



## **Grain collaborator shares 'number-one reason for success'**

Ten years ago, Nuffield scholar John Gladigau wondered if he would still be owning his 2000ha farm in 2016.

Exactly a decade later, he collaboratively farms 11,000ha in a two-family enterprise employing four extra staff. And the most important driver of this expanded venture is something he discovered back in 2006 – that good relationships fuel good farming.

"Without a doubt, it is the number one reason why co-operative businesses succeed or fail," he said.

He shared insights into the success of his cropping collaboration at Australia's first forum on agricultural collectives this week.

**The forum, at Kingscliff, NSW on August 29-30 also saw the launch of the \$14.9m Farm Co-operatives and Collaboration Pilot Program (FarmCCPP).**

The program is an Australian Government investment providing farmers with knowledge and materials on co-operatives, collective bargaining and other forms of collaboration. Southern Cross University is administering the program nationally.

Speakers came from most Australian mainland states to share their knowledge on collective marketing, governance, capital raising and collective bargaining. The keynote speaker was Jack Wilkinson Director, Co-operatives and Mutuals Canada.

**Deputy Prime Minister and Minister for Agriculture and Water Resources Barnaby Joyce said the national pilot program will allow farmers to work together to improve farmgate returns.**

"Agricultural cooperatives allow farmers to own and control more of the food supply chain, which gives them more bargaining power when it comes to negotiating with buyers of their produce," Minister Joyce said.

"This pilot program has been developed to give farmers access to information and resources in a flexible, responsive and customised way and will focus on supporting farmers at a grassroots level.

"By allowing farmers to reach further down the supply chain, it gives them the ability to get better returns at the farm gate—it's that simple. It's better for the farmer, and it's better for local communities and the people who live and work there."



From South Australia, John Gladigau shared the learnings gained from Bulla Burra, the cereal/legumes operation share farmed by two families since 2009. He has also been involved in the formation of five other collaborative farming ventures, from grain to wine.

“What I learned from the other successful businesses – and something completely backed up by our experiences – is the value of relationships,” he said. “It is something far more than simply working to lowest price. It goes beyond collaboration in many ways. I want to know how our company, Bulla Burra, can help your company. We need our banks and equipment suppliers and the chemical companies to be profitable.

“And then, when you work with your suppliers like that, the benefits come in so many ways; you become the preferred client. When there’s a problem they are the people you can call on.”

John continued: “When I did my Nuffield study 10 years ago I met the people who were talking about this stuff. I now understand it. I live it.”

The Bulla Burra enterprise of John and Bronwyn Gladigau and Robin and Rebecca Schaefer was one of many success stories aired at the conference which attracted a capacity crowd to the Mantra on Salt Beach. Organisers allowed preferential bookings for farmers, existing and emerging farm groups as well as farm advisors and other service suppliers.

Beef producer and former NSW Rural Woman of the Year, Lorraine Gordon is FarmCCPP’s program director. “There are many and varied examples of successful collaboration in agriculture in Australia and there is potential for many more farmers to benefit from this way of doing business,” she said.

“For some farmers, collaborative business arrangements such as collaborative farming, cooperative marketing or bargaining collectively with other farmers can improve their position. Others may wish to consider moving up or down the supply chain by establishing buying or selling cooperatives. Collaboration with businesses beyond the farm gate can also create great value for farmers.”

Ben Roche, director of Southern Cross University’s engagement strategy said: “We have a strong track record in the two core elements of this program — agriculture and collaboration. We are delighted to be chosen to lead this important national program, which has the potential to transform regional Australia.”

## **ENDS**

Caption: Lorraine Gordon: “Potential for farmers to benefit.”

To interview Ben Roche: 02 6620 3150

**NOTE: Photo opps/interviews at press breakfast from 7.30-8.30am on August 29 at the Mantra on Salt Beach.** Contact: Farm CCPP communications team leader, Sue Webster 0402 267 802