



Rabobank

*Media release
February 24, 2014*

Leading farm business management program calls for 2014 applications

Applications for this year's Rabobank's prestigious **Executive Development Program** are officially open. The program – which gives leading farmers from across Australia and New Zealand the opportunity to enhance their business management skills and take their enterprises forward – is open for applications for its 2014 course, commencing in August.

Announcing the opening of applications for the 2014 program, Rabobank CEO New Zealand Ben Russell said farm management had evolved to become much more commercially focused than in the past, making it necessary for producers to think more strategically about how they run their operations.

"Today, farmers are becoming more commercial in their business management – primary producers have to think more strategically, manage many risks and develop their people skills and capability – and a big part of that evolution is investing in themselves in order to benefit their business," Mr Russell said.

"The core of the Executive Development Program is to focus on the commercial and strategic factors that farmers face today. They're getting bigger, more commercial, business-focused, with more employees working for them than ever before."

The program, run in two separate modules over the course of one full year introduces participants to the latest practices in business management, leadership, strategy, finance, human resources, value chain management and marketing, and how these can be directly applied to their farm businesses.

"The reality is running an agricultural enterprise is extremely complex, no matter the sector. We need to recognise that across the agricultural industry," Mr Russell said.

"We will continue to invest in the knowledge of our clients – a vital component of business success – and provide them with access to the latest management tools to assist in making informed business decisions."

Guy Goodeve, general manager of the Castlerock Farming Company – a 1,640 hectare mixed farming enterprise of sheep, beef, deer and dairy support – completed the Executive Development Program last year.

With plans to develop and expand the farm enterprise, Mr Goodeve said he wanted to invest in his management skills and capability in order to take Castlerock Farming Company to the "next level".

"During the Executive Development Program, I basically put one week aside to put everything I knew about the business on paper, to formulate a strategic business plan that would help take our company forward," he said.



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“The lessons of the Rabobank program helped me to get these ideas and goals together, which I then presented to our advisory board back on-farm.

“At first glance, some of the figures and targets I had projected to our board were taken as almost ‘over-ambitious’, but now, 18 months later, now we’re getting pretty close to the bulk of my targets and new targets are being set.”

Through his learnings from the Rabobank Executive Development Program, Mr Goodeve said it became clear that he had been spending too much time “in the business, not on the business”.

“As a result, we have a development program underway across the business at the moment which is taking place in several stages, so planning is a big focus right now as we manage that progress,” he said.

“We have GPS-mapped everything and we’re currently building a pivot irrigator with four more to follow. We are working our way through harvesting the pine trees converting the back country into cropping and grass. This expansion will continue into 2014.”

Castlerock currently winters 1050 dairy cows, 2,800 breeding ewes, 500 breeding hinds and 220 South Devon breeding cows plus all young replacement stock, with a breeding and finishing focus. In 2013, more than 1000 calves have hit the ground and the dairy unit has continued to expand.

“You need to put that time aside, think ahead, plan ahead and review what you’ve done, what you could have done better, and challenge yourself,” he said.

“As farmers, you risk ending up in a rut doing the same thing as you did last year and you can miss opportunities if you’re not challenging what you’re doing.

“There are big opportunities in farming to get where you want to be and keep getting better. Go and find that extra 10 per cent, produce 10 per cent more, find those gains by cost cutting here or value-adding there. You need to capitalise on the opportunities when they do come.”

Applications for Rabobank’s 2014 Executive Development Program are open until Friday 30 May 2014, with applicants accepted from across a range of commodities and geographical locations in Australia and New Zealand. Held in Sydney, the first module runs from 17 to 22 August 2014, with the second module taking place in July of next year.

Producers interested in an application form or any further information on the Rabobank Executive Development Program should visit www.rabobank.co.nz/bmp or contact Rabobank Business Programs manager Nerida Sweetapple on +61 2 8115 4139 or email nerida.sweetapple@rabobank.com.au.

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Rabobank New Zealand is a part of the international Rabobank Group, the world's leading specialist in food and agribusiness banking. Rabobank has more than 110 years' experience providing customised banking and finance solutions to businesses involved in all aspects of food and agribusiness. Rabobank is structured as a cooperative operates in 42 countries, servicing the needs of approximately 10 million clients worldwide through a network of more than 1600 offices and branches. Rabobank New Zealand is one of the country's leading rural lenders and a significant provider of business and corporate banking and financial services to the New Zealand food and agribusiness sector. The bank has 32 branches throughout New Zealand.

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