

1.

Thanks ?. I'm going to explain how incorporating products like POAMA into my farm decision making has improved my farms profitability, and the flow on effects of healthier animals and better landcare.

We have 11,000ha in the Quorn area of the Flinders Ranges – we being myself, my husband Ben and our youngest son – who's also called Ben. We run up to 7000 merinos for wool and meat. Quorn is marginal cropping country. Ave 300 millimetres around the hills but most of our country is on a plain where the rainfall drops to about 250mm.

2.

I **often** say I got married under false pretences, as in the late 1980's the country looked like this, then the 90's looked like this most of the time! I decided to find out more about why our seasons seemed to be changing, so I did some Climate Risk Management courses through SARDI run by Melissa Rebeck and I got to know Australia's climate drivers. But after the disaster of the 2006 drought I really got serious and did further research on the internet & by going to any meetings on climate that I could. I met my mentors this way – Prof Gary Meyers via the internet and Darren Ray from the Adelaide Bureau. I started to follow coupled & ensemble forecast models via websites from Japan, Korea & Europe, and then later POAMA.

Before we began to **sow** a crop in 2007, I told Ben the signs were there for it to be another dry year, and we should be careful. This was the initial response!

3.
But once I had explained the reasoning behind it: which was another positive Indian ocean dipole, we decided to act on this information.

4.

We knew that **doing** the same things at the same time in the same way just wasn't getting us anywhere, so we began to incorporate seasonal forecast info into our decision making. In 2010 I became one of the Climate Champion Program participants and so I was able to utilize the POAMA 2 website. As we are such a marginal cropping area we have to be fairly certain it's going to be worth our while, so I came up with a decision making matrix, which I fill in as the year progresses.

5.

I get a consensus of all the seasonal forecast models and keep tabs on the Southern Oscillation Index & Indian Ocean Dipole. But Climate information is just one tool in my decision making toolbox – I always have to consider other things like sub soil moisture, and commodity prices. Sometimes it just might not be worthwhile sowing wheat for example, plus I factor in fertilizer & diesel prices, & our cashflow.

Click! This is how it looked for 2010. In March the early predictions were saying it would be ok year with an above average finish. This sounded great but we had to consider a lack of sub-soil moisture that year. By the time we got an opening rain the forecasts had updated, and now said we could have a dry spell in winter, a good finish, but a wet harvest. So we decided to only sow conservatively for 3 reasons – lack of sub soil moisture, the possibility of a dry winter, and a wet harvest. We had a wet harvest in 93 and it was awful trying to reap and sell ruined grain, so we wanted to avoid that.

So we did indeed get a dry spell in winter, but I wasn't too worried about the crop as I knew that a La Nina had formed and that this could potentially mean a good finish.

6.

Also a predicted negative Indian Ocean Dipole did occur so I knew we were probably in for a very wet harvest. So our decision making in September revolved around how we could harvest as quickly as possible, so when we had an opportunity to buy a neighbours header we bought it so that we had 2 headers going. The upshot of all of this was that by sowing less acreage, we were able to harvest quickly before the rain ruined the grain, & so thanks to early warnings of a La Nina/negative IOD combo, we made **very** profitable decisions. In fact, **I could** say that thanks to POAMA Ben bought a truck and I had the kitchen renovated!

7.

The last 2 years weren't quite as successful, as we relied too much on having sub-soil moisture, and didn't take enough notice of POAMA's seasonal forecast. This year we had sowed conservatively again, but it was a very dry year. I also watch the Madden-Julien Oscillation, and the sub-tropical ridge, and the only time that both of these were in favourable positions for us was the second week of July. So although the growing season was disappointing, knowing why it wasn't raining helped us handle it.

8.

So that's our cropping story, but we are principally sheep graziers. Having such a big acreage with varying rainfall has its advantages, like when we get thunderstorm events the upshot could be that some paddocks may grow abundant feed while others don't so it gives us flexibility to move sheep around so that we don't overgraze.

As farmers our **aim** is of-course, like any business, to make money, but we can only do this if we look after our country and have as much feed as possible, then we can grow better sheep.

So how does POAMA help with our grazing decisions?

By looking at seasonal forecasts we can make early decisions to either maybe buy in some more sheep if it looks like we'll have good feed, or if it looks like we're in for a dry spell we can either move sheep, or sell some or maybe start up the feedlot to finish the lambs. So Forewarned is forearmed.

Multi week forecasts can give us a heads up for animal health issues such as flystrike for example when hot and wet weather is coming.

And it has been very profitable using seasonal forecasts for when to put our rams in. The last 2 years the forecasts were for wet summers meaning we knew we would probably have more feed in Autumn than winter and so we lambed early onto good feed. Percentages have been the best we've ever had.

9.

So the results of using seasonal and multi week forecasts have been: better cover on our paddocks, fatter sheep, increased wool cut & improved lambing all adding up to making us and the bank manager happy!

Making money **is** important but so is peace of mind, and we've found if we understand **why** it's **not** going to rain for example, then we can get our heads around it and start making plans. Then when we're in the thick of it we know we've done everything we possibly can, and that brings peace of mind.

10.

So to finish up, I want to thank the Bureau for this opportunity to show you how farmers like myself can benefit from your work.

CLICK

This is a bit corny, but POAMA really can help farmers weather the storm! Thankyou!