

# 2014 International Year of Family Farming

*Feeding the world; Caring for the Earth*

## Family Farm Snapshots

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



## 60 years family farming, Wimmera plains

### Our Family

Last year, my husband and I celebrated our 60<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary. As we've spent most of our married life on our **Wimmera** family farm, we don't want to give up growing some of our own food! But now we do less and less hard work, now the **chooks** (mainly my **husband**) and the **orchard and vegie garden** (mainly **me**).

### Our Farm

Our family farm is **a few acres** around our house, where an **orchard, garden and chook pen** are, in about **500 sq m** of land producing food. (Our son still uses the rest of the farmland as part of our family farming enterprise.)

The land is **flat** and the soil is fairly **sandy**. We have water from the Wimmera-Mallee **pipeline**, to add to the **low rainfall**, with **hot summers**.

**Sharing our food** has always been part of life. When we milked cows, it went to meetings nearby, at the Country Fire Authority Station (where we've been members for over 40 years) and the Hall, e.g. breakfasts for ANZAC Day Marches (photo right).



We drive 20 km to Warracknabeal or further to Horsham to shop. Our district grew before Warracknabeal did. However once the **main road by-passed** here, the population started to drop. Like many rural areas we lost our local Primary School in the 1970's.

## Our produce - '**Feeding the world**' means '**Feeding ourselves**' now

We came here about **50 years ago**. There was already a citrus orchard and a chook pen.

- **Grapefruit\***

- **Lemons\*** – (photo right)

*Hey! What colour are lemons? No, it's not a trick colour from being in the shade of the branches! The lemons are just starting to grow. When they are ripe, they will be yellow.*

- **Oranges\*** (see photo first page on right)

- **Mandarine\*** (ditto, beside it to the left)



We kept these going and I added more trees to the orchard:

- **Apples\*** – **Granny Smith's** - the green apple

*They look a yellow colour in the early morning light in the photo right, but they are really a lovely green.*

- **Apricots\***

- **Fig** – planted to make fig jam for my Mum

- **Mulberry**

- **Nectarine\***

- **Peaches**

- **Pears**

- **Plums**

- **Quince** (photo right) – makes a lovely jam too!



We lost many trees in the orchard during the **decade of drought** at the start of this century. It wasn't just the **lack of rainfall**, but the water we relied upon in our **dams** became **salty** and then there was none supplied for two years from the Wimmera-Mallee Stock and Domestic Supply System. Only those trees marked \* above survived.

In last two years, the Wimmera-Mallee Pipeline has become our water supply bringing us good reliable water. We have **planted** apricot, nectarine and plum trees again.



The vegetable garden also suffered at this time. We used to grow a year's supply of peas and beans and tomatoes and other foods. This year, the vegetable garden only has **rhubarb**.

*Aren't these beautiful big green leaves on the rhubarb plant in the photo right? But don't get tricked! They will make you sick. The only safe part to eat is the red stalks and they must be well cooked! They go really well with apples.*



We use our produce **fresh, cooked or preserved** and often **share** it and swap it for things we don't grow with our **neighbours and family**. We also buy in bulk for things we don't grow, e.g. to make our own **tomato sauce**.

We have had **hens** since we came here, 50 years ago. So, except when the hens go off the lay, we have plenty of fresh **eggs** most of the year and use them in many dishes. We have had a couple of different breeds over the years. The breed we use most and like best is a great 'layer', the "**Isa Red**" (photo right). The chooks are quite tame and follow my husband around when he is in the yard!



*This photo shows some eggs. They haven't been washed yet, like ones bought from supermarkets have been before they get there to be sold.*



We have grown many other things over a life time in farming:

- I had an **Angora goat** farm. They were hard work shearing for their **mohair** wool!
- We used to have **Tukidale sheep**. They were very cute with curly wool, which was shorn twice yearly. Their coarse wool was used for **carpet** making and sent for sale in Geelong.
- When our children (now 50+ years old) were small, they used to have **Muscovy ducks**. They raised them, and made money from selling their eggs and meat, which we also ate. The children helped with plucking the feathers off, but I remember they weren't so keen on helping me clean them, after that! Mind you, they did enjoy roasted duck for tea!

- Our children also learned to **milk Short Horn and Guernsey Cross cows**, let them in and out, separate cream and make butter, as well as other farm chores. We used to milk up to six cows **by hand** daily. The cream was separated and picked up by truck from the creamery 100 km away, twice a week. After the factory closed, we still milked cows for our use until about 15 years ago, 'separating' so we had our own '**skim' milk and cream**. We also made our **own butter**. (It's easier to buy these now, but we can taste the difference to that we used to make ourselves.) Our last cow had a very quiet calf, which ended up being too fat to get in calf and produce milk for us. We called her "Fatso" and she is a **pet**, living her life out eating and lazing about on the farm (photo right – *her colouring shows she's a bit of a mixture*).



- My husband's main role used to be in growing cereals, like **wheat, oats and barley**, and raising **stock**. We used to cut tracks around the crops as **hay for the stock**. We kept some oats for cow feed, and some wheat for chook feed. Most of the cereals were sold to the Wheat and Barley Boards **for overseas and domestic sale**. We still use some wheat for chook feed and now add layer pellets to this, which are bought in town.

## Sustainability - 'Caring for the Earth'

### From chook pen to the orchard

Our **chook poo** is used for **fertiliser** for the **fruit trees**. It's not very far to take it from their pen to the orchard. They are also free to roam about the yards and garden when we are home. They can **eat insect pests** when they do this and help to keep them away from our fruit trees, so we don't need to use poisons on these pests.

### Low Food Miles

Growing our own food, sharing with neighbours and buying in bulk helps keep the cost of transporting food down. It also reduces the effects of transport. But most of all, we **enjoy growing and eating our own food** and will keep doing it for as long as we can.

Written by J. Clark from interviews, and with permission to use this information and photos on the web.  
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**For more information about the IYFF 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.

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at <http://familyfarms.enviroed4all.com.au/snapshots/60yrfamilyfarming-Wimmera.pdf>

