to her.”

Al and Milly also share a love of thoroughbred horses, both playing key roles at the local Towong Turf Club, affectionately known as the “Flemington of the Bush”.

They are also budding racehorse breeders, registered under the name AM Thoroughbreds (short for Amelia and Al Mackinnon).

Their first filly won her maiden preparation race in Wangaratta in May, and Al attributes the early success to Milly’s careful handling of both the mare and her filly.

“A trainer friend of mine, James Fraser, gave us a mare called Red Betty,” Al says. “She was never going to race, but we bred from her and got an amazing little filly. She’s called Barbaran and she’s showing real promise.”

“It’s a dream come true to breed a horse out of an unraced mare, but I believe Milly’s handling of that filly was the key to her success at the track. Barbaran has become a serious racehorse.”

Milly has loved horses since she started riding a Shetland pony around the farm as a pre-schooler.

In her first event at Merrijig’s Mountain Cattlemen’s Stockman’s Challenge earlier this month, Milly finished sixth overall in a field of 12 women.



The event includes cross-country time trials and bareback obstacle courses, along with horse shoeing, saddle packing and whip-cracking to hit targets, from the back of a horse.

“I ended up coming second in the ladies whip cracking section, which was great,” Milly says.

“It was my first time, and I was pretty nervous about it,” Milly admits. “I’ve always wanted to do a Stockman’s Challenge, but you need to have a horse that’s quiet and easy going.”

“Now big Des is a bit older and more mature, and he was fantastic. I broke in Desmond and know him so well. He’s a big quiet gelding and very forgiving.”

Milly is no stranger to stock work having spent nine months as a Jillaroo at Carlton Hill Station in the Kimberley. The only other female workers on the station were the camp cook, office staff and a governess.

“*I don’t know of many daughters staying in agriculture. It’s wonderful.*”

Al Mackinnon

“I’ve always wanted to do a Stockman’s Challenge, but you need to have a horse that’s quiet and easy going. Now big Des is a bit older and more mature, and he was fantastic.”

Amelia Mackinnon



For Milly, the family farm is an opportunity to innovate and shape the **future of farming** in Australia.

“It was tough, and I learned a lot about resilience,” Milly recalls. “You could let it get to you and crack it, and cry under a tree, or let it go and get on with it. Some people bailed out, but it’s just not how I’ve been brought up. You tough it out.”

“In my mind, I felt like I had to prove myself. And I did love the work. The property was incredible. Everywhere we rode, it was breathtaking. We’d do stock camps for two weeks at a time, and you’d be out camping out and mustering mobs of up to 1,500 with followers.”

Milly returned to Victoria to study an equine course before tackling farm management at Marcus Oldham, where she met Ed.

“It’s very special to live and work with Ed on the farm,” Milly says. “We’re a pretty good team and work well together.”

“You hear of some horror stories of families leaving because they can’t get along, but we’ve been welcomed with open arms.”

“I feel very lucky. Dad’s Grandfather bought the place and Dad’s Father took on the management of the station, about my age.”

“It would be great if agriculture was taught in all levels of school, whether you’re in the country or the city.”

Amelia Mackinnon

“Now I’m working with my Dad (pictured top right), and I love it. He’s really open with me on how everything works, handing over the reins with the cattle and consulting me with decisions and allowing me to build our genetics up.”

“Both of my parents are really open to innovation and new technology. They’re also very hands on. Mum’s running all the books. She’s the backbone of the business.”

In her new role as VFF Branch President, Milly admits she has a lot to learn, but she’s excited to meet with the new committee in coming weeks.

“Mum and Dad have always been members of the VFF, and I want to do whatever I can for our local farming community,” Milly says.

“There are some huge issues to tackle, but I believe the biggest one is education.”

“It would be great if agriculture was taught in all levels of school, whether you’re in the country or the city. Everyone should be educated on the importance of agriculture.”

“There are too many people who don’t know where their milk, or eggs or meat comes from.”

“It’s up to us as farmers to make sure our stories are heard.”

When it comes time to check your harvester, consider checking your insurance cover too.

Harvest season is almost here. And with that comes an increased risk of fire. At WFI, we want to make sure you get through the season safely. Consider the tips provided, and don't forget to check your insurance cover as well, to help ensure you're adequately insured should something go wrong.

Fire safety tips for harvest season*

- Clean your harvester regularly, starting at the front and working from the top down.
- Consider checking and recording your harvester's bearing temperature using an infra-red gun or thermal imager to help identify at-risk bearings.
- Adhere to state-based grain harvesting codes of practice and be aware of harvest bans. Look out for high fire risk days and abide by the Grassland Fire Danger Index (GFDI) protocol.
- Have water and a fire-fighting equipment in the paddock you're harvesting.
- Consider storing both a water and an A/B/E extinguisher at the cab entry and near the back of your harvester.
- Put a fire plan in place and make sure your harvest team is aware of it and understands it.
- Keep a list of emergency numbers or uhf channels in the cab.

Find your Local Area Manager at wfi.com.au or call 1300 934 934

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Good people to know.





Yellow!

From... Our side of the fence.

Every spring the vibrant yellow of flowering canola contributes to the beautiful patchwork of paddocks across rural Victoria. The malodorous flowers also bring with them an annual pest species... the road-tripping tourist keen for an **Insta-worthy pic**.

WORDS

Natasha Lobban

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rebecca Haycraft

VFF Farming Systems Policy Advisor Daniel Forwood says apart from the fact that **paddocks are private property** - and those taking the images probably wouldn't want farmers wandering through their gardens or apartments without permission - there are many reasons for these keen photographers to stay outside the fence.



“I think it's important to remind people that if you don't have the permission of the farmer, you shouldn't be on the property,” Daniel says.

“That canola, sunflowers, lavender, whatever field you're walking through, it's a commercial property and those plants are there for a reason. It's important to make sure that you can take photos from afar and appreciate it from a distance, but you don't need to actually go in and touch the crop itself.”

Those who do jump the fence, face hazards such as exposure to pesticides and herbicides, hurting themselves climbing fences, snakes hard to see under thick crops and uneven surfaces. They can also trample crops, which reduces yield, bring in plant diseases, bring in pests and damage fences, all at significant cost to the landowner.

This kind of behaviour also raises issues such as who is liable for damage and if the farmer is liable if a non-invited visitor is injured on their property.

“The more you unwrap it, the bigger the issue gets,” Daniel says.

Road safety is also a big issue - with cars parked along highways, in driveways and in some cases very dangerous positions.

Now there's a new reason to stay on the right side of the fence in this State, with the introduction of on-the-spot fines for offenders of \$1294 for individuals and \$8321 for organisations, the toughest fines of their kind in Australia. Further penalties of up to \$11,095 for individuals and \$55,476 for organisations could apply for more serious offending.

In October the VFF welcomed the introduction of the penalties to help farmers protect their properties and animals from unauthorised trespass and biosecurity threats following the successful passage of the Livestock Management Amendment (Animal Activism) Bill through the Victorian Parliament earlier in the year.

Under the regulations, farmers will be able to have trespassers prosecuted, as long as a **Biosecurity Management Plan** is in place and warning signs are displayed on all farm entry points.

The VFF encourages farmers to opt in and use the new regulations (see P5) to help protect their property from biosecurity threats and from unauthorised trespass.

Daniel points out that previously farmers could do a lot to implement biosecurity measures but it was tricky to manage unauthorised entry on their properties - whether that be from animal activists, trespassing hunters or those who were unintentionally creating biosecurity risks while they enjoyed their visit to the region.

He recommends that farmers do their best to control what they can and asks that visitors are “mindful and respectful” in their actions.

“If you wouldn't do it in your own backyard then it's probably not a good idea to do it out on a farm or in a park,” Daniel says.

The new regulations come at a time when biosecurity is front of mind for farmers, industry and government across

“It's important to make sure that you can take photos from afar and appreciate it from a distance, but you don't need to actually go in and touch the crop itself.”

Daniel Forwood

the Country with the threat of Foot and Mouth Disease and Lumpy Skin Disease looming large. The recent incursions of Varroa Mite, Avian Influenza and Japanese Encephalitis have heightened fears and highlighted how costly these outbreaks can be for primary producers and consumers.

The introduction of camping on Crown Land river frontages that are licensed by Victorian farmers has also raised questions about how to best manage biosecurity risks for farmers.

Reflecting these wide-ranging concerns, in September the VFF updated its biosecurity policy to reflect the increased risk and concerns from farmers, including that: “The VFF strongly opposes any unauthorised entry and/or trespass onto properties as this violates biosecurity plans, and places production systems at greater risk of biosecurity breaches.”

There are some easy steps to take to enjoy nature without jeopardising Victoria's agricultural industry, which had a gross value of **\$17.5 billion** in 2020-21.

Daniel advises visitors to find lookouts with great vantage points and other places that are safe to stop to take photos to enjoy the view safely and to not compromise farmers' production systems.

“Take all rubbish with you and do not interact with livestock or production systems. So leave it as you found it and, as they say, take only photos and leave only footsteps behind,” he says.

There's no official information on what foods can and can't be consumed at riverside or roadside locations, but he says that it would be a good idea for visitors to be mindful that food such as meat and dairy products can carry diseases that can impact livestock.

The VFF also recommends that farmers and visitors stay away from farms for **at least seven days** after overseas travel.

“Make sure that you have all of your clothes and shoes and everything clean,” Daniel says.

Ideally the same policy would exist when moving between properties and campsites, but in its place cleaning everything well, is of utmost importance. 🌱

ON-THE-SPOT FINES

\$1,294
FOR INDIVIDUALS

\$8,321
FOR ORGANISATIONS

Serious offending up to:
\$11,095 for individuals
\$55,476 for organisations





The Changing Face of Farming.

A white haired farmer admires his field, he's wearing a flannelette shirt and denim, chewing on a piece of straw, talking slowly and leaning against his pitchfork...

WORDS

Natasha Lobban

PHOTOGRAPHY

Rebecca Haycraft

It's an enduring stereotype of farmers that many in the industry are fed up with, including VFF Vice-President Danyel Cucinotta, who believes farmers are not being seen by the general population for who they really are.

In October, the Australian Bureau of Statistics released its latest tranche of reports from the 2021 Census showing the agricultural workforce is now made up of more women and migrants and is more educated, than ever before.

In fact, as of 2021 that farmer mentioned above has a 32 per cent chance of being a woman. It was an increase of one per cent from 31 per cent in the 2016 Census, worlds apart from the two per cent of the primary production workforce who were women during the 1921 Census and the nine per cent in the 1961 Census.

"When I go to agricultural events and look around the room, it is looking more like me, there are more women in the room, there's younger people in the room. There's different perspectives, and there's different opinions, and it's actually becoming more diverse. It's really lovely to see a more diverse version of agriculture," Danyel says.

“

There's different perspectives, and there's different opinions, and it's actually becoming more diverse. It's really lovely to see a more diverse version of agriculture.

”

Danyel Cucinotta

The perception of a farmer of advanced age, has its merits though, with the age of farmers across Australia again increasing during the latest Census.

It showed that in the Farming, Forestry and Fishing industry, the percentage of workers grew in the 78-84 and 25-34 age brackets and fell in the 65-74, 45-54, 35-44 and 20-24 age brackets.

The percentage of involvement from the 85 years and above, 55-64 and 14-19 years category, all remained the same.

According to ABARES within Australian agriculture, the median age of owner-operators has been gradually rising since 1981 and surpassed 55 years at the 2016 Census. The median age of agricultural owner-operators has increased by four years in the decade between 2006 and 2016.

Danyel says the unrealistic view of farmers starts from childhood and points to her own child's toy box and farm toys as an example, saying they are unrealistic and represent an industry that doesn't exist. The perception endures.

"I get on a plane and am stuck next to someone for an extended amount of time. And they're like, What do you do for work? And I'm like, I'm an egg farmer. And then they're like, Oh, you don't look like a farmer? And you certainly don't look like a caged egg farmer."

"What exactly am I meant to look like? I don't know the answer to that. What if I wore a flannie, oversized shirt, jeans and my hair messy in a bun? Does that mean I'm a farmer?"

Australia's agricultural industry in 2021:

32% WOMEN

Compared to 1921, when women only made up just **2%** of primary producers.

Our owner-operators are getting older by the year.

HOWEVER

We have a growing cohort of **25-34 year old workers** in the Farming, Forestry and Fishing industries.

In a single decade (2011-2021), our agricultural workers **born overseas** have **almost doubled.**

Farmers with degrees are on the rise with a

30% INCREASE

in the uptake of **tertiary and non-school studies** in just five years.

“The one positive thing about people being so shocked that I’m a farmer, is that it opens up conversations, because people become intrigued about challenging their own perceptions and thoughts.”

Danyel Cucinotta

Danyel says it's not just toys that influence children and the community, it's the programs run in schools such as 'dress like a farmer day' and how we as an industry present ourselves to the community. When showcasing members of the agricultural industry, she says there should also be young farmers, female farmers and farmers from different ethnicities represented.

Danyel singled out migrants as a positive growth area in agriculture.

“Migrants are coming into agriculture and working on farms and they deserve the recognition of agriculture as well. They do a phenomenal job and I think that perception is probably lost in you know, the pitchfork, the ranch and the hoo ha that comes with that,” she says.

The 2021 Census reflects this, with 54,092 people who were born overseas recording they were employed in Farming, Forestry and Fishing, up from 43,524 people in 2016. The latest Census also showed over the past decade 20,000 more people who were born overseas were working in the agriculture industry, up from 34,004 in 2011.

It's not just the physical perception of a farmer that Danyel would like to change, it's also the **general perception that farmers are not very bright.**

“There are a lot of farmers now who have degrees or who have gone and done additional study, they are actually some of the most intelligent people I've ever met, they're business savvy, they are generally well educated. Whereas we assume lawyers and doctors are educated, we don't assume farmers are,” she says.

The 2021 Census showed greater levels of education for those in agriculture, with increases in highest non-school qualifications in all categories, including Bachelor Degree Levels, which rose from 25,502 in 2016 to 33,175 in 2021.

For now, Danyel will keep proudly telling people that she is a farmer and answering all the questions that follow.

It may have shocked her midwife when she put farmer as her occupation on her daughter's birth certificate, but Danyel and many others in the industry are working towards this not being the case, for future generations.

“The one positive thing about people being so shocked that I'm a farmer, is that it opens up conversations, because people become intrigued about challenging their own perceptions and thoughts. And that in itself, is really powerful for the agricultural industry.” 🌱

Data obtained from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and Agriculture Victoria.



Conquering Napoleon

with Alice Zaslavsky

You could say this is ‘an old family recipe’, but really, it’s more of ‘an old family philosophy’: find the shortcuts to success, leave nothing behind, and *always* say **‘yes’** to a second piece of Napoleon.

WORDS AND PHOTOGRAPHY

Murdoch Books

SERVES 8-12

2 square sheets of butter puff pastry, cut in half, or 1 x 375 g (13 oz) roll of butter puff pastry, cut into thirds

600 ml (21 fl oz) thickened (whipping) cream

2 x 150 g (5½ oz) store-bought crème caramels (see *Tips*)

1 teaspoon vanilla bean paste

A pinch of salt flakes (*optional*)

Icing (confectioners’) sugar, for dusting

Every family has ‘a cake’, and Napoleon is ours. It’s the Russian version of a French mille-feuille (‘one thousand layers’) or the Aussie vanilla slice, which makes sense, because the many many layers of cream and pastry in a traditional Napoleon are a bit like a Babushka doll crossed with a millefeuille, and just as complex to make. Of course, by now you’ll know that my mum is the shortcut queen, so hers is the cheat’s version — because ain’t nobody got time for 18 layers.

Instead, she blends the best bits — flaky puff pastry and a custardy crème pâtissière — with a sprinkling of icing sugar and spare pastry flakes to finish (because she also doesn’t believe in waste). Speaking of blending and shortcuts, instead of making crème pâtissière from scratch, Mum simply blends store-bought crème caramels with cream to help set it, and for bonus flavour, which I discovered only very recently.

Preheat the oven to 200°C (400°F). Line one or two baking trays with baking paper, and have another baking tray or trays at the ready.

Place the pastry pieces on the lined baking trays, without overlapping, then poke the pastry all over with a fork. Top with another sheet of baking paper and place another baking tray on top. The pastry will want to puff up, but the trays will keep it flat, which is what you’re after here.

Bake on the middle rack of the oven for 30 minutes. Remove the top baking tray and baking paper sheet. Flip the pastry over and bake for another 10 minutes, or until the pastry is very golden (bordering on ‘lightly browned’), and evenly cooked all the way through. Cool completely on a wire rack.

Meanwhile, whip the cream until soft peaks form, then add the crème caramels, vanilla paste and salt flakes, if using. Whip again until stiff.

Use a serrated knife to carefully trim the edges of the cooled pastry; reserve these for the top of the Napoleon. If you used square pastry sheets, leave three intact and crumble the fourth into flakes (or embrace a four-layered Napoleon and use less cream on each layer).

Place a pastry piece on a serving plate. Spoon just under half of the pastry cream on top, before topping with another layer of pastry and another half of the pastry cream. Add the last layer of pastry, then top with the remaining pastry cream and any broken-up pastry flakes, if you’ve ended up with any. Dust liberally with icing sugar.

Leave in the fridge overnight to soften for a traditional Napoleon, or serve immediately for more of a mille-feuille vibe. Both will make you feel a million bucks at the table! 🍴

TIPS

You’ll find crème caramels in the **refrigerator section** at the shops, in the vicinity of the chocolate mousse cups. You could use a tin of condensed milk with similar success, though it’ll be sweeter.

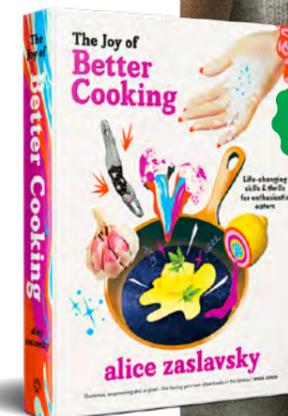
You can also use left-over crème caramel if you have any handy — you clever planner, you.

Offset spatulas are a bit of an unsung hero for bakers. The wide surface area and raised handle mean you have less chance of splooding cream or icing out of place, while the rounded edge prevents unprovoked jabs into batters and cakes. If you find yourself baking more than a few times a year, grab a baby one for the kitchen drawer; you’ll use it far more than you think.

Alice Zaslavsky is Cookery Columnist for *The Weekend Australian Magazine*, host of ABC Radio Melbourne’s Saturday Breakfast, and resident foodie on ABC TV’s News Breakfast program.

Images and text from *The Joy of Better Cooking* by Alice Zaslavsky, photography by Ben Dearnley. Murdoch Books RRP \$49.99.

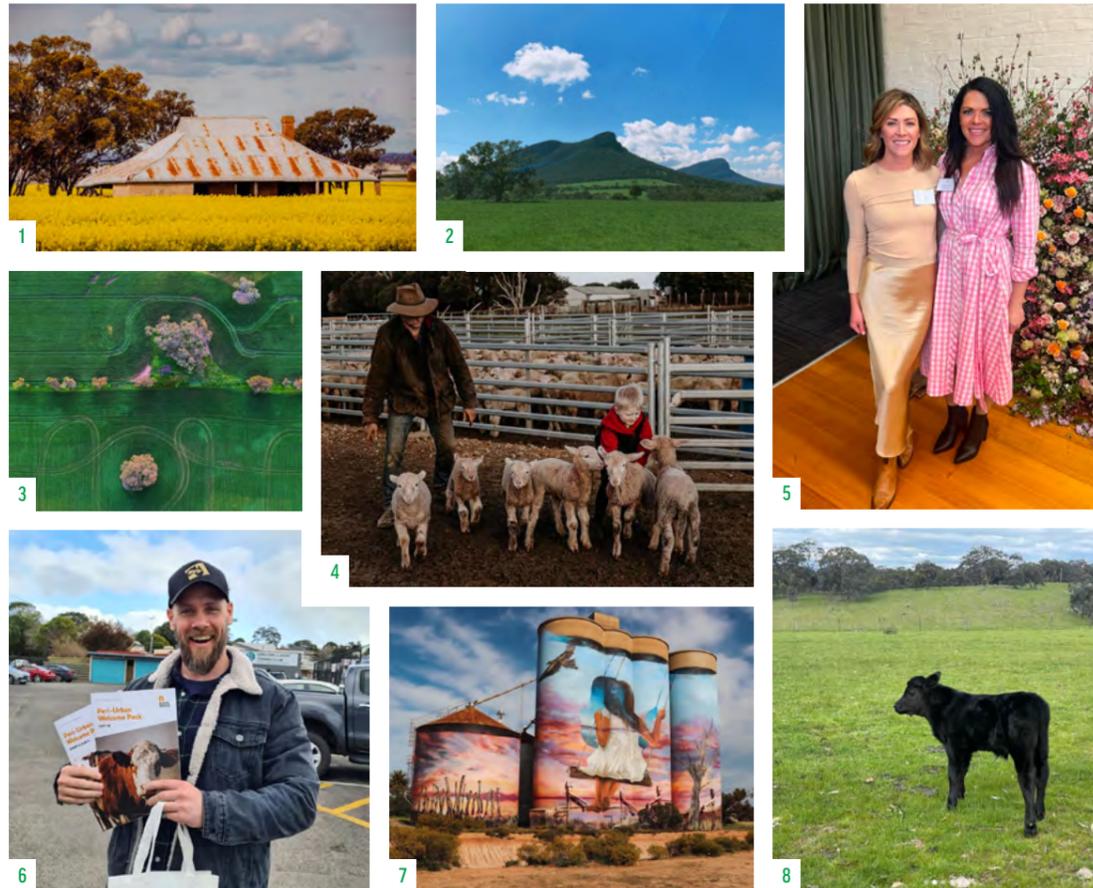
Learn more at:
www.thejoyofbettercooking.com



Out and About

Here we showcase some of the best agriculture shots from all over the State.

If you have a great photo of your farm that you would like published, send it to media@vff.org.au or tag us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter with [#vicfarmers](https://twitter.com/vicfarmers).



1. The western countryside, awash in colour
(credit e.m.images_)
2. A spectacular spring morning at the base of Mount Sturgeon
(credit hanmarissa)
3. Crop patterns in Lake Hindmarsh
(credit i_see_u_see_photography)
4. "Come on Barnaby and Jackie! Move up there Stew and Chops! On you go Giant and Barbarella!"
(credit e.m.images_)
5. VFF and the Making Our Farms Safer team attend a jam-packed 2022 Rural Women's Day Weekend in the Southern Grampians
(credit sezh_3chirpywrens)
6. A day of insights on peri-urban farming with the Stock Sense team
(credit chris_burson_avp)
7. Stunning silo art at Sea Lake
(credit bc_photography_)
8. Lambing season ends, and calving begins!
(credit martinhavingacrack)



The Last Word

Regional Victoria is home to over 1.6 million Victorians who **need and deserve equitable access** to the services and infrastructure enjoyed by communities in Melbourne.

Too often, elections are focused on how to make Melbourne the most liveable city on earth, rather than making Victoria the most liveable state.

That's why the VFF has been focused on delivering a fair go for regional Victoria as part of this year's State election campaign that kicked off in June – to draw attention to the challenges and opportunities that our communities face, on a daily basis.

Whether it's how we work together to maintain the success of industry, how we deal with a changing climate, or how we continue to sustain thriving communities, with a lifestyle envied by those in Melbourne – farmers are well placed to identify the issues that matter to all regional Victorians and to offer solutions.

Although most of the commitments we have been seeking at this election revolve around the agriculture industry, we know the farming community doesn't exist in isolation and that regional Victoria receives a dividend when government partners with farmers.

The State election is an opportunity to put forward a positive agenda and vision for our community's future. We are calling for a clear plan from the next Victorian government that focusses on delivering better regional road and rail, making regional Victoria the best place to live and work, protecting farmland and our natural environment and supporting farm businesses and regional jobs.

The VFF will continue to be an active voice on behalf of farmers and our communities. We are committed to ensuring regional Victoria is front and centre at this election – and every election – and are equally committed to working with all parties and candidates to deliver a better future for our State. 🌱



Scan or click the QR code to read our **Fair Go for Regional Vic** policy platform in full.



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