

An Australian farmer's perspective, 26th February, 2010

Hi Hamish, I did check out your website [www.biodynamics2024.com.au](http://www.biodynamics2024.com.au) - very good - but I didn't have time to read it all - will do that at a later date - WHEN I've got more time!

Here in the Victorian Goulburn Valley there is very little interest in organics etc. - we have people saying how they like organic food, "You're doing the right things etc." - but NEVER the farmers, they're just going on their 'merry' way! And one old time farmer told me a while back that organics was "all poppy cock"!! Then added: "That's how we farmed years ago!" He also has had a long battle against cancer! My husband commented later: "They stopped doing it - that's the problem"

Also dairy farmers are disappearing FAST in this area - where we are was ALL irrigated dairying - now we're one of THREE left.

As well as the dairy farmers dropping like flies, the orchardists are having an EXTREMELY hard time (along with the viticulturists) as apart from the water problems (we've currently got 57% of our Water Allocation - but have to pay for 100% - this is the fourth consecutive year of a similar scenario).

The water charge is paying for our share of the "storage" (& channel maintenance etc.). If the water's not there to give us a full allocation - what are we storing? We are charged storage for High Reliability Water Shares and less for Low Reliability Water Shares storage (we've not had ANY Low Reliability water for MANY years - I'd bet over 10 - at least) - and then a smaller "delivery" charge - when we actually take water through the outlet!! We have received a bit of government assistance for the first 3 years of this 4 years terrible stretch - but this year absolutely NOTHING!! The other 3 years, we still paid for a lot of water we didn't receive. Victorian Premier, John Brumby, said "A large percentage (75% I think) of their (the farmers) water bills were paid" - but they were the hobby farmers, retired people with 2 megs. of water, small orchardists - those of us with larger Water Rights, usually employing people, commercial farms, still paid for a LOT of water we didn't receive! But his figures looked good!!!

The fruit cannery is now owned by Coca-Cola - (and you can imagine how much empathy they have with the fruit growers) - and they are bringing in fruit in LARGE drums from China, South Africa etc. - and don't want much of the local fruit at all. So if the poor fruit growers actually grow the fruit, they can't sell it - other than some to the fresh market and that can't take it all. If we drive around here anywhere - there are large piles of bulldozed fruit trees, waiting for the time to burn them - just unbelievable.

Beef has also CRASHED - BUT as from next Monday we'll allow beef to come in from countries which have Mad Cow disease!! An example was given recently - the meat in your pie can be from one such country, the pastry and packaging from Australia and it's legally allowed to be called "Product of Australia"! Glory, we're a ridiculous country!! We're being told that all systems, procedures etc. will be followed and it's all "safe" - but yesterday a qualified vet told of the procedures - simply ticking boxes - NOT by actually testing!

Grain prices have also CRASHED, as the northern hemisphere had a bumper crop and basically the rest of the world didn't care whether Australia produced any grain or not.

And you've probably already heard about the milk prices - they dropped by 40% last February - but have started to climb up a BIT now - almost getting up to the cost of production! With such low water allocations, paying for water we don't receive and then having to buy more on the exchange (where other farmers often sell their water or water authorities with surplus water) low milk prices, red tape, IR laws etc. MANY farmers have "had ENOUGH. " In the Leitchville area (population 271) the Murray Goulburn Cheese factory has recently closed ("to be moth balled") and 80 people have lost their jobs. One man said that IF he can get a job in another area, he won't be able to sell his house anyway! So many people have stopped milking that there simply isn't enough milk to keep the factories operating! Under utilisation of the Tatura plant a few years back caused them to lose over \$6 million in one year - and that is why Bega now own the controlling share.

The ONLY thing going well in agriculture is fat lambs - and that's because no-one's got any or many!! The sheep flock is down so far, that they're calling on people not to sell too much and to retain extra for breeding. An old ewe (not long back worth \$8) is now selling for \$90 and is now sought after by people hoping to get her still to breed.

As the grain prices were so LOW this year and many crops failed due to the weather (lack of rain, late frosts etc.) MANY farmers put that into hay - and there's (literally) not enough stock left to eat it all. Farmers are left with thousands of rolls of hay. We personally know of several with 4,000, 2,000, 3000

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rolls and they don't know what to do with it, as soon they need to get it off the paddocks to start getting ready to sow again.

Grapes are well below the cost of production - and there's a glut - we're all being told - and that's true - BUT there is a lot of cheap wine coming in from overseas, being 'blended' with Aussie grown and then being sold as "Product of Australia"

China is now into milk production - and can get a tanker of fresh milk to Australia in 9 hours. At present they've got BIG quality problems - but are offering to pay Australian farmers BIG money to go over there and show them how to do it. They're also milking the heifers that Australian cash strapped farmers have sold to them previously!

What next?

The Goulburn Valley was called the "Food Bowl" - now it's rapidly becoming the Dust Bowl. The 3 of us left milking in our own area are all struggling - so how much longer do we keep doing this? We think if we go a bit longer, we'll become a tourist attraction - we'll say; "farms like this is where your milk came from, before we started importing it from overseas - China etc.!!"

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