



Newsletter

September 2008

Farm Writers' Association of NSW Inc
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Market reaction to Woolmark re-launch

Brian van Rooyen's first five months as Chairman of Australian Wool Innovation has resulted in a new strategic direction for a global R&D and marketing company.

He's a forthright leader who's not afraid to tell the media the way he sees things.

Some of the media coverage has been positive, with the re-launch of the iconic Woolmark Brand and a fresh \$120 million marketing strategy for the industry focusing on the Australian Merino and Superior Merino Brands. Some of it mysterious, with talk of another mulesing alternative in the wings. And some of it has been confronting with news reports of conflicts of interest among some AWI Board members.

Three new independent non executive directors Dr John Keniry, Ken Boundy and Robyn Clubb will face shareholders for the first time at the November Board election which is shaping up as the most important election in years.

At our September seminar Brian van Rooyen will be talking about market reaction to the re-launch of Woolmark, his vision for marketing Australian Merino, and what he thinks the strategic issues growers should be considering when assessing candidates at the 2008 AGM.

Event details are below, book now to secure your seat at the September seminar.



Brian van Rooyen, AWI Chairman

John Porter on the future of regional media

Austar Chief Executive John Porter, will present his views on the future media landscape in rural Australia, at the Farm Writers' October seminar.

This promises to be a popular event, so put a note in your diary for Friday 31 October.

Australian photographer wins IFAJ Star Prize

Victorian photographer Mike Dugdale has won the prestigious 2008 IFAJ Star Prize for Agricultural Photography. Mike's entry was selected from 118 entries representing the world's best rural photographers in 18 countries.

The Geelong photographer's shot was of a sheep leaping out of an arena during a working dog trial. One Star Prize judge commented, "no other photo can compete with this".

Register early and online for the September seminar, Friday 26th September.

Please note the booking deadline of 5pm Monday 22 September

Corporate members of the month: Schute Bell Badgerly Lumby

Venue: The Menzies Hotel, 14 Carrington St, Sydney

When: Friday 26th September 12pm (with lunch starting as usual at 12.30pm)

Cost: \$60 per head or voucher, for members. \$70 per head for all non-members

Register: BEFORE 5:00pm on Monday 22 September 2008
online: www.nswfarmwriters.org, email: bookings@nswfarmwriters.org

Reminder: If bookings are not cancelled by the deadline, the person making the booking will be invoiced. We will do our best to accommodate late bookings and cancellations – please phone Nicole Tyzack on 0400 800 704

Change afoot at Elders

Despite healthy revenue Elders has an “inappropriate business model” for the challenges facing the company and is therefore embarking on a change program representing the “largest investment program in the company’s history”, Managing Director Mike Guerin told Farmwriters at the August lunch.

Mr Guerin said the company was refocusing on its core Australian and NZ business, getting closer to customers and dealing with like-looking customers in a similar way. No single model was suitable for this, he said, and up to 20 distinct regional models were anticipated.

Those in the audience hoping for a hint on the progress of their application for one of the numerous jobs on offer were disappointed though, with no mention being made.

Mr Guerin said Elders even hoped to begin opening new stores and was experimenting with a franchise model on the Eyre Peninsula in South Australia.

In a wide ranging look at the challenges facing Australian agriculture, Mr Guerin discussed farm ownership, genetically modified crops, greenhouse gas issues, biofuels, infrastructure and the shortage of labour.

He said the need for GM crops was self-evident, with no opportunity to increase farm areas and a need for more productive and efficient methods to increase yields. He also saw large opportunities for agriculture arising from measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

On the labour front, Mr Guerin said Elders is offering traineeships to year ten students to ensure it has a supply of potential staff.

Referring to infrastructure, Mr Guerin said he was proud that Elders had been awarded a grain export licence. To ensure it had the ability to move grain, a contract has been signed with a trucking company that will ensure it can still be moved if rail facilities are not available. This will also address locations where rail corridors cannot be accessed.

Apart from grain, he referred to export opportunities for dairy cattle, with Russia aiming to be self-sufficient in dairy products within ten years. It is therefore importing 50,000 dairy heifers per year and is not too concerned about how much it pays for them.

Mr Guerin said he was optimistic about agriculture, suggesting farmers terms of trade will improve in the period 2009 to 2013 although risks will increase as a result of higher input costs.

Mike Guerin commenced as Managing Director in March 2008 after a background in banking, including Head of Rural Banking at the ANZ. He originates from a farm in New Zealand and retains a particularly biased view about a certain rugby team.

Ditching undies and socks for Aussie beef wins award for MLA

Meat & Livestock Australia’s Damon Whittock has taken out the 2008 Farm Writers’ media release award. The winning media release used a catchy heading and opening paragraph to gather attention in order to promote the essence of the media release – the success of MLA’s Aussie Beef marketing efforts in Japan in the lead-up to Father’s Day. This media release was used in over 30 newspapers across Australia, ranging from metropolitan newspapers, all state rural weekly newspapers and rural/regional newspapers. Several radio interviews with MLA staff were also generated as a result of this media release.



The media release highlighted an interesting event in another country that not many Australian’s would know about, whilst at the same time providing a strong link back to Australia.

As the media release explained, Father’s Day is the second highest beef sales period in Japan after Christmas and Aussie Beef experiences a huge boost in sales during this period – a very positive thing for all Australian cattle producers.

The media release successfully blended a quirky theme with effective promotion of an event and useful statistics – all very important in making a media release newsworthy. It appealed to journalists and the public alike because it offered up any interesting, newsworthy topic that also directly related to those on the land.

Check out the winning release at www.mla.com.au/newscentre

Farm Day 2009 already looking big

Deb Bain, founder of Farm Day has had yet another hit with city families, with research carried out following the last event finding 90% of city respondents now have a better understanding of the role of farming. In August last year Deb outlined to Farm Writers why Farm Day works so well.

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