

# Resilient systems provide flexibility

A lot has happened in the 12 months since I wrote the foreword for the December 2008 edition of *Future Farm*. Back then, the storm clouds had gathered with politicians and experts warning us to hold on because the Australian economy was in for a bumpy ride. As we know now, the Global Financial Crisis did not hit Australia as hard as predicted.

Australian farmers did not fare so well. After enjoying high wheat prices in 2008, there was a steep decline in wheat prices during 2009. At the same time the value of the Australian dollar soared to put real pressure on farmers' terms of trade. Many parts of Australia continued to experience difficult conditions will some areas still declared drought affected.

Over the last few years, sheep numbers have been on a steady decline resulting in Australia having the smallest national flock in more than one hundred years – potentially limiting

farmers' options for managing the now obvious variability and risk they face.

In this edition, we examine what has caused this alarming decline in the national flock and discuss its significance to Australian broadacre farming and what can be done about it. In the face of these business risks farmers tell their own stories about what they have done to adopt new ways to diversify their mixed enterprises and gain a greater economic resilience by being more flexible to market forces.

Through the development of new perennial-based technologies and systems, the Future Farm Industries CRC has a key role in achieving this goal by helping farmers respond creatively to short term and long term market trends. The incorporation of perennials into farm enterprises also provides other economic and environmental dividends that in the long term reduce costs while creating new opportunities.

A good way to find out what perennial plants can do for your business is to read the stories that lie ahead in this edition of *Future Farm* magazine. These stories show the variety of ways that perennials can be added to farming systems throughout southern Australia and the many benefits they bring. Their willingness to give things a go and try something different has rewarded these farmers with more stability and certainty in a time of change both environmentally and economically – stories that I hope will inspire change. With that in mind, I encourage you to turn the page and read on.

**Kevin Goss**  
FFI CRC Chief Executive Officer



Read about the successes producers across varied landscapes are achieving with perennial pastures and shrubs inside this issue of *Future Farm*.

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For further information, contact FFI CRC on:  
T: (08) 6488 8559  
E: [enquiry@futurefarmcrc.com.au](mailto:enquiry@futurefarmcrc.com.au)  
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## OUR COVER

Lyn and David Mathwin have discovered the value of matching the right plant with the right place in their farming system.

- See full story page 6.

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