



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”

Happy family farming, near Ballarat

Our Family

I love my patch!

I love that we all **work** together on it as a **family**!

I love that we all **eat** from it.

I love that we **share** from it. ...

It's the best feeling in the world to **harvest** food we have grown!

With two small children, my husband and I want to expose them naturally in a day-to-day way to growing food. **My husband and I** do most of the **gardening work**, but the **children help** as they can.

We are lucky to be able to do this on our little farm, **near Ballarat**, in the Central Highlands of Victoria. We both had the benefit of a rural, or part time **rural, upbringing**, so giving our kids those opportunities for **nature-based play** is critical for us. We also want to empower them with food production.



Our Farm

Our little farm of 10 acres, has about **500 m. sq.** **under cultivation, mainly vegetables** - its all edible this stage. We eat a LOT of veggies in our house.

Our aim to is to grow some of our own to supplement what we buy, i.e. we **grow for ourselves** and have some **to share** with neighbours and family. As we have other off-farm jobs, we are **part-time family farmers**.



at



Our land is **slightly hilly**. *Do you notice the colour of the soils in the photo?* This area was created by volcanic **lava flows**. They have left us with **rich soils**. This land was a **potato farm** before. They added **chemical manures**. We add **horse manure** from a nearby stable. These soils have good colour.



Being in the Central Highlands near Ballarat, it is **colder** here than other nearby places. The cold also shortens the **growing season**. I like the cold, but the veggies don't! So I rarely get pumpkins to ripen.

Our produce - 'Feeding the world' means 'Feeding ourselves'

We all enjoy eating from the garden! At the moment (autumn), we are eating **carrots, zucchini, corn, tomatoes and beans** from our garden. *The tomatoes are grown on stakes (photo right).*



There are many **different varieties** of tomatoes. They have different shapes and sizes. I always wish there was more variety and more months of the year that we were harvesting!

How many different ones can you see in the bowl in the photo? The Grosse Liesse variety of tomato, in the bowl at the back, has a round shape and is largest. The Roma, in the middle, have an oval sort shape. The Tom Thumbs are small balls.



of

Gardening and cooking is not a special or planned 'activity' in our house, but our 5 year old is exposed to all sorts of **cooking**, especially from our garden. We have recently preserved some of our tomatoes by cooking.

What do you think we made from them? In the photo, the jars hold yummy **tomato relish**!

We are having great luck with **berries** as the soil is fantastic. So we could definitely look at growing berries and selling them on one day. But now, the kids check the **strawberry** patch gleefully to see if any ripened overnight! We all enjoy that feeling of eating them at room temperature - delicious softness!

My organic research friends tell me the chemical residue on standard strawberries is quite high for the weight of the fruit. Could that be the slight bad taste at times I wonder of the hard, cold store bought versions?

Sustainability - 'Caring for the Earth'

Organic agriculture

Our little family farm is in an area with a very active **permaculture** group, so there are other small family farms around us. It's great to be a part of a community where loads of people grow their own food, at least in part.

As Kylie Kwong says, "There are lots of good things say about Organic - best for us, best for the planet but really, ... they **taste better!**"

We are growing with **no chemical inputs**, but we'd be far from organic because of the years of **potato** farming on our block, which I am told will have left lot of **chemical residues** in the soil. One day, when I am brave enough, I will have that tested.

Contributing to healthier people

It's the **best feeling** in the world to harvest food we have grown! I just wish more people got that same buzz! It's such good fun and so good for you mentally and physically!

I genuinely believe that the more **disconnected** we become **from Nature and the Earth**, the **unhappier** we become. When we are busy putting efforts into something worthwhile, we feel happier and more satisfied, I think. If only people gardened together and just talked while they toiled or shelled peas or whatever, the fewer people we'd have in therapy I think! - Just my theory!

Creating healthier communities

The local '**farmers markets**' can also contribute to this wellbeing. They are booming in this area – I think this reflects that attitudes are changing.

The govt is keen to have people making the move regional Victoria.... if we stopped buying food from other countries than we would need people back in Rural Victoria growing our food. Crazy idea- could we tax the imports to support farmers who grow here? Another reason for this would be that imported food implies high food miles.



to



a



to

Challenges

Food Miles

Food miles costs the distance we take food from source to user. Family farmers eat food from their place – lowest food miles. If we are serious about reducing **carbon footprints**, we had better stop **transporting food** around. A linked issue from this is wasted food.

Do we really need to ship frozen peas around the world? I HATE that we can't buy frozen peas or corn that have been grown in Australia! We can grow great peas here! I get frustrated that Australian grown is NOT the norm now and tire of looking at frozen veg or tins of veg to ascertain country of origin. THEN, some of the veg is not even from NZ or wherever, it's from imported ingredients into NZ.... from where I wonder??

Loss of farming expertise

We are also concerned about our **farming neighbourhood**. There are nearly no farmers left that can support themselves fully off the land - they nearly all have full-time or part time jobs as well. 50 years ago, the 10 acres we are now on would have raised a whole family.

I worry that, as more food is produced on super-farms, we, as a **community lose control**, choice and touch with our food. I worry about these super farms as 'custodians' of land. I feel that our farming land is safer in the hands of the families of real people that live on that land. Surely they are more likely to look after the land and make those longer term investments? (If they can raise the money of course - farming can be extremely tough)

Future food security

I have real concerns about **food security** - I hate the idea of someone else making the decision as to what we will eat, how it will be grown, where it will be transported from and how long it will be stored before being displayed for sale.

So for so many reasons, despite being a small scale, we are **so happy to be family farming growing as much of our food as we can!!**



Permission to use information and photos was given by CB to Jeanie Clark. Editing and map by J. Clark. (cc) 2014.

For more information about the 2014 International Year of Family Farming go to:

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