



UPSKILLING THE WOMEN OF THE UPPER NORTH TO BE FUTURE READY, PRODUCTIVE FARMERS

RESEARCH SUMMARY

UNFS118G

FAST FACTS

PROBLEM

Women moving to the Upper North after university and/or marrying a farmer bring many skills to the region, but felt they lacked the agricultural 'know-how' to participate in a modern farm business.

PROJECT

A series of workshops to help women in the Upper North be more informed and effective partners in their farm businesses.

PARTICIPANTS

Upper North Farming Systems: Jessica Koch, Ruth Sommerville, Kristina Mudge

DATES

Start: 30 October 2018
Finish: 31 August 2019

The Ladies on the Land group found that many women have moved to the Upper North after completing tertiary studies, building a career and/or marrying local farmers. These women identified the need for agricultural information they could easily access.

The solution was a series of free workshops on relevant farming and business skills, to help these women participate in a modern farm business – including practical knowledge of precision agriculture systems and tools to help with business planning. As an added benefit, the women built social networks that proved valuable to the resilience of their farms and communities through the recent drought.

BACKGROUND

Ladies on the Land operates under the Upper North Farming Systems group and holds workshops focused on upskilling women in a range of areas, so they can sustainably manage and grow their businesses.

The group offers women in the Upper North opportunities to improve their level of agricultural knowledge while building their social networks.

The Smarter Farmers, Smarter Farms project aimed to deliver a series of six workshops on precision agriculture technologies, managing the farming and social challenges of drought, and undertaking strategic business planning to improve the resilience and profitability of farm operations.

RESEARCH AIMS:

The core objectives of the project were to:

- Present a series of workshops that would explain complex agricultural and business concepts, in order to give women the skills, resources and knowledge they need to be part of profitable farming decisions.
- Offer women opportunities to take a valuable role in the farm business, focusing on areas of business management that are often overlooked by operational needs – such as precision agriculture data management and business planning processes.
- Strengthen women's business and social networks in the Upper North, to create more profitable and sustainable farms and more connected farming communities.

IN THE FIELD:

Workshops 1 and 2 provided an introduction to precision agriculture. Workshop 1 was held on 30 October 2018 and focused on autosteer systems, precision ag map types and how map information can be used to guide decisions to improve profitability.



Workshop 2 was held on 29 March 2019 and covered the analysis and management of precision ag maps – including using and managing data from the machine cab to the farm office.

Workshops 5 and 6 were held on 24 July and 28 August 2019 and provided practical guidance on managing a smarter and more resilient farm business through the development of a strategic business plan. The sessions were hosted by Carlyn Sherriff of Rural Directions, and participants were provided with a workbook to help them develop their plan at home.

Workshops 3 and 4 were held on 15 May 2019 and 19 June 2019 at Morchard and were entitled 'Weathering the drought – skills and tips to build resilience in tough farming situations'. These important sessions were funded by Country SA, not SAGIT, however they were still a valuable part of this workshop series.

RESULTS:

The workshop series successfully brought understanding and knowledge of precision agriculture to an important new audience of women, who demonstrated skills that will enable them to take a more hands-on role in this important area of farm operations.

The workshops broke down barriers that prevent women attending workshops to access key advisers, by offering a creche, holding workshops during school hours and making attendance free.

Attendees were enthusiastic about their new confidence to keep up with technological advances on the farm and implement planning processes to increase the sustainability and profitability of their farm businesses.

Ladies on the Land has gone on to establish a monthly newsletter with 140 subscribers, an active Facebook community with 6,743 followers and a Twitter page with 159 followers.

Their work has also been covered by SA Country Hour, Southern Cross Ten News, Stock Journal and RM Williams Outback magazine.

SAGIT was acknowledged on all formal workshop invitations and tagged on relevant social media posts.

VALUE FOR GROWERS:

The organisers felt very confident that the women in the workshops gained skills which will complement the knowledge of their partners in their farm businesses, bringing a new and informed perspective to farm operations.

The knowledge and social networks established by the women attending these workshops will enhance the resilience of farm businesses and farming communities in the Upper North..



'Ladies On The Land'.
Women from the Upper Mid-North take part the series of farming and business workshops.

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