RAMP
Regenerative Agriculture Mentoring Program

Case study

Regenerative farmer:
Erin Wise

Length of time on the RA journey?
Four years

Industry:
Mixed farm (sheep, cattle, crops)

Location:
Canowindra, NSW

Regional information:
Canowindra is in the Cabonne local government area of NSW and has an average annual rainfall of 600mm.
The region's economy was founded on agriculture (mostly grains), with mining and manufacturing also becoming important sectors. Major employers include the Manildra Flour Milling, MSM Milling Manildra, Canobolas Eggs and Bryton Wool.

Erin Rush runs 1400 sheep on her farm in Central West NSW.

In partnership with her husband and her parents, Erin Wise owns and leases 1500 acres of land in Central West NSW. They run 1400 breeding ewes, grow crops and run some cattle. Erin became frustrated by the cost and reliance on chemicals, so she starting researching regenerative farming practices.

Making the transition

Venturing into regenerative agriculture was like "going down a rabbit hole", Erin says.

"There's so much information out there, and that's why I was keen to get involved with RAMP when I saw it advertised on Facebook.

"I wanted to reduce the use of chemicals on the farm, particularly Roundup, which in turn would help to reduce costs. We also have a feed gap, so we've been looking for new ways to address that issue.

"This year we planted a multi-species cover crop, and we're working towards full ground cover, even if it's just stubble."

Practice changes so far

- Using a mulcher to get rid of weeds instead of spraying.
- Rotate stock as much as possible.
- Soil testing in the "worst paddock" every year. Results show the 0-10cm layer is improving but there have been compaction issues.
- All farm practices aim to conserve as much moisture as possible.

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"I want to reduce the use of chemicals on our property. But we're a farm and we have to be profitable, so I'm looking for regenerative practices that work for us."

Erin Wise, farmer

Experience on RAMP

Erin has enjoyed connecting with other farmers and finding people on similar journeys.

"In this area, there's a lot of conventional farming. I didn't realise there were other people here who were doing regenerative farming," she explains.

"I like being able to bounce ideas off other people. There's a guy in our group from Bathurst who has sheep and he's using electric fencing, which is something I now want to try. We also had the group come to our farm, and it was great to get their feedback."

Regenerative farming goals

Erin's biggest goal is to develop a pasture cropping system over the next 10-20 years.

"We have a feed gap because we do cropping, so we have to agist the sheep out," she said.

"Even with summer crops there's a gap, because when it finishes, you're waiting for a rain event to put the winter crop in, and then it needs to grow.

"I want to run the numbers and be profitable, but on our farm., if I had a pasture system, I would have close to 12 months of feed."

Best advice for farmers transitioning to regenerative agriculture

"When I started, I went to the worst paddock, but I should have gone to the better paddocks and got them working more effectively," Erin said.

"You'd see results quicker and then you could go back to the worst paddock and look at it. We've been working on our worst paddock for four years and it's painful. It's a bit disheartening.

"I also think farmers need to understand what their limiting factor is. Is it water infiltration, is it the soil, is it rainfall? Know what that is, and start working with it."

Want to learn more?
www.farmingtogether.com.au

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