

GRAIN & GRAZE 2 CASE STUDY

Relative advantage: Using the knowledge in the room

*Written by Danielle England, Project Officer, Grain & Graze
(May 2012)*

Profile

Nathaniel O'Hare

Company: Planfarm

Position title: Farm Consultant

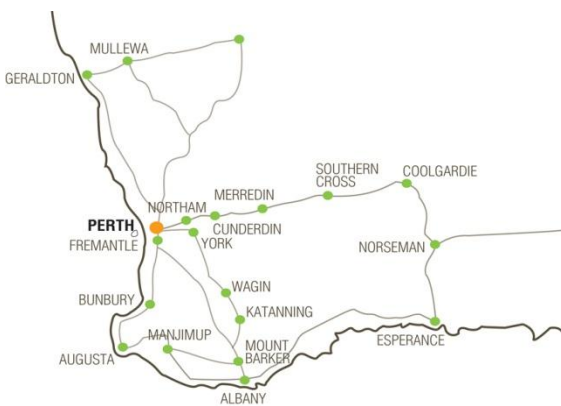
Location: Perth

When Nathaniel O'Hare was asked to speak about expanding farm businesses in the York region to the Living Farm benchmarking group at their annual review, he knew he wasn't the only person with this type of experience in the room.

"They are all good growers, with many of the group members' successfully buying land, share farming, leasing or investing off-farm," he said.

"If I was to get up there and tell them how to do it, I would have got it 80% wrong and only 20% right. Each of them has found a business expansion scenario that suited them, their family and their business."

Nathaniel also reflected on his position in the 'line-up'. "I was asked to speak after lunch, and followed a bank manager and a presentation of the farm group's trial data in the morning. I didn't think the group would want two financial speakers in a row".



Nathaniel decided to give a small presentation on each of the proposed options; leasing, purchasing or share farming around York versus further east in the WA wheat belt. He then broke the group into small groups and asked them to look at three 'live' scenarios (real-life opportunities available at the time of presenting);

1. a 1,200ha lease in York;
2. a 3,000ha lease in Quairading; and
3. a 3,000ha purchase in Tammin.

The groups were asked to list the tangible benefits and costs and the intangible benefits and costs.

"It worked a treat! It got everyone talking and sharing their experiences", he said.

"Trying to give everyone a turn was like juggling balls. I tried to give everyone the chance to give their insight and to make sure we got everyone's views.

“Unfortunately, it was quite disempowering for me, as you have little or no control over the group, or their answers, and you can’t position yourself as a source of knowledge. However, I was able to bring in my expertise when they started talking about capital gain benefits in purchasing land, and we discussed the Rural Watch data from Landgate and I was able to discuss land values around York versus further east.”

There were also another couple of times where Nathaniel was able to share his knowledge around farm business management.

“Next time I’d probably spend more time preparing and have some localised enterprise gross margin data available from the Planfarm benchmarks. As a predominantly agronomy focused group, they liked to talk about enterprise profitability rather than whole-farm profitability.”

By using everyone in the room as the trainer, Nathaniel admitted he was able to move from logical to lateral thinking to solve the problem, and he presented a different way of analysing the business growth opportunities for the members of the farmer group to what would normally be presented.



Acknowledgments



The Grain & Graze 2 project is supported by GRDC and DAFF through funding from the Australian Government’s Caring for our Country Programme.



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