



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”

New ways to ‘work’ a family farm, Jeparit

Our Family

WE love living here – on our farm in the Wimmera. Our **family of three** has only been back on our ‘family farm’ in the Wimmera for just over a year.

We **love it** here for:

- its connecting with **our** family’s past, ancestors and childhood
- the **quiet**
- the ability to make the place what we **hope and dream** it to be
- its rural setting experience for **our visitors**.- see photo below right.



This is a ‘**family farm**’ in four ways:

1. As a family of three, we work together in our **vegetable garden** and with our **hens** to produce some of the food we eat.
2. As a family of three, and following on from work done by my parents, we all **share in the jobs of keeping our paddocks in order**, e.g. mowing, clearing up after storms, keeping fences in order. However we don’t ‘farm’ the paddocks - our share-farmer neighbours do. The cropping and livestock operations are run by them as part of their operations providing produce for the world,
3. This farmland has been in our family **for four generations** and other members in our extended family have land nearby.
4. We are creating a **new ‘family farm’** here, making a living from a **combination of**:
 - the **small farming enterprise** (cash from the share farming and food direct to the kitchen from the home food garden)
 - and **two farm-based businesses** (my wife’s- massage therapy- and mine – aviation, charter flights etc).



Aviation A.K.A.



Our History

This farm has been in our family **since 1898**. Four generations have worked the land up until the present moment.

Since **the 1970's**, when **farm sizes** started to **grow** in the Wimmera, there has always been income drawn from off the farm to supplement the farming enterprise. This has been due to **outside interests** mostly, as well as financial need.

The **males** in the family had always **worked the farm**; the **females** had usually worked in **off- farm jobs**, which they had before being married. Not since the second generation of farmers, have the farmers' wives remained on the land day in and day out.

During our 20 years working in education further afield than the Wimmera, we only had a small involvement with this land, while my **parents** were on it. When the opportunity arose at the end of 2012, we decided to live here to have **our turn** at making this 'family farm' what it will be....



Our Farm

Our farm is in the Wimmera, in **northwest Victoria**, a part of southeast Australia's grain and stock farming region. The climate is **hot and dry in summer**; with rain mostly in winter.

Jeparit is our **nearest town**, 15 kilometres away. It is very small and has limited services. We shop at the next town, which is 30 kilometres away. This is also where the local high school is located.

Our farm covers a block of **260 hectares** – or a 'square mile'. This is a **small farm** here - farmers need a lot more than this to make a living. It is **mostly flat land**, with the house and vegetable garden on a **sandy rise**. The **windmill** is there connected to good underground water, used for the stock and gardens.



What can you see in the photo above? Look for the farm house and sheds surrounded by the paddocks, and farm roads linking them. The paddocks are used for crops and stock. The farm house has the vegetable garden and chook shed nearby for our needs.

New ways to make a living on a small Wimmera family farm

Small farm sizes like ours can't produce enough for a living today, but **small family farms** like ours can **continue, when there are additional sources of income**. As well as growing some food for our use and some income from the share farmed paddocks, we run two businesses based at our farm:

1. Aviation –

My father built his airstrip on the farm. I am taking it a step further. My charter & scenic flights and tours business - see <http://www.akubeaviation.com.au/> - is just starting. It provides a way to turn a 'passion' into way of life that can be part of our 'family farm'.



2. Massage therapy –

We have plenty of room on our farm, and lovely gardens as a heritage from the generations before us. When clients drive out to our farm, they can have a mini 'retreat' experience, and massage in the tranquility of our family farm environment.

Our produce - 'Feeding the world'

Our share farmer grows the 'cash' crops in the paddocks, which are sold to various merchants and mostly exported, for food. Sometimes crops are sold to dairies in southern Victoria for stock food. Their sheep graze here and their wool is sold.

The **crops** have historically been **cereals**:

- wheat,
- barley
- oats.

Our crops now include:

- **legumes**, like:
 - chickpeas
 - field peas,
 - lentils
 - and fodder crops, like vetch.
- An **oilseed**, canola, is also grown regularly.



Legumes are shown in the photos here. Can you tell which is which from the following shape clues?

- *Chick peas have a split like a yo-yo*
- *Field peas have a dimple*
- *Lentils are a like a discus.*

Includes 'Feeding ourselves'

The **wheat and oats** provide feed for the **chooks**.
The chooks provide us with **eggs**.

They are shown in the photos to the right. Can you tell which is which from these shape clues?:

- Oats are longer and thinner
- Wheat is plumper and shorter



We love eating our food.

In summer, it is great to have **omelettes**, or **salads** that are all home grown! We grow some of our own **vegetables**, like: tomatoes, corn, zucchinis, herbs.

The crops from the paddock sometimes provide us with foods too, like chick peas and, this year, lentils.



Sustainability - 'Caring for the Earth'

Tree plantations

In the **early 1980's** I was working this farm, with my grandfather and brother. **Trees** were seen as **competition** for the **crops** – and it could be clearly seen that crops near trees did not grow as well.

My brother and I were interested in **conservation** issues and decided to **plant 2 rows of trees** (about 650 meters long) as a **shelter belt**. At this point in time, there were no similar plantings around the area. Farmers were still clearing clumps of trees making way for the bigger machinery that was getting popular.

My Grandfather was a little puzzled, as he in his youth had finished clearing the block from its native state. Now, years later, we were wanting to put them back in the ground! He however didn't complain!

Since that time, my brother took on the farm **for 15 years** and **planted over 1000 trees** on this home block and other nearby blocks of land.

My **parents** moved back onto the farm in the late 90's and planted **thousands of trees along fence lines** and **in small clumps** in the corners of paddocks, and thickening areas of native vegetation.

*The photo to the right shows what a **new planting** looks like – yes, a lot of milk cartons!*

*Look carefully at the first one- you will see the newly planted tree poking out the top. The **milk cartons** protect the young trees. They have **stakes** in them to hold the cartons in place.*

A lot of work goes into a tree planting like this. What else do you think needs to be done?

Local seeds are collected. They often take a year to sprout and be put into tubes to grow to be ready to plant. There are nurseries set up to do this.

The land has to be prepared. A deep furrow is ripped just before planting, so the roots of the tree will grow down quickly into the soil. Plantings are often done in late winter so the trees can get going in spring, before summer's heat and dry arrives.



The trees have provided **wildlife corridors**. We have noticed an increase in the variety of **birds** now taking up residence and passing through our farm area

Waste management

We give **food scraps** to our chooks, what they don't eat, gets composted in the garden. **Burnable scraps** are incinerated. **Recyclable material** is taken to town and put in the recycle bins. Plastics are dumped and the local tip.

It's quite a process but means very little is 'thrown out'.



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

<http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au/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