



**Future
Farmers
Network**

Strategic Plan 2016-2018

FFN's 2016-2018 Strategic Plan guides our directions, priorities and actions as we strive to achieve our vision in accordance with our mission and values

Who we are

In November 2001, founder of FFN, Deb McLucas, decided to do something about the widespread concern she had seen expressed for the future of young people in the rural industries. As a result FFN was established in 2002, with the belief that it is not a shortage of young people in the rural industries, but a shortage of identified and communicated opportunities that is the major problem.

We are Australia's only national network of agricultural youth aged 18 – 35 years. We provide services to our community that span geographic and sectoral boundaries. Our community also come from all aspects of the industry - from young people who work on-farm, on remote and rural stations to those in industry support roles based in urban or regional centres.

We are not-for-profit company limited by guarantee. Our Board of Directors and management are all under 35 and bring a diverse range of skills and knowledge to the network.

Our vision

We are the national leader in advocating, empowering and providing support to young people working in Australian agriculture.

Our mission

We exist to connect, empower, support and retain young people in Australian agriculture.

Our values

- To act on the best interests of our community in everything we do.
- To respect and value the contribution our community, stakeholders and industry partners bring to FFN.
- To be an honest, credible and transparent organization.

The environment: Our strategic intent and strategy drivers

The number of young people working in Australian agriculture has been gradually declining

Over the last thirty years there has been a gradual decline in the number of young people working in agriculture. The Commonwealth Government's Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper argues that this decrease is due to the fewer opportunities for young farmers in particular to enter agriculture as a result of:

- the decreasing number of Australian farms, accompanied by increased average farm size and purchase price, leaving fewer opportunities for young people to acquire land and enter agriculture

- a decrease in the rate of exit from farming amongst farmers aged over 65, with the population of farmers aged over 65 increasing by 55 per cent since 1991
- a fall in the recruitment of the youngest farmers (under 25 years) relative to the recruitment of other entrants, as longer years are spent in education (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014).

The Green Paper also notes the perceived lack of career path and ability to transfer skills as further barriers to young people entering careers in agriculture.

It is critical that we support the next generation

The last three decades have been a period of significant change and ongoing adjustment across the Australian agriculture industry, as we have transitioned from a low to high cost exporter and terms of trade and total factor productivity growth have both declined. The resulting structural adjustment has seen the gap between high and low performing businesses widen across the industry.

Young Australians working in agriculture now face greater levels of risk and complexity associated with greater climactic volatility, the emergence of new types of technology, and reforms to water markets and statutory marketing authorities.

The knowledge and skills that members of the agriculture industry require to stay competitive are growing ever more sophisticated and diverse.

Attracting and supporting the next generation of new farmers is therefore critical to “safeguarding the transfer of knowledge and expertise to future generations and to reinvigorating the sector with fresh talent, ideas and enthusiasm” (Commonwealth of Australia, 2014).

Young farmers are already shaping the future of Australian agriculture

Recent research suggests that attitudes, preferences and ambitions of young farmers in Australia are different from those of their older peers. The characteristics of young Australians working in agriculture include (Barr, 2014; UMR Research, 2012):

- **Broader aspirations** – the aspirations of the next generation of farmers are being set by the expectations of their peers, rather than the income of their parents. These expectations are less geographically and industry-bound than in previous generations, as younger farmers are now starting their careers later after longer periods of pre-farming education and employment where they are able to mix with a wide range of peers and have a more global focus.
- **Better and more widely educated** – increasingly, young people from farming families and backgrounds are pursuing tertiary qualifications in a diverse range of fields. Historically, studies would be in agricultural sciences and other agrifood related courses. However, increasingly, many young farmers are gaining formal qualifications in non-specialised courses such as economics, business or science. These farmers will sometimes pursue early careers in areas tangential to farming such as commodity trading or agribusiness banking, building a sophisticated understanding of business and markets which they apply once they return to farming later in their careers.
- **More receptive to new technology** – younger farmers have been raised in a society more globalised and connected than any of their predecessors. Similarly, they are more amenable to electronic channels of communication to share farm capability information.
- **Better connected through non-traditional and informal networks** – young farmers tend to have multiple non-traditional networks which are not limited by physical boundaries. These farmers are generally technologically savvy, well-travelled and better networked into urbanite colleagues than older generations of farmers.

- **More open to risk and growth** – the current generation of young farmers are less likely to have dependents than farmers of the same age in previous generations. This enables them to be both more mobile and to take greater risks in career risks.

Our three areas of focus

The work of Future Farmers Network will focus on three strategic priorities:

1. **Connect:** Facilitate dialogue and networks between our community
2. **Empower:** Support our community to access relevant knowledge
3. **Advocate:** Give voice to the aspirations and needs of our community

For us to remain a sustainable organisation that is working on behalf of all young people in the agricultural sector we must also actively expand our membership and community, evolve our partnerships and evaluate our activities.

Strategic Priorities

Connect

1. Facilitate dialogue and networks between our community

- Facilitate and promote targeted program of events
- Cultivate our virtual networks
- Provide a platform for our community to connect
- Execute a targeted communications strategy

Empower

2. Support our community to access relevant knowledge

- Aggregate and disseminate topical information
- Provide platforms for our community to share their knowledge
- Implement scholarship program to enable our community to further their knowledge
- Raise awareness of industry opportunities

Advocate

3. Give a voice to the aspirations and needs of our community

- Conduct annual 'Young People in Agriculture' survey
- Conduct and disseminate targeted research
- Contribute to relevant policy conversations
- Foster relationships with industry, government and stakeholders
- Provide a platform for our community to advocate their aspirations

Enablers

Develop

Enhance the coverage of our membership base and community

Collaborate

Evolve our relationships with industry and government

Evaluate

Ensure that our community are deriving value from our network

Sustain

Be a financially viable and sustainable organisation, with robust corporate governance measures ensuring transparency and accountability to our community, stakeholders and industry partners

Key Activities	Measures of success
SPA 1: Connect	
<i>Facilitate dialogue and networks between our community</i>	Facilitate and promote a targeted series of events including Youth Ag Council, Young Beef Producers Forum, Southern Red Meat Producers Forum and Future of Farming Week.
	Cultivate our virtual networks in order to enhance our broader community by introducing a regional champions program.
	Ensure FFN’s digital platforms are relevant, functional and utilised as vital tools by our community.
	Execute a targeted communications strategy through the delivery of robust KPI’s.
SPA 2: Empower	
<i>Support our community to access relevant knowledge</i>	Aggregate and disseminate topical information and opportunities that are relevant to our community and become a vital source of information.
	Encourage our community to share knowledge and information ensuring that our community has input to the conversation and are able to assist each other in their professional development.
	Implement scholarship programs to enable our community to further their professional development.
	Raise awareness of external opportunities ensuring that our community are kept up to date with relevant information.
SPA 3: Advocate	
<i>Give voice to the aspirations and needs of our community</i>	Conduct state of ‘Young People in Agriculture’ survey to provide transparency on the views of the FFN community.
	Provide a platform to communicate and connect the views of our community.
	Contribute to relevant policy conversations advocating on behalf of our community.
	Evolve relationships with government and industry organisations by representing our community’s voice and ensuring that FFN is sought for information and collaboration.

Enabler 1: Develop	
<i>Increase the coverage of our membership base and community</i>	Evolve FFN's membership categories to ensure that the FFN maintains the reach required for its continuous improvement.
	Evolve FFN's community to ensure that the FFN maintains the reach required for its continuous improvement.
Enabler 2: Collaborate	
<i>Evolve our relationships with industry and government</i>	Ensure that our community and partners are receiving a reciprocal return on their investment.
	Source new industry partners that ensure our community are receiving a return on their investment.
	Evolve relevant relationships that provide benefit to the FFN community.
Enabler 3: Evaluate	
<i>Ensure that our community is deriving value from our network</i>	Evaluate FFN's performance and its value to the FFN community to ensure the organisation remains relevant.
	Evaluate partnership involvement to ensure that FFN remains relevant.
	Evaluate FFN's strategy annually to ensure that the organisation remains relevant and committed to long-term sustainability.
Enabler 4: Sustain	
<i>Be a financially viable and sustainable organisation, with robust corporate governance measures ensuring transparency and accountability to members, stakeholders and industry partners</i>	FFN will adopt best practice corporate governance processes ensuring up to date organisational policies and procedures are in place.
	Establish a long-term financial strategy to ensure the longevity of the organisation.
	FFN will adopt best practice employment initiatives to ensure an enjoyable, fair and productive workplace that encourages and supports employee's professional development.

References

Barr, N., 2014. *New entrants to Australian agricultural industries: Where are the young farmers?*, Canberra: Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation.

Commonwealth of Australia, 2014. *Agricultural Competitiveness Green Paper*, Canberra: Commonwealth of Australia.

UMR Research, 2012. *Farm Capability Study*, Wellington: UMR Research.