

Eastbourne & Bundalong

Champions:

Rachel Ward and Mick Green

Length of arrangement:

Two years

Industry:

Regenerative Agriculture

Location:

Nambucca Valley, NSW

Region: The region's leading sources of business income are Construction and Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing, and together accounted for 45 per cent of business income.



Eastbourne and Bundalong are two neighbouring farmers who joined forces to improve conditions for the land, the cattle and themselves. Eastbourne, owned by Rachel Ward and Bryan Brown and Bundalong, owned by Mick Green, operate under an informal arrangement so that regenerative agricultural practices can be effectively implemented.

Success Story

- The transformation to regenerative agriculture is in infancy however the success lies in the process and the partnership.
- Mick Green looks after 324 hectares in a combination of ownership, lease and management. Mick adopts a couple of key strategies to ensure his farm is regenerative– ‘cell grazing’ and untouched borders (e.g. dam, fence and steep slopes) [1].
- The partnership between the two neighbours continues to thrive and grow after navigating the tricky waters of the start-up of a business arrangement together.
- Profitability through sharing equipment.
- Transitioned 350ha to regenerative agriculture



Hot tips!

1. Connect with others in your area.
2. Do the enterprises that suit you and your land.
3. Manage holistically, communicate and monitor!

Mick Green, *Farmer/Business owner, Bundalong Farm & Green Farm Rural Contracting*

[1] Reference: Scott Gooding, *The Sustainable Diet*, (UK: Hachette, 2019)

The Catalyst for Change

- Gradually recognising that the way they were farming was unsustainable, both economically and ecologically, Rachel began talking about the possibility of farming a different way.
- After fires and drought Rachel destocked all but a herd of breeders.
- Ultimately, the bushfires were a catalyst for change and since then she has jumped boots and all onto the regenerative agricultural trail.

Opportunities

- They joined their herds together and stopped drenching, applying any chemical fertilisers or biocides and began cell grazing their herds. They have added water tanks and more troughs and are now in the process of further dividing pastures and erecting permanent electric fencing.
- Providing consumers with best practice, high welfare, chemical free beef while optimising the health of the soil is their ultimate goal.

Hot tips!

1. Do a holistic management course.
2. Check out Graeme Sait's bioproducts.
3. Read case studies on the Soils for Life website.

*Rachel Ward, Farmer/Actress/Director,
Eastbourne Farm and Newtown Films*

Challenges

- It doesn't cost a cent to change a paradigm however matching personal and business values with landscape needs can be challenging.
- The risk of jumping into a new frontier of farming with not a huge number in semi-tropical mid north coast and no long-term practitioners for mentorship.
- Climate and conditions: they began when all boundary fences were burnt in fire and just emerged from very dry year.
- Fed stock and then sold more than usual so bouncing back and restocking in high market was an added pressure.
- Fear, procrastination, intergenerational norms and expectations and negative people.

Enablers

- Joining forces: the two neighbouring farmers working together by joining their herds had greater impact on cell grazing management.
- Background knowledge: Mick and Daren Newbury (who we employed) had both done some regenerative agriculture courses and had read extensively on subject for many years. They knew the concepts well.
- Combining strengths: Mick is the farmer and has the knowledge. Rachel had resources from off-farm income sources to support the venture during the transition.

Future Looking

- **Start!** And don't be concerned about the mistakes - that is part of the learning process.
- **Transition at a pace you can afford.** Holistic financial management planning has really helped to get control of finances.
- **Patience.** It takes 3 - 5 years for the soil to wake up and transition from years of soil ignorance. Biodiversity improves with time. So, know it will come. It is a life time change. It doesn't have to happen all at once.
- **Find a local mentor,** or join with someone who is passionate about the same goals and where the sum of your parts is greater than the individual. Engage with passionate and positive people who won't waste your time.