Delve

Our farming future

www.dpi.nsw.gov.au

2012
It is with pleasure that I present Delve 2012 to you. This edition focuses on our State’s primary industries sector as we celebrate Australian Year of the Farmer, recognising the contribution farmers make to our everyday lives.

We invite you to get to know some of our farmers, to learn what inspires them and the journey of their product to your plate. Our farmers are meeting some important challenges today—issues like food security and producing more food and fibre using fewer resources.

The Australian Year of the Farmer provides a unique opportunity to enable greater connection and understanding between urban and rural Australians. I hope Delve will play a small part in your journey as we celebrate this important event together.

The Hon. Katrina Hodgkinson, MP
Minister for Primary Industries
Minister for Small Business

Delve 2012 presents an excellent opportunity to introduce you to our new NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI). Our department consists of Agriculture NSW, Fisheries NSW, Forests NSW, Business Services, Biosecurity NSW, NSW Office of Water, Catchments and Lands, NSW Food Authority and the NSW Rural Assistance Authority.

We share a strong focus on rural NSW, and sustaining the resource base that plays a vital role in producing food and fibre for families across NSW and for our overseas customers.

Delve’s stories illustrate the research, science and communication efforts our professional staff are working on, hand in hand with farmers, everyday. The theme of ‘Our Farming Future’ captures our goals in NSW DPI as we celebrate Australian Year of the Farmer in 2012.

Dr Richard Sheldrake
Director General

Delve 2012 aims to connect readers to the farmers and resources of NSW that bring high quality food, fibre and shelter to our country and beyond.

Any useful feedback to help shape future issues is welcome.
Email: delve.feedback@dpi.nsw.gov.au
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The information contained in this publication is based on knowledge and understanding at the time of writing (February 2012). However, because of advances in knowledge, users are reminded of the need to ensure that information upon which they rely is up to date and to check currency of the information with the appropriate officer of NSW Department of Primary Industries or the users independent adviser. Recognising that some of the information in this document is provided by third parties, the State of New South Wales, the author and the publisher take no responsibility for the accuracy, currency, reliability and correctness of any information included in the document provided by third parties. Photo credits: Page 6 Jenny Bradley, courtesy of AWW. Page 24 Diver, courtesy of Robb Westerdyke, Page 26 Patty Byrne courtesy of Sarah Simmons.
We all enjoy fresh food products, from the land, from the sea and from our rivers. We like wearing good cotton and woollen clothing. And we like knowing our homes are made from quality wood.

What we might not know is that the collective value of all these products, the food and fibre that comes from agriculture, fishing and forestry, represents a gross value of more than $9 billion. And that figure grows significantly when we consider the multiplier value of primary industries production.

It’s an industry that helps keep our economy strong, creates jobs, and enables a unique lifestyle for those who belong to it. It’s this industry—and especially the people who work in it—that we celebrate in 2012: Australian Year of the Farmer (AYOTF). NSW DPI has contributed to the establishment of this important celebration together with the other State, Territory and Federal Government agricultural departments by providing seed funding.

NSW DPI and its staff are proud of the work we do with farmers and other primary producers, providing research and development support, scientific analysis and extension services to help keep our industries profitable and sustainable. NSW DPI also plays an important role in managing lands, waterways and other natural resource issues through Crown Lands, NSW Office of Water, and Catchment Management Authorities. Food safety is another priority—one overseen by the NSW Food Authority, while Biosecurity NSW strives to protect our produce from pests and diseases.

For Chair of the AYOTF, Phil Bruem—also a dairy farmer from NSW—the year is about encouraging celebration.

“We hope the Australian Year of the Farmer will inspire us all to support our farmers. Everyone is connected to farming in some way—the food you eat and clothes you wear are produced from farming; therefore it’s vital that we come together and celebrate the importance of our nation’s providers.”

So consider this YOUR invitation to get involved, to learn, to understand and to experience a little of our farming industry…and to think about how you can contribute to its future.

For more information about events in NSW and how you can get involved, go to www.yearofthefarmer.com.au
BEEF CATTLE PRODUCER AND CONSULTANT
Alison McIntosh sees the Australian Year of the Farmer as a unique opportunity to bridge the city-country divide. As one of a number of AYOTF Ambassadors, Alison will have the chance to share information and experiences about the industry she loves.

Alison is particularly excited at the prospect of encouraging young people to learn more about agriculture and farming, and to help urban families better appreciate the industry’s contribution to our economy.

“I want to see us connect city and country people, and help families understand where their food actually comes from.”

“There are some fantastic career opportunities for young people in agriculture, and we need to promote these better so that they can consider the possibilities. I will be visiting schools as part of the AYOTF education program to help provide information and encouragement,” she said.

Alison runs AJM Livestock Solutions, a consultancy and service provision business for beef producers, from Crookwell in the State’s south. A former finalist in the NSW RIRDC Rural Women’s Award, and Rising Beef Industry Champion, Alison, 32, is also the youngest Councillor with the Royal Agricultural Society, is a Young Farming Champion with Art4Agriculture and is undertaking the Australian Rural Leadership program.

The opportunity to be an AYOTF Ambassador alongside Australian identities such as former cricketing great Glen McGrath is something she regards as a huge honour.

Here was a time when the popular image of a farmer was that of a man, on a tractor, wearing a hat and chewing on a piece of wheat. While farmers today still wear hats, drive tractors (complete with GPS) and grow wheat, they’re as diverse a group as the food and fibre products they grow.

Here are some of the diverse industries and roles that our farmers represent—lamb marketing, native flowers, holistic manager, fish breeder, climate change advocate, goat breeder, irrigation specialist, cheese maker, communications specialist, cattle breeder, website developer, tree farmer, blueberry grower, organic soybean cultivator and dorper sheep breeder.

Farmers also use innovative methods such as cell grazing, farmstays, free range, drought proofing and zero tillage cropping.

What they all have in common is a commitment to produce top quality, safe and sustainable commodities. And according to Marie Russell, NSW Farmer and Young Farmer of the Year Chair, that’s what makes the future bright.

“It’s the diversity that makes farming today so exciting.”

We have so many different types of farming, with an emphasis on management of natural resources. Today’s farmers take more of a business approach, with marketing skills and excellent traceability. They know where the animal starts and finishes in the food chain.

Marie believes there’s also increased recognition for the partnership approach between men and women on the land. They are seen as equal partners—applying their skills together as a team.
Ask Jenny Bradley what she enjoys most about farming and she will tell you it’s all about the end result. And in the case of this sheep producer, that end result is the succulent lamb that Australian consumers can’t get enough of.

Jenny’s Armatree farm is a 50/50 operation managed with husband Craig producing lambs, stud sheep and various crops. Jenny runs the livestock while Craig’s focus is grain. They’re all products that end up on the dining table, and that’s what motivates Jenny to continually strive for the best.

“For me it’s all about presenting a quality product for everyday Australians to enjoy. I love the challenges involved; I love that we can involve our whole family in the business—including working alongside my husband for 365 days of the year!”

Jenny was the first female Chair of the Tooraweenah Prime Lamb Marketing Cooperative, a state-wide group of around 95 sheep producers. It’s an experience that earned her the NSW Rural Women’s Award and has been invaluable to her farming.

“The marketing of our products is extremely important, as well as understanding the whole supply chain. This year is a great chance to bring our city cousins closer to what we are doing on farms, to help them understand how we produce their great tasting food.”

According to Meat and Livestock Australia, Australians spent a whopping $2.2 billion on lamb in the last financial year.

Clothing us in COTTON

Most people know that milk comes from a cow, but did you know your cotton shirt or dress is the result of a cotton crop that was probably grown right here in NSW?

Cotton production in Australia is considered amongst the best in the world, and NSW produces about 50% of the nation’s total. Growing quality cotton which is used to make our clothes is a way of life for Andrew Watson, a cotton farmer from Boggabri who, with wife Heike, also grows wheat, canola and chickpeas. Andrew says it’s exciting to be part of an industry that has achieved such significant efficiency gains in resource usage.

“I’m encouraged that we’re able to produce cotton fibre at twice the world’s average yield and at three times the world average water use efficiency.”

A former NSW Young Farmer of the Year and current Cotton Australia Chair, Andrew would like to give people the chance to discover how interesting farming can be.

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“The Australian Year of the Farmer is a great opportunity for more people to visit farms and see the satisfaction that farmers gain from growing healthy, sustainable food and fibre.”

More than 420,858 kg of cotton are ‘consumed’ every day in clothes—like shirts, jeans and underwear, purchased by Sydney-siders.
In 2008, Andrew Carroll took a gamble and bought an old prawn farm near Yamba. His dream was to grow mulloway fish for domestic and foreign markets. And even though he still works 17-hour days, that gamble is starting to pay off.

Andrew now has two full-time and one casual staff, is producing more than 80 tonnes of mulloway a year and still can’t keep up with demand. Andrew would like to see more research available on producing mulloway using land-based earth ponds. But through hard work, trial and error and innovation, he continues to see results.

“Over the summer we increased our stocking density by 30%, and soon we expect to be producing two and half tonne of fish a week rather than the one and a half we do now.”

Andrew said he has also changed the fish’s diet to one more suited to a cod, rather than the kingfish diet they were on, and has invested in building new infrastructure around the hatchery and tanks. Nothing happens fast in mulloway farming, the fish themselves take two years to reach two kilograms, but that doesn’t bother Andrew.

“I get phone calls every second week from all over the country looking for my fish. We’ll get there eventually, but at the moment the focus is on plugging away, staying niche and retaining quality.”

Mulloway is a fine tasting fish with white flesh and has few bones, making it easier to eat!

Ask Russell Riepsamen what he loves most about farming trees and he will tell you it is growing a renewable and highly versatile product that Australians use everyday.

Russell works in the Central West of NSW establishing plantation crops for Forests NSW which are eventually harvested and turned into wood and paper products.

“My job involves preparing the land, controlling competing vegetation, planting and fertilising. It’s all about team work. I bring together people with a range of skills from bulldozer operators and helicopter pilots to forest research scientists—all with the aim of planting seedlings to grow into strong, healthy trees, and eventually providing quality wood for a range of uses.

“The biggest challenge is trying to establish a crop that meets the needs of customers 35 years down the track, which can also survive all that mother nature throws at it during that time.”

“Our forests are internationally certified as sustainable to the Australian Forestry Standard, which gives consumers the assurance that wood products they purchase are coming from forests managed to internationally recognised standards. Plantation tree farms are a valuable part of the landscape and I am proud to help manage them sustainably to ensure we have a supply of timber today and into the future.”

Forests NSW pine plantations grow enough timber to build A QUARTER OF THE HOUSES constructed in Australia each year.
Food security is one of the biggest issues affecting primary industries.

It’s a global issue and one that NSW DPI takes very seriously. We have dedicated some of our best and brightest to the topic, including scientists whose work has been ranked in the top 1% of world research.

In NSW, we produce a lot more food than we consume, so our farmers play a crucial role globally, growing the food we export as raw commodities. Our primary producers are more productive, efficient and sustainable than ever before. NSW DPI is helping them to maximise the potential of their land and implement more efficient use of natural resources. We have helped farmers increase their productivity, use less water in the production of crops, and produce bigger and better vegetables using the latest technology and techniques.

The success stories include breeding cold-tolerant rice, developing disease-resistant chickpeas, using saltbush in low rainfall areas, increasing the use of pulses in cropping rotations, and breeding specialised durum wheats for pasta—an industry that could triple in size. These projects not only benefit farmers in Griffith and Tamworth, they have the potential to help farmers on the other side of the world to put food on the tables of families.

Food security is one of the biggest issues affecting primary industries. As the population grows here and around the world, the pressure is on our farmers to produce more. But at the same time, farmers are being asked to use fewer natural resources. It’s a pretty big challenge to achieve both things at once—and explains why the issue of food security is so important.

Michael O’Brien, a beef cattle, sheep and grains farmer from Walgett, and former NSW Farmer of the Year, has spent his life producing food for Australian and export markets. Michael’s large scale production enterprise produces up to 1500 Angus cattle, 8000 sheep and 43,000 acres of crops annually. He believes that there are exciting opportunities for NSW farmers to meet the growing population’s demand for food.

“For Australia and beyond we produce the most essential item in the world—and that’s food. We’ve made some wonderful production gains by adopting technology in the last 20 to 50 years. Things like no-till farming and better storage of moisture in our highly variable climate have made a dramatic difference.”

But Michael sees conflicting land use and water management as big challenges. And he wants urban Australians to better understand why food production is such a big deal.

NSW is the lead State for research in beef, cotton, pulses, rice, sheep meat, wild fisheries, wine, winter cereals and wool.

“We want people to understand that we are the food custodians of the world.”
Buying organic has become cool and organic farming has become big business. From organic eggs, fruit, milk and meat to chemical-free wine—consumers are going manic for organics.

But what do farmers really have to do to be considered organic in NSW? To put it simply, organic farming is the production of food and fibre without the use of synthetic chemical fertilisers, pesticides, herbicides or genetically modified organisms. But farmers who don’t spray their weeds or pests are not automatically organic.

Many farmers believe that organic farming is about a different approach to management, focusing on living, healthy soil as the basis for sustainable productivity and relying, as much as possible, on natural processes and cycles for managing pests, diseases, weeds and crop nutrition.

For a farm to be certified organic it must conform to Australia’s National Standard for Organic and Bio-dynamic Produce and be verified by an independent certifier. Certification ensures the integrity of the organic product from ‘paddock to plate’. There are now more than 1000 certified operators in NSW—more than a third of the national total.

The production and consumption of organic produce has almost DOUBLED in the last two years
Farmers are putting up their hands to help protect the environment by storing carbon in their soil. In an Australian first, farmers in Central West NSW are working with NSW DPI researchers to find out how much carbon they can store and test how the market could reward their efforts.

Kate Lorimer-Ward, leader of NSW DPI’s Climate Smart Agriculture program, manages the pilot project which brings together farmers, scientists and economists.

“Farmers are a really important part of the equation—their involvement is helping government develop policies that will work in real-life situations. We have been funded by the NSW Catchment Action program to develop and test market-based instruments that pay farmers for carbon they store in their soil.”

Developed by NSW DPI and Office of Environment and Heritage, the Catchment Action Market Based Instrument (CAMBI) carbon trading scheme is being run by the Lachlan Catchment Management Authority. The CAMBI pilot scheme offers farmers in the Cowra Trough area, five-year contracts to store carbon.

Three contracts are being evaluated, including action-based contracts which pay farmers to adopt practices which are known to increase soil carbon—conservation tillage, permanent pastures and environmental plantings.

You wouldn’t expect dogs to be able to teach you much about how our rainfall patterns are changing, but Ridgy, Enso, Indy, Sam and Eastie are now doing just that—without the wet dog smell.

These animated cartoon pooches are being used on the NSW DPI Climate Dogs website to demonstrate, in simple terms, the complex impact of climate change to farmers.

Each dog character represents one influence on our weather to illustrate how they are changing our rainfall patterns. **Ridgy**, otherwise known as the Subtropical Ridge, is the lead dog of the pack. **Enso** symbolises the El Nino Southern Oscillation phenomena. **Indy** represents the Indian Ocean Dipole, **Sam** the Southern Annular Mode, and **Eastie** helps explain some of the rainfall variability east of the Great Dividing Range.

Unlike the other dogs, Eastie is not a sheep dog. Instead he is represented as a Jack Russell and behaves differently to the sheep dogs, getting very wound up and full of energy—a great analogy for the phenomena he represents. The NSW Climate Dog animation series has been developed in collaboration with the Australian Bureau of Meteorology and Victorian DPI.


Soil-organic carbon has benefits for farms—it makes soil more resilient and boosts production by improving water-holding capacity and nutrient retention.

Without travelling into the future...

it’s pretty hard to predict how climate change will affect our valuable aquaculture industry. But in their quest to save the humble oyster, NSW DPI fisheries scientists have done the next best thing.

Our scientists have exposed wild and captive-bred oysters to a series of worst case climate change scenarios to learn how the species will cope with an uncertain future. And it turns out they’re a lot tougher than we thought.

Any impact on the oyster industry would have ecological and economic consequences for the State.

Oyster farming is our most valuable aquacultural industry with current annual production over 106 million oysters, worth over $35m to our economy.

Oysters are filter feeders and particularly vulnerable to changes in water chemistry and temperature. So scientists exposed adult oysters to changes in temperature and acidity levels during the reproduction stage. They found that the conditions had a negative impact on the adults, but a positive one on their larvae. Larvae from adults exposed to the worst case conditions developed faster and displayed similar survival to larvae from normal oysters.

This research suggests that sensitive marine organisms may be able to acclimatise or adapt to conditions over the next century. Researchers also found evidence that selective breeding may assist to ‘climate-proof’ important aquaculture industries from impacts like ocean acidification and temperature rise.

The research was part of the Mollusc Breeding Program that’s been helping oyster growers farm quality oysters since 1990. Ninety new oyster lines have been created, each resulting from the crossing of two individual oysters. Thanks to the program we now have bigger and tastier oysters than we had two decades ago and it seems they’ll be around for years to come. That’s good news for oyster farmers and everyone who enjoys a dozen of the best oysters our State has to offer.
Ross and Dimity Thompson see themselves as true custodians of their land. The farming family is a great example of caring for the environment, while still improving production and profitability on their seed stock beef cattle business near Bathurst.

The Thompsons realised the need to explore new management practices to improve the granite soils and fragile landscape on their 951 hectare property ‘Goonamurrah’ and sought advice from the Central West Catchment Management Authority (CMA).

As a result of their on-ground projects the Thompsons have seen improvements in the overall health of their land, including water quality and groundcover, habitat value for wildlife and carrying capacity. These changes also resulted in positive production benefits.

Their willingness to try new techniques has generated numerous accolades for the Thompsons’ innovative environmental rejuvenation work. They were announced the 2011 Carbon Cocky Winner of the Year for the NSW Tablelands, awarded runner-up for the NSW Landcare Primary Producer Award and announced Central West CMA Champions of the Catchment.

Weeds are much more than a nuisance—they’re a major threat to our environment, food production and human health. However, many of us have little knowledge about the problems caused by weeds, or the simple ways we can limit their spread.

NSW DPI is trying to change that through the NSW – No Space 4 Weeds awareness program. The program highlights the fact that weeds are everyone’s problem and provides opportunities for all of us to become part of the solution—at home, at work and at play.

You can make a difference at home by properly disposing of garden and aquarium waste at a waste management centre or by composting. Controlling weeds around your home or farm will prevent them spreading to neighbours.

A major cause of weed spread at work is through the movement of vehicles, machinery, equipment and livestock. This can be reduced by checking equipment and animals for weeds and seeds on arrival, and cleaning machinery on arrival and at departure.

Recreational activities such as bushwalking, camping, fishing, off-road driving and boating can readily spread weed fragments and weed seeds. Simple steps such as checking and cleaning recreational vehicles and equipment before travelling can prevent you from contaminating your favourite place.

The ‘live data’, which include river levels, flow rates, volumes and rainfall, are crucial for the Bureau in determining if a flood is likely to affect a particular river and whether a flood warning should be issued to protect people and property.

NOW is Australia’s largest water monitoring agency with over 5000 monitoring stations measuring water quantity and quality from surface and groundwater sites across NSW. Of these, about 750 continuous monitoring stations deliver the data in ‘real-time’ using digital electronic technology.

While the use of this data for flood warnings is important, most of the time the information is accessed via the internet by the community and government agencies for activities including water availability, water sharing plans, river health, and managing resources.
Primary industries are everywhere!

Take a short drive outside Sydney’s CBD and you’ll come across an array of fresh food growing in fields, potential woolly jumpers on the backs of sheep, scrumptious seafood platters swimming in the waters, and future house frames lined up in a plantation.

There are 120,112 farms in Australia solely dedicated to agricultural production—with over 30% of these located in our NSW backyard.

But what do NSW farmers produce and where?

Check out this map for some of our State’s produce-growing regions.
Growing our food, fibre and shelter
“I’m proud of my job and see pine as just another form of farming, just over a longer period of time,” Stephanie said. Her job involves pest and weed control in State forests to assist in protecting the productivity of neighbouring farms, fire management, and recreation—particularly in relation to mountain bike tracks.

Stephanie grew up on a farm in the Bega Valley where she developed a great fondness for outdoor life and farming in general. She went on to study forestry at the Australian National University.

During recent years, there have been numerous women working in forestry in the Monaro Region. Stephanie says local farmers happily accept her role as a female forester and she enjoys the interaction with the local community and the slow growing pines.

Functioning FORESTS

Timber might not be everyone’s idea of a farm crop, but like wheat or corn, it has to be harvested. Mind you, it takes quite a bit longer to reach maturity.

Long-term staff of Forests NSW might get to see only one, sometimes two, crops of the one plot in a working life. And what’s more, if it’s cypress pine, it can typically take more than 80 years to reach harvest size.

But in all our forestry, sustainability is the byword. Nothing happens unless it follows the rigid Ecologically Sustainable Forest Management plans, the blueprint for how NSW State forests are managed.

Long before a tree is selected for harvest, ecologists conduct surveys for threatened flora and fauna. There is a suite of prescriptions that come into play to protect threatened plants or animals. This might include, in the case of koalas, retaining a specific number of feed trees for every hectare, or if it’s a high use area, excluding the area from harvest altogether.

Tiny frogs can stop a harvest in its tracks, and what might seem a humble mouse might turn out to be an endangered species. Last year, Forests NSW ecologists targeted 50 species with almost 2000 fauna sightings resulting in adaptive harvest or harvest exclusions.
Pests and disease are a very real threat to our State’s farmers and can have a major impact on both the economy and the environment. For example, an outbreak of foot-and-mouth disease could cost the Australian economy as much as $13 billion.

Weeds are a $1.2 billion headache for our farmers and invasive pests are a major threat to our national parks, forests and reserves. Our marine environments are also under constant threat from exotic pests and diseases.

NSW has some of the toughest biosecurity measures in the world and we’re determined to safeguard our primary industries sector. We partner with the community and farmers to manage biosecurity threats.

Biosecurity measures are vital in protecting our reputation for producing clean, safe, quality products and maintaining our access to international markets. To achieve this, NSW DPI operates a number of biosecurity facilities in NSW, including the world-renowned Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute at Menangle on Sydney’s outskirts. It’s from here we’ve led a number of biosecurity breakthroughs, including Hendra research, improved testing for sheep diseases, and fruit fly control.

These efforts ensure the food we all enjoy stays healthy and can continue to be produced for generations to come.

Pest animals like foxes and wild dogs cost the economy $1 billion each year.

NSW DPI scientists are leading world-first research projects aimed at protecting our equine industry from the deadly Hendra virus. The research projects are being coordinated through a newly-established NSW-Queensland taskforce and follow the largest outbreak of Hendra the two States have ever seen. In 2011, the virus claimed ten horse deaths at eight properties on the NSW North Coast.

A major $900,000 study, led by Dr Peter Kirkland at NSW DPI’s Elizabeth Macarthur Agricultural Institute, will look at new state of the art testing techniques and how various animals, including horses and dogs, contract and respond to the deadly disease. The study is trying to establish what risk animals that test positive for Hendra present to other animals and people.

David Jordan, an epidemiologist from NSW DPI’s Wollongbar Primary Industries Institute, is also closely involved in research projects looking at the transmission of the virus from flying foxes to horses and the impact flying fox dispersal has on virus infection levels.

Horse owners themselves play an important role in protecting their horses from the virus. People should keep horses away from fruiting and flowering trees that might attract fruit bats or other areas where bats are known to congregate.

Hendra virus mainly infects large flying foxes and was first isolated in 1994 in horses at a racing stable in Hendra, Brisbane.
Eggs are a nutritious part of our diet, but like all fresh perishable food they need careful handling. Most egg shells in Australia are clean and free from bacteria, but sometimes harmful bugs can be on shells that are dirty or get inside the egg if the shell is cracked.

Our Egg Food Safety Scheme helps to ensure that eggs produced, graded or processed in NSW continue to be as safe as possible for you to eat. The scheme also applies to businesses manufacturing, pasteurising, storing or transporting products containing 80% egg yolk or white or both.

FOLLOW THESE SIMPLE TIPS TO ENSURE YOUR EGGS ARE SAFE AT HOME

* Keep eggs cold, in their carton, in your fridge—this minimises the risk of bugs like Salmonella growing
* Use eggs before the recommended date on the pack
* Don’t wash the eggs—egg shells become more porous when wet, making it easier for any bacteria from dirt or feathers on the shell to get inside the egg
* Keep the eggs clean and discard any cracked or dirty eggs.

Uncooked food that contains raw egg is a higher risk than cooked eggs. It has been linked to food poisoning when not handled, stored and cooked properly. Avoid serving foods containing raw eggs to children under two, pregnant women, people over 65 and anyone with serious illness.

Cooking kills most harmful bugs, so to minimise risk, cook eggs until the white is completely firm and the yolk begins to thicken.

Safer food, clearer choices

The NSW Food Authority is Australia’s first through-chain regulatory agency, responsible for monitoring food safety and food labelling in NSW.

To achieve our goal of reducing foodborne illness across the State, we maintain a presence at every stage of the food supply chain—from when the product is farmed, harvested or caught, through to when it is consumed by you.

We continuously use science, ongoing research and lessons learned to improve the way we do things.

For advice on food safety and healthier food choices:
www.foodauthority.nsw.gov.au
or helpline 1300 552 406
For Tamworth egg producer Bede Burke, the use of innovation on his farm has increased production and made his family life a whole lot easier. By modernising his sheds with state of the art technology, Bede is meeting new cage egg industry standards. He has integrated feed milling and pullet replacement systems, with plans to establish a free range component.

Bede's 106,000 layer hens are now maintained with better environment controls that include safety alarms if temperatures change. It means his family can monitor the birds remotely and even take breaks—something that's almost impossible when running an intensive farm.

“Needing to be on hand 24/7 can be a real challenge in our sort of farming, but new technology means we can monitor things differently. Our new system is not just about increasing cage sizes—it’s delivering better outcomes for the birds and the farm as a whole.”

For egg farmers, meeting animal welfare and consumer concerns while staying profitable is an ongoing challenge. Bede sees Australian Year of the Farmer as a chance to educate consumers about farming systems and large scale egg and poultry production. He is keen to showcase achievements in sustainability and the ways farmers are continually improving production methods.

### Silverbeet frittata

Great picnic recipe! Serves 4-6

1 bunch silverbeet, 400g reduced fat fresh ricotta, 100g reduced fat feta
5 eggs, 1/3 cup chopped low fat semi dried tomatoes, 1 tbsp chopped dill,
2 tsp finely grated lemon rind, 2 garlic cloves, crushed; baking paper.

1. Preheat the oven to 180°C. Line 6 large muffin cups with non-stick baking paper. Pull the green leafy part from the silverbeet stems. Wash and shake dry, then microwave or sauté until wilted. Cool, squeeze out water, and chop.

2. Mix the ricotta, feta and eggs with electric beaters. Stir in the remaining ingredients. Divide between the muffin tins, and bake for 30 minutes. Serve at room temperature.

For egg farmers, meeting animal welfare and consumer concerns while staying profitable is an ongoing challenge. Bede sees Australian Year of the Farmer as a chance to educate consumers about farming systems and large scale egg and poultry production. He is keen to showcase achievements in sustainability and the ways farmers are continually improving production methods.

I love the challenge of constantly improving how we farm. Like most farmers, it’s important to us that we leave the farm in good shape for future generations.

When properly managed 10 layer hens can produce more than 2000 eggs in a year.
A monster lies at the bottom of the ocean just off Sydney Harbour. It’s 12 metres tall, weighs more than 42 tonnes, and the fish just can’t get enough of it.

NSW DPI staff lowered the monster, Australia’s first offshore artificial reef, 38 metres to the ocean floor off South Head in late 2011. The steel structure is fast becoming the hottest real estate for fish and other aquatic life and a popular fishing spot for the State’s one million recreational fishers. Fish species like snapper and yellowtail kingfish will soon be calling the reef home along with a host of aquatic plants, crustaceans, starfish, sea worms and other marine creatures.

The reef was designed and constructed using funds from the Recreational Fishing Trusts. It’s designed to withstand the most extreme environmental conditions for at least 30 years.

Artificial reefs have been used extensively around the world to create fish habitat, regenerate damaged ecosystems and to enhance angler catch. They’re just one of the many ways NSW DPI Fisheries are working to make sure the future is bright for those who live under the ocean and as well as above it.


The researchers also looked at the impact that hook design and materials had on the fish. They discovered that hooks made of carbon-steel with narrow wire diameters and little protective coating actually helped the mulloway and snapper pass them more quickly.

Off the hook

Catch and release fishing is a great way to make sure that both the sport of fishing, and the fish themselves, are around for future generations to enjoy. An estimated 47 million fish are caught and released by recreational fishers in Australia each year, so NSW DPI scientists have gone to great depths to find out if the fish we catch and release actually live to swim another day.

The fisheries research team studied popular species; yellowfin bream, snapper, mulloway and Australian bass to find out the best methods of returning fish to the water after they’ve been hooked.

The research found the best way to help fish survive was to simply cut the line and release them back into the water with the hook attached. Almost all of the lip-hooked fish survived and the majority of fish that swallowed hooks actually shed them between nine and 30 days after release.

The researchers also looked at the impact that hook design and materials had on the fish. They discovered that hooks made of carbon-steel with narrow wire diameters and little protective coating actually helped the mulloway and snapper pass them more quickly.

Information and tips on catch and release fishing

The only way to guarantee you never come face to face with a shark is to stay out of the water altogether. But for those of us who like to take a dip, the NSW Shark Meshing (Bather Protection) Program is the next best thing.

Since its introduction in 1937 the shark meshing program has been helping to provide a safer environment for swimmers and surfers. The program involves using specially designed nets along 51 beaches from Newcastle to Wollongong, where the majority of people swim and surf.

The nets don’t work by creating a solid barrier between bathers and sharks and don’t stretch from one end of a beach to the other. Instead, the nets are designed to deter sharks from establishing territories, thereby reducing the odds of a shark encounter.

The nets are 150 metres long and 6 metres deep, and are surface set by specialist contractors within 500 metres of the shore. They are in place from September 1 to April 30 and removed from May to August during the whale migration season. The nets are checked regularly by contractors for maintenance and to see if any marine life has become caught.

**SWIMMING SAFETY TIPS**

- Swim at a patrolled beach, between the flags
- Avoid swimming and surfing when it’s dark or during twilight hours
- Avoid areas with signs of baitfish or fish feeding activity

While the nets cannot provide a guarantee, NSW DPI scientists believe they have been effective in reducing the number of attacks. Since the program began, there has been only one fatal attack on a NSW meshed beach.

**Crabby goes free**

Farmers don’t usually have too much trouble keeping track of an injured animal in their back paddock. But when you’re a Marine Park officer and you want to check on an injured turtle, you need all the high tech help you can get.

Marine Park officers rescued Crabby, an endangered green sea turtle, from a crab trap in Soldiers Point, Port Stephens last year. They rehabilitated the 60 cm long female turtle, and before they released her back into the wild, attached a satellite tag to her back.

The tag is part of the turtle monitoring project between Sydney Aquarium Conservation Fund and Marine Parks Authority (MPA). Every time the turtle surfaces to breathe, the tag sends a signal to overhead satellites which notify MPA staff of its location. Crabby’s movements will be recorded for the next six months and the information will help MPA staff learn more about the animal’s behaviour and how best to manage the protected species in the future.

Crabby is one of three satellite tagged turtles released by MPA. Tracey, was tagged and released in May last year and a 110 kilogram male named Max, was released in Port Stephens in December. When released, Max travelled south to Gosford and then back to Newcastle, swimming 220 kilometres in just eight days.

The largest green sea turtle on record weighed 395 kilograms, and some have been known to live as long as 80 years.
Nestled in the hills of the Hunter Valley, Tocal College is the nursery for our State's farming future. Tocal is the only agricultural college in NSW, with large commercial farms offering students the practical skills needed for careers on farms and in rural businesses.

Many of those running large commercial farms around Australia are graduates of Tocal. Alumni members also end up as stock and station agents, rural contractors; working in research, extension, education and other rural businesses. Some Tocal graduates also go on to university to gain degree level qualifications in agriculture or related areas.

The future of farming affects us all. Australian farmers produce quality produce for domestic and export markets and contribute billions of dollars to the economy. So modern farms need competent managers skilled in the use of technology and able to manage livestock, machinery and crops. Farmers are also stewards of the environment. They care for the land and ensure it’s protected for future generations to enjoy.

Careers in agriculture are exciting and rewarding. The variety of work, challenges and lifestyle continue to attract young people from across the State. We rely on them to produce our food and the raw materials for our clothes—and they rely on Tocal College to start them on the road to a rewarding career.

Mel Adams would be a handy companion in the meat section of the supermarket.

She’s the holder of the 2011 University of Newcastle Scholarship, is one of Tocal College’s top graduates and has represented Australia in an international Meat Judging Competition in the United States.

In July 2011, a team of students from Tocal competed in the Intercollegiate Meat Judging Competition at the University of New England in Armidale. Competing against highly-trained university students from around Australia, the USA and Japan, Mel placed second overall and went on to a week of intense training in Brisbane.

College Principal, Dr Cameron Archer, says that Mel is an outstanding student whose study at the institute has complemented and enhanced her considerable hands-on experience. Mel grew up on the South Coast of NSW and attended Kiama High School. She spent all of her spare time on her father’s beef cattle property and is keen to follow in his footsteps.

While in the USA, Mel and the Australian team mixed with students and beef industry experts. Other Tocal students who’ve been selected for this competition in the past have gone on to careers in the meat industry around Australia, and Mel looks set to do the same.

TOCAL COLLEGE FARMS HAVE
1500 BEEF CATTLE, 100 STOCK HORSES, 200 DAIRY COWS, 300 SHEEP.
THE 5 POULTRY SHEDS PRODUCE 1,000,000 CHICKENS PER YEAR.

MEAT JUDGING COMPETITIONS USE PORK, BEEF AND LAMB, AND INVOLVE CORRECTLY IDENTIFYING THE TYPE OF CUT AND WHERE IT CAME FROM ON THE ANIMAL.
What does it take to feed and clothe Sydney for a day? That’s the question 21 urban primary and high school students tackled in 2011 as part of Art4Agriculture’s Archibull Prize.

The Archibull Prize is an innovative and fun program that asks students to research a food or fibre industry and then use art and multimedia to showcase what they learned. This includes decorating a life size fibreglass cow to tell their story. The winning school was Caroline Chisholm College from Glenmore Park where students discovered that it takes 2020 cows every day to supply Sydney with the steaks, mince, roasts and other delicious beef meals that we enjoy.

More info: www.art4agriculture.com.au

Some other facts about Sydney’s food and fibre consumption include:

- It takes 90,000 cows to produce the 1.3 million litres of milk that Sydney consumes daily
- We need 696,151 kilograms of grains every day to make the 31,543 loaves of bread for our toast and sandwiches.
- And to accompany our morning toast, Sydney consumes 822,959 eggs each day. That takes a lot of chickens!

Art4Agriculture programs engage urban and rural Australians in a two-way conversation about where our food comes from. In 2012 the program is looking to expand to other council areas and states so that the conversation becomes louder.
A scuttled warship
has become sunken treasure for divers and marine life on the NSW Central Coast. The former Australian Navy frigate HMAS Adelaide was sunk off Avoca Beach near Terrigal in April 2011 and is now a popular dive site and artificial reef under the management of Crown Lands.

Ex-HMAS Adelaide is now resting in approximately 32 metres of water, and is proving to be a significant boost to local tourism, attracting divers from across Australia and around the world. As an artificial reef, the Adelaide is also attracting a multitude of marine life, including tropical species like the bannerfish which is unusual at the Central Coast latitude.

The ex-HMAS Adelaide reserve is one of around 33,000 Crown reserves managed by Crown Lands around NSW. The Crown land estate is worth an estimated $6 billion and includes many other recreational assets, including 17 State parks, eight major recreational trails, 260 holiday parks and showgrounds. The ex-HMAS Adelaide location is now a Crown reserve and anyone wishing to dive or snorkel at the site requires a permit before accessing the reserve.

Dive bookings and moorings information from Central Coast Tourism at www.visitcentralcoast.com.au and background on HMAS Adelaide’s history and scuttling at www.hmasadelaide.com

Sunken Treasure

Reducing the number of unwanted pets and protecting the welfare of our furry friends is the focus of the newly-established Companion Animal Taskforce.

The Taskforce, set up by NSW DPI and the Division of Local Government, has assembled the State’s leading animal welfare advocates including the RSPCA, Animal Welfare League NSW, the Cat Protection Society and the Australian Veterinary Association.

The taskforce will promote responsible pet ownership, investigate animal breeding practices, desexing and micro-chipping. The experts will look at new ways to involve the community in reducing the number of unwanted animals and euthanasia rates in council pounds.

The government is investing $7.5 million in the rebuilding and refurbishment of the RSPCA Yagoona animal shelter. The Yagoona shelter is the largest animal holding facility in the southern hemisphere and at any one time can be housing up to 900 dogs and 300 cats, as well as large numbers of livestock, birds and other small animals.

Sydney’s Yagoona shelter is 40 years old and in need of refurbishment to ensure its dedicated staff can continue to care for the 18,000 sick, injured and stray animals that walk, crawl and slither through its door each year.

EACH YEAR MORE THAN 48,000 DOGS AND 26,000 CATS END UP IN NSW POUNDS.
The dog proof fence was built in the 1880s to keep rabbits out, but these days it holds back creatures with less fluff and more teeth.

The idea of the fence is simple: to protect the grazing lands in the Far West of NSW from dingos and other wild dogs. However, maintaining it is not. Fifteen employees, including boundary riders and plant operators, maintain the NSW section of the fence which is 600 kilometres long and located on part of the borders separating NSW from Queensland and South Australia.

The NSW section is part of over 5000 kilometres of continuous fence that stretches from north east Queensland to the Great Australian Bight in South Australia. The fence is managed here by a board comprising landholders and the Western Lands Commissioner, and some of the staff live at various points along it.

Each worker is allocated a specific section of fence between 50 and 100 kilometres long to inspect and repair as needed. Each week, they inspect their full length of the fence, and every August, a group of six men drive the entire length of NSW’s 600 kilometre fence to ensure it’s being well maintained. It’s a job that’s never finished as nature takes its toll through floods, dust storms, searing heat, and damage by feral pigs … some would describe it as ‘a dog of a job’.

We all rely on our farmers to provide a constant supply of high quality food for our tables and fibre for our clothes, but what happens when mother nature interrupts the smooth flow of production with natural disasters such as drought, storms and floods?

Farmers have no control over the devastation that wild weather can cause on their farms, so the NSW Government provides assistance through the NSW Rural Assistance Authority (RAA) to help farmers and other rural businesses to get back on their feet following natural disasters.

Without this assistance, food shortages could cause significant price rises and hardship for struggling families. Our hard working farmers and related businesses could also go out of business, further impacting food supplies and our economy.

Agricultural natural disaster assistance is tailored to help farmers resume production as soon as possible. Most often this is done through low interest loans to assist in the restoration of essential farm infrastructure and ensure that livestock have enough to eat. In the worst cases, grants may be available to enable farmers and rural communities to survive. No farmer wants to rely on the RAA to help them through the tough times, but it’s good to know that help is at hand when disaster strikes.

After extreme flooding in 2010–11, the RAA processed 4728 Recovery Grant applications, providing $64.5m in assistance to affected primary producers and small businesses.
**Networking Rural Women**

RWN Manager Sonia Muir describes the network as an important means of sharing the talents and contributions of rural women.

“There are so many inspiring women living in rural NSW who play a crucial role in primary industries and farming—helping to grow food and fibre products that we all use and enjoy in our daily lives. They are diverse and include entrepreneurs, conservationists and decision-makers.”

One example is Debbie Allard and Sue Harnett, who set up ‘Tweed Valley Whey Farmhouse Cheeses’ in 2008. They have a small on-farm factory on the Far North Coast. Their range of soft cheeses and yoghurts are sold through farmers' markets, local shops and restaurants.

Another, Patty Byrnes, lives on ‘Wamberra’, a large fifth-generation outback station near Mildura, and produces beef cattle and dryland cereal crops. She also helps manage Wamberra’s 27,000 acres of private conservation land which includes the endangered Malleefowl. A significant part of the property has dedicated remnant vegetation that will ensure a sustainable future for generations to come.

**Country gatherings**

Want to meet some inspiring female farmers and get to know a regional NSW community? Well, each year women travel from farms, villages, towns, and even cities, to get together for the NSW Rural Women’s Gathering weekend.

Gatherings provide a unique opportunity to learn from others, speak with members of Parliament, listen to inspirational guest speakers and take part in a diverse range of workshops and tours.

Gatherings are organised by a local committee of dedicated volunteer women keen to showcase their town’s people, creativity, culture, industries and environments, with behind the scenes support from the Rural Women’s Network (RWN). This year’s Gathering will be held in the Central West town of Parkes from 12-14 October 2012 and you’re all invited.

A highlight of the most recent Gathering at Gloucester was the unveiling of the annual Hidden Treasures Honour Roll which acknowledges the volunteer roles of women within NSW’s rural and regional communities. The 2011 Roll features stories of 140 inspiring women from across NSW. Nominations for the 2012 Roll open in May.

To download a free copy of the 2011 Honour Roll or to find out more on rural women’s activities check out the website or follow us on twitter @NSW_RWN.

Find out more about the RWN go to www.dpi.nsw.gov.au/wn

**NSW DPI's Rural Women's Network (RWN)** is not an organisation, but a way of connecting women and their families across regional and remote NSW. The RWN’s services include leadership training and networking, coordination of the NSW RIRDC Rural Women’s Award and a free newsletter The Country Web with inspiring images, stories and information about life in the country.
Take a trip to regional NSW these days and you’re almost certain to encounter a local food experience along the way.

It might be a farmers’ market, a meal featuring locally grown produce or a farm-based tasting event. Regional food and wine specialist Kim Currie says that the increased popularity of local food experiences reflects people’s wish to feel more connected to food products.

People have this increased desire to be connected with their food, where it came from and the people who grew it.

They want to learn more about it. Is it home grown? Is it produced sustainably? There is also an increased awareness of regionalism. If they’re in a region they want to experience the local produce. And they also want to support our growers and farmers.

Kim believes the growing popularity of regional food and wine events is helping to revitalise what being a farmer is about.

“Farmers are realising the importance of showcasing what they’re doing locally, and that’s now including support from local restaurants, wineries and producer groups. People want the chance to connect with farms and fresh produce...visiting our regions and getting that education is really important to them.”

Kim believes concepts like Taste Orange’s 100 Mile Diet will continue to grow in popularity, with benefits for consumers and producers alike.

Those who enjoy a glass of wine will often remember the experience as well as the product.

And if it’s a NSW winery you’re visiting, it’s an experience that can be very personal. According to head of the NSW Wine Industry Association, David Lowe, NSW winemakers pride themselves on giving customers a chance to ‘meet the maker’.

“When you come to our wine regions, the people you meet are the ones who make the wine—and they are hell bent on delivering you a terrific experience.” David, also a wine maker from Mudgee, says wine is unique as an agricultural product.

“Wine is like no other product in that it displays its relationship with region, weather, culture and history. The NSW wine landscape has amazing, diverse styles within its 14 regions—when you taste the wine you taste all the things that influence it.”

David says today’s focus has moved from bulk supply to export markets, to creating quality products for a more wine conscious local audience.

“Our sales in NSW have increased from $52.4 million a year to $86.3 million since 2008. We want to see this continue, and NSW consumers can play their part by choosing NSW wine.”

Information on the 100 Mile Diet www.tasteorange.com.au/mile
Supporting our farmers through extension, science and research, and industry initiatives

Advising rural communities on natural resources and managing our parks, reserves and public spaces

Celebrating! NSW farmers in 2012 Australian Year of the Farmer

To find out more about us and innovative primary industries, phone our head office 02 6391 3100, or visit www.dpi.nsw.gov.au