



enviroed4all® - Family Farm Snapshots-

an educational resource at <http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au/> for the

2014 International Year of Family Farming

“Feeding the world; Caring for the Earth”

Foods for us and the world, Batchica

Our Family

We love living on the farm and working it as a family. Our **broad-acre cropping** and seasonal **sheep farm** in the Wimmera, at Batchica, north of Warracknabeal. We produce **food for ourselves** (in the garden) **and for the world** (in the paddocks).

Our family consists of **two parents and three children**. My **husband and I both work on our farm** and I also work on two industry organizations, so we employ a farm hand and use contractor staff busy periods like harvest. So we also **employ a farm hand and use contractor staff in busy periods**, like harvest.



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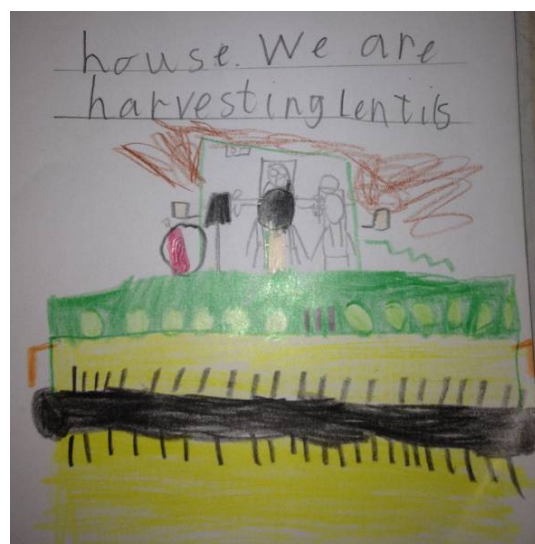
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The **farm work**, mainly done **by my husband** and the employee includes:

- planting,
- growing,
- harvesting (*My son's drawing of the lentil harvest using the 'header' is to the right.*),
- managing crops and livestock,
- machinery maintenance
- and fencing.

It also includes work mainly done **by me**:

- staff management,
- record keeping,
- tax reporting,
- Occupational Health and Safety requirements,
- marketing
- and freight logistics



The **children** have jobs too, e.g. feeding dogs, cats and chickens.

Shearing is a big job on our farm, involving us all.

- My **husband** brings the sheep in full of wool and herds them away when shorn, with the help of our working sheep dogs.

(What stage do you think the photo to the right show? Hint- look for wool on the sheep or not.)

- Shearing is a skilled job for which we employ **specialist shearers** to remove the fleece. It takes place in a shed. *(Look for the shed in the photo and the ramp the sheep will walk up into it.)*
- Our employee acts as **rouse-about**, - meaning he sweeps the fleeces up, and other odd –jobs, like pressing them into bales.
- The **classer's** job is to inspect the fleece and grade how good the wool is.
- I manage the three **shearers' meals** a day and the payroll requirements.
- My **children** also love helping with the sweeping and classing of the fleeces.



Our Farm

We have a **medium to large farm** for this area (over 2000 ha). It is spread across three farm districts, north of Warracknabeal, our nearest town.

The land has a long geological history. Forming under the sea, the land is relatively **flat** (see photo below). More 'recently' it has been along a flood plain in a wetter past climate.

The climate has **hot summers**, and overall a **semi-arid** rainfall level. The sheep squatters arrived in the mid 19th Century, followed by the selectors who cleared the woodlands for cropping later that century. These two uses, **grazing and cropping**, still dominate today.

Our farm is situated alongside the Yarriambiack Creek. So you might think that we would have a nice water part of our farm. Well, we do have a lovely green **tree corridor**, but it is an **intermittent stream**, so it only gets water every few years.

Broad-acre cropping involves large areas of crop, so we need **machines** to help us harvest them. *The photo to the right shows two key machines.*

- The green **auto-header** does the work of harvesting for us.
- The grain is emptied into a '**chaser bin**'. The chaser bin follows the header around the paddock so it doesn't have to stop working, thus being very efficient. The chaser bin will then empty into a truck at the edge of the paddock.



The **truck** will cart the grain away to local silos, end processors, exporters or to our own silos on farm for transport later in the season.

What do they cart? Our crops include:

- **cereals** like
 - barley,
 - wheat,
- and **legumes** like
 - lentils,
 - peas,
 - beans
- canola, an **oil-seed**
- and **hay** from these.



Which ones can you find in the selection in the photo to the right? How do they differ in colour and size? Which ones do you eat and in what form?

Our produce - 'Feeding the world'

We use some of our own produce to live on (**meat and grains**) but the **bulk** of it is **sold**. It is amazing how **widely** our farm produce travels to **feed other people!**

Where do we sell it?

We cart produce from our farm to:

- the local **sheep** saleyards at Warracknabeal (lambs, ewes, and wethers for domestic consumption, meaning they become meat at the butchers and supermarkets)
- the local grain handlers (crops) who buy our produce and then sell it on in Australia for domestic use) or overseas (as exports)
 - The **lentils** are sent 50 km to PeaCo in Donald, packed into containers for export to the world.
 - **Feed barley** is a lower grade of barley, that is not good enough for 'malting'. It is processed into stock feed by Riordan's near Geelong (350 km away) and bought by dairy farmers for their stock. So it too will eventually feed people, through the food chain.
 - **Canola** is usually for processing into edible oils – cooking oil or margarine.
- dairy farmers in the Western District of Victoria (**hay** to feed their cattle) a couple of hundred kilometres south of here
- the Victorian ports of Portland or Geelong, over 300 km away, for export overseas as **grains** (the seeds of cereals) and **pulses** (the seeds of the legumes)
 - Our **wheat** can be exported almost anywhere in the world for food for people.
 - **Barley's** top grade is '**malt**'. This means it is suitable for beer making. Our barley of malt grade heads into the premium Japanese market to make Sapporo beer.
 - Our pulses (like **lentils, peas and beans**) are usually graded, cleaned and packed into containers, then exported to Indonesia or the Middle East, for food for people there.

Includes 'Feeding ourselves'

We save some of our farm produce for our consumption:

- lamb,
- grains
- and pulses.

We also have **eggs** from our hens, and a home garden, with lots of food plants:



Fruits

- Kaffir Lime Tree,
- Meyer Lemon Tree,
- Peach Tree,
- Nectarine Tree,
- Strawberries
- Tomatoes



Vegetables

- Beetroot,
- Broccoli,
- Cauliflower,
- Silver beet, *(see photo right)*



Herbs

- Basil
- Mint,
- Rosemary
- Thyme and Lemon Thyme,



Sustainability - 'Caring for the Earth'

Replanting the trees

We have planted green "shelter belts" along some of our farm **fence-lines**, with the help of **Landcare** . You can find out what Landcare does at <http://www.landcareonline.com.au/>

A home for native wildlife

When our intermittent Yarriambiack Creek does flow we get an amazing display of **birdlife**.

We see plenty of **native fauna** around our farm and along the Creek, including:

- kangaroos
- Blue-tongue Lizards,
- Frill-neck Lizards,
- Brown Snakes!
- cockatoos,
- eagles,
- magpies *(see photo right)*
- owls



To look after these native creatures, we need to look after our **native flora** too. This includes some 300 year old Buloke Trees, many gum trees and wattles.

*Look carefully at the photo right of a **River Red Gum** tree on the Creek. Use its branches and the person (about 1.6 m high) to estimate how tall and wide a centuries old tree can grow.*

Find the hollow in the tree trunk. What do you think could live in here from the list of creatures above?



Caring for the soils

The Wimmera's soils are very **old**. To look after them better than past methods did, we now use '**Precision farming**' techniques. These include:

- **stubble retention** – Stubble is the stalks of plants left after the heads with grains have been cut off. In the past these were burnt. Now we leave stubbles on the land after harvest as they can protect the soil from wind erosion and evaporation.
- **no till** – We drill the seeds directly into the soil, rather than plowing the soil before sowing the seeds. This may be through a stubble too, if it has been left.
- and **targeted inputs** – We test the soil for what nutrients are missing, and then apply those only, rather than automatically applying them as used to be done.

All have made a great difference to soil stability, moisture conservation and reducing wind and soil erosion. Under these farming conditions we even find **wild mushrooms** to eat!

Challenges

Some farming challenges into the future will be to better understand soil / water construct and to reduce chemical applications for weed control.

Pest animals

We unfortunately have **feral animals** which we try to reduce, including:

- rabbits,
- hares,
- foxes
- and wild cats.

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For more information about family farming and the 2014 IYFF go to:

<http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au/family-farm-snapshots/> for more in this series of snapshots

<http://www.fao.org/family-farming-2014/> <http://www.familyfarmingcampaign.net> for the official IYFF sites

<https://www.facebook.com/InternationalYearOfFamilyFarmingIYFF> for the facebook updates.