

Masters of the Climate revisited: Innovative farmers coming through drought

June 2004 – December 2005



Location: NSW, ACT, VIC, QLD, WA, SA

Principal investigator

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The need

This project addressed the capacity of Australian farmers and landcare members to adopt innovative techniques for managing for climate variability. The project provided practical case studies of the success and failures experienced by farmers in applying various agricultural practices in their efforts to manage for climate variability.

The Masters of the Climate farmers already had management approaches in place when they were originally interviewed in 1999. Their technical approaches were put to the test in a dramatic fashion, with a severe drought. This project looked at how these farmers dealt with climate issue before and during a major drought, and their conclusions in the drought's aftermath. Part of the approach was to discuss how their technical methods succeeded or failed, what factors contributed to success/failure, and what lessons could be learned for future application.



How this project fits with MCV objectives

This project is aligned with the MCV goal of increasing adoption of climate risk management by farmers on a national scale.

Project objectives

The intention of the project was a) to improve communication to users in natural resource management in a down-to-earth and meaningful way by using personal stories (case studies) to show the practicalities of applying climate tools; and b) to give policy makers insight into which approaches have been adopted by farmers and how successful they have been, based on a qualitative exploration of the farmers' experience. The project objectives were to:

1. research the performance of previously documented climate management activities, after those farmers faced a major drought
2. add value to the work already done in preparing case studies of Masters of the Climate finalists
3. widely communicate the practical methods farmers are using, and how well they are working, to the landcare network and beyond, in a specific climate campaign and in an ongoing manner
4. publish the case studies in printed and electronic formats

Methods

This was a qualitative research and communication project, writing up case studies based on face-to-face interviews with a previously selected group of farmers (winners and finalists of the Masters of the Climate competition). Each farmer was interviewed face-to-face and the case studies written based on the interview material.

Desired outcomes

The project aimed to improve knowledge within the target audiences of the various methods available to manage for climate variability, and how they worked during a major drought.

The practical outputs included:

- a series of case studies of farmers using innovative climate management strategies, looking in particular at how they have evolved over time and how those strategies worked when facing a major risk
- a media campaign in *Australian Landcare* magazine and the *Australian Farm Journal*, to take messages about climate management to a wide audience
- a printed booklet of the final case studies and photographs, distributed to landcare groups and through MCV networks

Achievements to date

The project has been completed. The media campaign ran in early 2005 in *Australian Landcare* magazine and *Australian Farm Journal*. The full colour, illustrated booklet, which includes an explanation of the science behind the case studies, was printed in the second half of 2005 and distributed to landcare groups and through MCV's networks. A reprint of the booklet was ordered in early 2006 to meet extra demand.

What is left to do?

Each of the interviews was videoed, so there is a 'bank' of footage on the topic that is available for use. The project did not have sufficient funds to produce a DVD.

MCV is a collaborative program between the Grains, Rural Industries and Sugar Research and Development Corporations; the Australian Government Natural Heritage Trust and Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry; Dairy Australia; Meat & Livestock Australia; and Land & Water Australia. The National Farmers Federation and Australian Wool Innovation Limited are associate partners.

For more information on MCV, visit <http://www.managingclimate.gov.au>
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