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## RFCS future focus

August 2008 no. 24

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### Carbon Neutral RFCS Conference

As part of the Adelaide Convention Centre's Go for Green Program, the Office of Rural Financial Counselling offset the estimated 96 tonnes of carbon dioxide emissions generated by the conference through the planting of native trees. Carbonneutral, who were engaged to organise the planting have already grown over 30 million trees in Australia.

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### ABS Release of Farming Families Article

On 12 August the ABS released further information collected from the 2006 Census of Population and Housing on Farming Families in Australia.

The key findings outlined in the article included:

- ⇒ A trend to decreasing numbers of farming families in Australia was reflected in all states and territories, with the smallest decrease in the Northern Territory (1%) and the greatest decrease in Queensland (13%).
- ⇒ 51% of farming families were couples with children. This compares with 45% of all families in Australia. A greater proportion of farming families have a youngest child under 15 years old than the general population. NSW and Queensland had the greatest number of family farmers, i.e. two or more people that are related through blood, marriage (registered or de facto), adoption, step arrangements or fostering that usually reside together.
- ⇒ The median income of farming families was \$1122 per week. Just over half (54%) of farming families had a gross income between \$500 and \$1399 per week and 30% of farming families had a gross income of between \$1400 and \$3999 per week. 3% of farming families reported negative or nil income.
- ⇒ The median age of farmers is 52, a slight increase from 51 as recorded in 2001. Factors that may affect family succession and inheritance of the farm business that can lead to farmers remaining on the farm for a longer period of time include; the impact of assets and income tests on eligibility for pensions, the impact of government taxes, the financial pressure caused by escalating costs, the persistent drought, and the need to preserve the viability of the family business.

The full article can be accessed from the ABS website at <http://www.abs.gov.au/Ausstats/>

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### Climate Change Adjustment Program (CCAP) Exit Grants

Farmers that have chosen to exit agriculture may be eligible to access financial assistance of up to \$150,000 through the Australian Government's Climate Change Adjustment Program. This assistance is targeted to those that have little prospect of achieving long-term viability and therefore need to establish themselves away from their enterprise.

In order to obtain the exit grant the farmer must be in effective control of their property prior to sale. This requirement has been designed to encourage farmers to leave their properties before their asset base is eroded to the point where creditors compulsorily foreclose.

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The intention is not to compensate farmers who delay the decision to leave until the decision has been taken out of their control.

The CCAP Exit Grant guidelines provide a definition of effective control of the property, which may include voluntarily entering into Bankruptcy proceedings. For more information contact the Centrelink Farmer Hotline on 1800 050 585.

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## NEWS

### Changes to Wheat Marketing

As most of you would be aware, the Australian Government has reformed export wheat marketing arrangements. The new arrangements took effect on 1 July 2008.

The Wheat Export Marketing Act 2008 establishes a new independent regulator, Wheat Exports Australia (WEA), which will administer an accreditation scheme to control the export of wheat in bulk. Further information regarding the accreditation process can be found on the [WEA website](#).

A number of [information sessions](#) have already been held by the government in conjunction with state farming organisations, with more scheduled for early September in Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. These sessions provide growers with information about the changes, their impact and the opportunities they provide. Details of when the information sessions will be held can be found at [www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/wheat-sugar-crops/wheat-marketing/grower\\_information\\_sessions](http://www.daff.gov.au/agriculture-food/wheat-sugar-crops/wheat-marketing/grower_information_sessions).

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### Latest information on EC declarations

The Australian Government announced on 19 August that it had accepted all 36 recommendations provided by the National Rural Advisory Council (NRAC) and had agreed to extend assistance for 32 EC-declared areas in NSW, Victoria, Western Australia and South Australia. Details of the announcement can be found in the media release provided by the Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry at [www.maff.gov.au](http://www.maff.gov.au).

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