



FARMERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION

2018 ANNUAL REPORT



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THANK YOU FOR SUPPORTING FARMERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION.

Farmers for Climate Action is a movement of farmers, agricultural leaders and rural Australians working to ensure farmers are a key part of the solution to climate change.

We support farmers to build climate and energy literacy and advocate for climate solutions both on and off farm. We are independent, non-profit and non-partisan.

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MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR

THOUGHTS FROM THE Paddock



As I write this a scorching January has descended on our part of southern New South Wales. We have a full blown drought strategy in place to keep our livestock numbers through this tough season. Being in cattle genetics, we are not able to sell down our numbers and still have an operational business at the other end of the drought period.

Managing drought on our property provides a constant reminder of the importance of an organisation like Farmers for Climate Action. As farmers, we really are on the frontline of climate change and we need to be part of its solution. We need tools to help us manage extreme weather events, set to occur with increasing frequency, and we need strong government policy to limit future warming.

As the only farmer-led organisation focussed on climate, Farmers for Climate Action is building a very wide support base across rural and urban Australia. Our engagement model is enabling many farmers and interested Australians to be part of this grass roots organisation.

Farmers for Climate Action has really cemented itself on the national stage over the past 12 months. We are fortunate to have built a community of Australia's climate scientists for primary industries who very generously give us advice in their own time.

In October we had over 200 delegates at our Managing Climate Risk in Agriculture conference in Beechworth.

This feedback from Deakin University Associate Professor Robert Faggian expressed what many people said to us on the day:

"I was one of the speakers at your event last week in Beechworth. I just wanted to say what a pleasure and honour it was to participate in the conference – I've spent the last 15+ years conducting research on climate adaptation in agriculture and my work involves direct interaction with farmers. There have been times when the reception has not always been good because climate change denial amongst some has persisted for a long time. As such, it is great to see an organisation like Farmers for Climate Action doing so well and attracting so many people to its events!"

We have a highly capable and energetic team of staff, led by Verity Morgan-Schmidt, which has created the credible organisation that FCA has become.

My hope for 2019 is that we can harness the energy for change in our physical and political environments to effect great policy for the future of food, families and farming.

Lucinda Corrigan

Chair, Farmers for Climate Action



"Farmers are trusted and respected in the wider community and, with Australian agriculture on the frontline of dealing with climate variability, farmers have an opportunity to cut through on climate action."

Dennis Ward, managing director of Avigrain and FCA supporter



"Action on climate change in Australia by all levels of government and all sectors of industry is critical for my farm and my business. That action will provide clarity for me to pursue strategies that will help me and my son prepare for a changing and deteriorating climate, and provide opportunities for my business to start sequestering carbon."

Robert Lee, Larras Lee farmer and FCA supporter

MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



2018 was a year of extremes. From amazing highs as thousands rallied in the streets of Sydney to demand a clean energy future, through to extreme lows as devastating drought took hold across eastern Australia and parts of Western Australia.

It's been an incredible journey and a tremendous privilege to work with farmers across Australia to drive climate action both behind and beyond the farm gate.

Even in the toughest times, as our farmers have faced dry dams, parched paddocks and offloading stock, Farmers for Climate Action has been there to support and empower them to take positive action to address climate change.

A huge thank you to our board, staff, donors and supporters. It has been an absolute pleasure to lead such a high-impact, purpose-driven organisation.

There's a lot of work to be done, and I look forward to rolling up my sleeves with all of you in 2019!

Verity Morgan-Schmidt

CEO, Farmers for Climate Action

2018 KEY HIGHLIGHTS

We hit the ground running in 2018! In the first few months of the year alone we:

MET WITH FEDERAL MPS INCLUDING THE ENTIRE SHADOW COUNTRY CAUCUS, GOVERNMENT WHIP AND MINISTER FOR THE ENVIRONMENT



PRESENTED 150,000 SIGNATURES ON OUR GRAZIERS' PETITIONS AGAINST ADANI'S UNLIMITED WATER LICENCE AND COMPULSORY ACQUISITION OF FARMS ALONG THE RAIL LINE TO QUEENSLAND PARLIAMENT

RAN A HUGE TV ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN IN VICTORIA AND NEW SOUTH WALES



RAN OUR INAUGURAL VICTORIAN CLIMATE SMART AGRICULTURE FELLOWSHIP

HELD OUR INAUGURAL QUEENSLAND STATE SUMMIT



From a flying start, the year's achievements continued to build. A key highlight was our work successfully lobbying state Agriculture Ministers to achieve a commitment from the Agriculture Ministers' Forum (AGMIN) to advance a National Strategy on Climate Change and Agriculture.

Later in the year we also:



BROUGHT FARM UTES AND TRUCKS TO CANBERRA FOR OUR BREAK THE DROUGHT ON CLIMATE ACTION RALLY. THE FIRST SITTING WEEK OF PARLIAMENT AFTER SCOTT MORRISON BECAME THE PRIME MINISTER, HE SAID THE DROUGHT WAS HIS NUMBER ONE PRIORITY



RAN A HUGE RADIO, TV, PRINT AND BILLBOARD ADVERTISING CAMPAIGN IN TOWNSVILLE, MACKAY AND ROCKHAMPTON WITH FARMER VOICES LINKING THE DROUGHT, CLIMATE CHANGE AND COAL

PLACED A HUGE NUMBER OF MEDIA STORIES WITH OUR FARMERS LINKING THE DROUGHT AND CLIMATE CHANGE TO MAINSTREAM AUDIENCES



HOSTED A LARGE CROWD OF FARMERS IN MACKAY FOR THE LAUNCH OF OUR GALILEE RISING FILM, ALONGSIDE OTHER EVENTS THROUGHOUT THE CENTRAL QUEENSLAND REGION

SUPPORTED FARMERS FROM ACROSS NEW SOUTH WALES AND SOUTHERN QUEENSLAND TO TROT ON HORSEBACK THROUGH THE STREETS OF SYDNEY TO DEMAND A CLEAN ENERGY FUTURE

HELD OUR WIDELY-ACCLAIMED MANAGING CLIMATE RISK IN AGRICULTURE CONFERENCE IN NORTHERN VICTORIA



PULLED TOGETHER LEADERS FROM THE SECTOR TO CREATE OUR RURAL FUTURES TASKFORCE REPORT, LAUNCHED ON THE LAWNS OF PARLIAMENT, GENERATING HEADLINES THROUGHOUT REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

AND CONTINUED TO GROW AND EMPOWER OUR NETWORK OF RURAL AUSTRALIANS.



What a year!



OUR WORK IN FOCUS

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FOCUS AREA ONE.

AGRICULTURE IS CLIMATE SMART

As farmers on the front line of climate change, helping shift our sector to become more sustainable and climate resilient is one of our top priorities. Across our broad supporter base, there are a diverse range of experiences and views on the best approaches to sustainably increase productivity and production, maintain ecosystems, strengthen capacity for adaptation to climate change and to progressively improve land and soil quality.

Holistic managers, organic producers, carbon farmers and conventional producers all approach climate smart agriculture from different angles. We believe this diversity is one of the strengths of our movement.

Throughout 2018, our farmer-to-farmer networks grew dramatically, in both size and extent of ongoing learning and development. It is now common for our farmers from Victoria to engage in shared learning with our farmers from South Australia, and our Queensland graziers to reach out to their New South Wales counterparts.

Thanks to connections made through Farmers for Climate Action, information regarding climate adaptation and climate smart agriculture is flowing across commodities and geographical boundaries. The drought has provided a key impetus for improving of shared learning, while the challenges in the Murray Darling Basin have resulted in farmers' relationships being strengthened across the catchment.

Our farmers networks are both formal and informal. We actively facilitate them through video conferences, volunteer leadership team meetings and events. They are also informally driven by farmers reaching out to drive their own conversations across social media and through phone calls.

We seek to work collaboratively across the sector and beyond, and are forging strong relationships with leading organisations in the agriculture, natural resource management and climate realms.



FARMERS FLOCK TO BEECHWORTH FOR MANAGING CLIMATE RISK FORUM

In October we were overwhelmed by the interest shown in our Managing Climate Risk in Agriculture forum in Beechworth. Farmers from as far afield as north Queensland, Tasmania and the West Australian wheatbelt were among the 200 people who gathered in north-east Victoria, to hear from a full program of 33 experts and facilitators.

Some of the highlights included:

- Director of the ANU Climate Change Institute, Professor Mark Howden reinforced the importance of acting early, if global warming is to be limited to 1.5 degrees, and emphasised that every half a degree, every year and every choice mattered.
- Farmers for Climate Action Chair Lucinda Corrigan reflected on the changes and adaptation that has occurred on her property, Rennylea, which has been in her family for five generations.
- Minter Ellison Special Counsel on climate risk, Sarah Barker, provided a legal perspective on climate change, noting that eventually Australian governments could be sued for not making adequate provision for climate risk.
- Agriculture Victoria's Graeme Anderson explained carbon farming and built climate literacy. He said most of the good land management practices farmers have been putting in place were actually best-practice for building soil carbon.

For the full list of speakers and to access resources from the day go to

↑ www.farmersforclimateaction.org.au/resources

MACKAY CLIMATE WORKSHOP, A HIT

Around 65 local farmers turned out to see the latest in innovative climate smart farming practices at a field day at Marian in August. The Climate, Cane and Carbon field day was co-hosted by Reef Catchments and Farmers for Climate Action.

Local cane grower and Nuffield Scholar Simon Mattson shared his family farm with a shed full of his industry peers and discussed multi species cropping, improving organic carbon levels in their soil and the latest science and research on climate and cane farming in the Mackay region.

Keynote speaker and Deputy Chair of the Australian Cane Farmers Association, Robert Quirk spoke about the need for the community to understand the risk of inaction on climate change and the opportunities for cane farmers to adapt and mitigate climate damage and improve productivity at the same time.

"Growing cane with a focus on carbon retention is one of the best ways to get carbon out of the air and into the soil and offers a range of benefits for producers including moisture retention, higher production and less input costs".



“Climate action or, more specifically, action to ameliorate anthropogenic global warming is important to me because I, like all businesses, farm to make a profit. To make this profit, risk management is a very important part of my business model.”

Peter Holding, Harden farmer and FCA board member

FOCUS AREA TWO. 

FARMERS MOBILISED TO DRIVE A CLEAN ENERGY TRANSITION

Farmers for Climate Action is calling for a rapid transformation of Australia’s energy system away from fossil fuels and towards renewable energy in a way that maximises benefits to farmers and regional communities.

In 2018, this included the development of a Rural Futures Taskforce and a resulting report, jointly-released with The Next Economy, outside Parliament House in Canberra in October.

The report set out a vision for a vibrant and sustainable regional Australia and came out of extensive discussions with experts, farmers and rural Australians.

Two days’ later we gave a copy to the Prime Minister Scott Morrison at NFF Congress. Our supporters’ messages encouraging the PM to read our report numbered over 1000, and were delivered to him by Minister Rebekha Sharkie.

In 2018 we also ran a three-week long advertising campaign in central Queensland that aimed to raise awareness of the link between thermal coal, climate change and drought.

A crowd-funding campaign, which raised almost \$12,500, allowed us to extend our reach and book television advertisements to run during the Melbourne Cup. Our advertisements reached thousands of Queenslanders and forced a response from both the local MP and Adani.

In late November we launched our Galilee Rising short film at an event in Mackay. The film features the stories of farmers and graziers from across Central Queensland and the Galilee Basin and their campaign to protect land and water resources from extractive industries like Adani’s Carmichael Mine.

Speakers at the event included central Queensland graziers Mick Alexander and Jody Brown; Farmers for Climate Action CEO Verity Morgan Schmidt; and coal industry employees concerned about the lack of a transition plan for the industry. Concerns about extractive industries and alternate opportunities for the region dominated discussion.



FOCUS AREA THREE.

RURAL AND REGIONAL MPS ARE CHAMPIONING CLIMATE ACTION AND RENEWABLE ENERGY FOR REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

The current drought has hit Australian farmers hard. Every day we have phone calls with farmers who are out hand-feeding stock, repairing bores and working to increase the sustainability of their land management practices. The reality is that natural drought cycles are being exacerbated as a result of climate change.

Farmer frustration with the comprehensive failure to address climate change boiled over in 2018, with hundreds travelling to Canberra to rally outside Parliament on the first sitting date of the new Morrison Government, demanding that politicians 'Break the Drought on Climate Action'.

However, we know that holding a rally is only a small part of building the political will required to address climate change.

Throughout the year we worked behind the scenes advocating for significantly stronger climate policies in state and federal Parliaments. We've established excellent relationships with most state Agriculture Ministers, and several state Environment Ministers on both sides of the political spectrum.

One of our most significant policy achievements in 2018 was the agreement by the Agriculture Ministers' Forum (AGMIN) for the advancement of a National Strategy on Climate Change and Agriculture.

Farmers for Climate Action was directly approached by a senior Government advisor to provide our advice on the essential ingredients for a meaningful national strategy. Naturally, this was not an opportunity to be passed by, and we swung into action, putting together a series of key evidence based policy recommendations for recommendation.

We also engaged our key influential and trusted farmers in each state to meet with their state Agriculture Ministers. We waited with bated breath as the meeting was underway, and were absolutely thrilled when Verity received an email from a senior staffer to advise that the motion had been carried. First step achieved!

Although this was a great step forward, we're all familiar with policies which have languished on government shelves and are determined not to let that happen. Thanks to the support of Australian Environmental Grantmakers Network (AEGN) and the Australian Communities Foundation, we have partial funding to drive a major three-year campaign to deliver a fully-funded and implemented National Strategy on Climate Change and Agriculture. We'll be working with the Australian Farm Institute and other industry parties to ensure an enduring, meaningful and resourced policy shift so that climate change is incorporated into federal and state agricultural policy, and that agriculture is incorporated into climate policy.

RALLYING TO BREAK THE DROUGHT ON CLIMATE ACTION

On 10 September we welcomed the new Morrison Government in true FCA-style—with a Break the Drought on Climate Action rally and truck convoy outside Parliament House.

The tooting of horns, barking of dogs and cheering from the hundreds of supporters who turned out was not something we'll forget in a hurry. Bega Councillor Jo Dodds, and Goondiwindi farmer Peter Mailler could even be found cracking their whips for climate action.

We were thrilled with the turn-out of supporters on the ground and the national media coverage, as well as the support from farmers we received via email and on social media. Farmers travelled hundreds of kilometres to support us and we were overwhelmed by the outpouring of support on Facebook and Twitter. It set the scene perfectly for our meetings with Federal Agriculture Minister David Littleproud and Opposition Agriculture Minister Joel Fitzgibbon later that day.



"It's not good enough for some people to do some things: everybody has to do everything to act on climate. We have to get governments to make sure everyone is working towards fixing global warming."

Dale Park, Badgingarra farmer and FCA supporter

FOCUS AREA FOUR.

AGRICULTURE LEADERS ARE CHAMPIONING CLIMATE ACTION

An important part of our work is helping the leaders of Australian agriculture become champions for climate action.

2018 was a huge year for shifting climate policy within the agricultural industry. Several of our farmers successfully shifted climate and energy policy at the United Dairy Farmers of Victoria (UDV) and the Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) conferences. These were huge historical shifts, which would not have been possible without Farmers for Climate Action farmers building climate, carbon and energy literacy within their communities and having the courage to step forward and demand agricultural leadership take serious action on climate change.


We've also been actively shifting agriculture industry policy at the national level. In August 2018, we pulled together Australia's first agricultural industry-led Drought & Climate Change Roundtable. We invited innovative thinkers from agricultural production and farming systems groups all over Australia including Birchip Cropping Group, WA No-Till Farming Association and Namoi Water.

Facilitated by Farmers for Climate Action, Professor Richard Eckard of the Primary Industries Climate Challenges Centre and the Australian Farm Institute, we were able to achieve a significant shift in influential industry rhetoric and language, bringing climate change, climate resilience and adaptive capacity to the forefront of drought conversation within the industry.

To quote Richard Heath, the Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute (and facilitator of our Roundtable): "Climate change is a reality which should be fundamentally changing the way drought policy is developed".

Farmers for Climate Action farmers engaged with National Farmers' Federation (NFF) roadshow events at Charters Towers (QLD), York (WA), Longreach (QLD), Dubbo (NSW) and Goondiwindi (QLD). Through these engagements, Farmers for Climate Action farmers were able to successfully achieve two key objectives within NFF's Talking 2030 policy roadmap for the agricultural sector:

1. The target of 50% renewable energy on Australian farms by 2030
2. Climate change being placed front and centre

A man and a woman are standing in a lush green field. The man is on the left, wearing a dark shirt and light-colored pants. The woman is on the right, wearing a green shirt and dark pants. In the background, there are several cows grazing in the field, and a line of trees under a clear blue sky.

"I'm proud to be a member of FCA, an organisation that recognises the role of farmers as environmental stewards and supports our ability to make change with regard to environmental issues, most importantly climate change. FCA has given us the opportunity to meet and join with other farmers to have our voices heard and raise awareness for issues that impact our agricultural land and livelihoods. It is refreshing to be part of an organisation that acknowledges and supports the good work that farmers do towards environmental gains, and recognise that our involvement in these issues is crucial for a future for our children."

Skye Douglass, Neumgna Farmer and FCA supporter



ORGANISATIONAL GROWTH

2018 was also a year of tremendous organisational growth for Farmers for Climate Action. Highlights included:

RECRUITING FOUR AMAZING NEW STAFF MEMBERS, BRINGING OUR STAFF TEAM TO SIX

HOLDING OUR FIRST BOARD-STAFF STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT, AND CREATING OUR FIRST THREE-YEAR STRATEGIC PLAN

ACHIEVING EXTRAORDINARY MEDIA IMPACT, REGULARLY REACHING MILLIONS OF AUSTRALIANS IN BOTH RURAL AND URBAN AUSTRALIA WITH THE VOICES OF OUR FARMERS TALKING ABOUT CLIMATE CHANGE

GROWING THE NUMBER OF SUPPORTERS ON OUR EMAIL DATABASE TO 22,000

WELCOMING NEW DONORS TO THE FARMERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION COMMUNITY, INCLUDING SETTING UP A MONTHLY GIVING PROGRAM AND LAYING THE FOUNDATIONS FOR A MAJOR DONOR GIVING CIRCLE, 'SEEDS OF CHANGE'

BUILDING UP THE SKILLS AND CONFIDENCE OF 35 AMAZING FARMERS WHO NOW HOLD VOLUNTEER LEADERSHIP ROLES WITHIN THE ORGANISATION

GROWING OUR FACEBOOK SUPPORTERS TO OVER 8300, AND OUR TWITTER FOLLOWERS TO OVER 5500



"If farmers can be bold about climate change, then those whose daily lives aren't so affected may begin to understand the urgency."

Neil Westcott, Alectown farmer,
Parkes Councillor and FCA supporter

"Agriculture in Australia is now a high-risk, low-return business and climate change is increasing the risk. We must mitigate that risk now."

Peter Mailler, Goondiwindi farmer and FCA supporter





FCA

FARMERS FOR CLIMATE ACTION



GET INVOLVED AT

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