

Future grain leaders line up

Until recently, the \$10 billion Australian grains industry had no proactive way of identifying and nurturing the individuals who would go on to meet the industry's future challenges.

In response to this, and in a first of its kind, Grain Growers Association (GGA) launched the Australian Future Grain Leaders Program to find these future leaders and equip them with the skills and knowledge to take the grains industry forward.

With the inaugural intake for the program recently completed, 15 potential future leaders met in Albury, NSW to review their involvement in the program.

The participants, from across Australia and from all areas of the supply chain, include growers, researchers, traders, consultants and agribusiness professionals.

Leadership in action

The three day workshop in Albury allowed program participants to explore their leadership potential as well as develop their communications skills. The cornerstone of this program, which sets it apart from others, is that it supports leadership in action, with participants setting their own integrated industry leadership project to work towards.

Participants met with grains industry leaders including GGA Director Dan Mangelsdorf and Deb McLucas, founder of the Future Farmers Network to talk about their vision for the future of the grains industry in Australia, leadership in the industry and how to tackle their individual projects.

Shane Azzi, Supply Chain Manager from Mars Petcare was on hand to provide a business perspective to the issue of leadership in the grains industry and organised a visit to the factory in Wodonga.

GGA Chairman John Eastburn said the face to face meeting of all the program participants was a great start to the challenge ahead.

"It was encouraging to see such enthusiasm from those selected to take part in the first intake of the Australian Future Grain Leaders Program.

"GGA is proud to support the future leaders of the grains industry so they have the skills and knowledge to meet any challenges that arise," John said.

During the upcoming months of activity, the future grain leaders will visit with industry leaders, tour successful businesses, meet leading entrepreneurs and hear the latest in research.

Mel Taylor, General Manager of the Na-



Program participants – Top row L-R: Peter Flottmann (CEO, GGA), Royce Taylor, Heidi Cheney, Daniel Cooper, James Nalder, James Caracoussis, Helen Richardson, James Hamilton, Arthur Gearon, Alistair Murdoch, Georgina Whiting, Thomas Saint, Mel Taylor, John Eastburn. Bottom row L-R: Lauren West, Mark Swift, Katrina Swift, Josh Taylor.

tional Grower Register based in Queensland is part of the program's inaugural intake. She says the program appealed to her because as she was relatively new to the grains industry it gave her the opportunity to develop both her personal skills and industry know-how.

In her individual project Mel will scope and develop an industry-wide traceability tool to meet emerging needs for Quality Assurance of grain.

"I have a tremendously challenging project ahead of me which requires solid leadership skills to bring together industry participation.

"At the end of the program I'm hoping to have full scope of the project complete with an implementation plan that I can use for ongoing industry discussions and to gain strategic buy-in," Mel said.

Next stepping stone

Grain grower Daniel Cooper from Purlabooka, NSW has been actively involved in GGA's young grower network and saw the Australian Future Grain Leaders Program as the next stepping stone to further his grains industry involvement.

"I was encouraged to apply for the program to improve my own leadership skills and hopefully be able to have a positive influence on the grains industry moving forward from the single desk," Daniel said.

Daniel's integrated leadership project

will address grain market opportunities for bags and containerised grain into Asia

"The workshop in Albury helped me start to put the jigsaw puzzle together but I think it is going to take the full length of the program for me to get results.

"When the program is complete I'll be in a better position to bring positive dialogue and improved leadership skills to the grains debate.

"It's important that the Australian grains industry now streamline and consolidate the way it approaches representing growers. We need grower representatives with appropriate skills and knowledge, and this is what the Australian Future Grain Leaders Program is helping to make sure happens.

Other program participants are looking at projects such as promoting the grains industry as a career choice, developing a communication strategy for researchers in the Australian pulse industry, improving communications between growers and traders and encouraging young growers to become more involved in the grains industry.

The program is being designed and delivered by Jo Eady at RuralScope Pty Ltd with project management from Heidi Cheney, Senior Membership Liaison Officer at GGA.

The 2008 intake of the Australian Future Grain Leaders Program will conclude their work in July 2009. ■