

services & information for new landholders



Do you own a small property in rural Victoria?

farm diversification decision making - step 1 compatibility

This Information Note discusses how compatibility of an idea is important in decision making.

Ideas that are compatible fit easily with existing practices, knowledge and skills. Compatible ideas require less change to the current household or farm system, and have lower costs. Compatible ideas have less risk of failure.

Your Own Situation

It is important for people to assess any idea from their own point of view. Experience has shown that the most important element of the decision process is the ability of people to assess any idea linked to their own self-interest.

Lifestyle and hobby farms

Lifestyle and hobby farms face a different situation to commercial farms. These small properties are primarily for enjoyment and relaxation or to focus on personal interests. It is important to clarify the purpose of

buying a lifestyle farm before plunging into any enterprise.

If you don't live on the property or cannot be there every day, then you are not well placed to graze animals or grow crops that need constant care.

While many people have enjoyed learning about and participating in new ventures others have faced difficulties, stress and disappointment.

Some Useful Questions

For lifestyle farms it is helpful to ask the following questions:

Are we living on a lifestyle farm to primarily enjoy the environment or to focus on some agricultural activity?

Will we be away from the property for extended periods of time?

How much do we know our proposed venture?

Have we got the time to do the work, especially during the peak seasons for harvesting?

Am I physically able to do the work? What about in 15 years time?

Will we enjoy doing this type of work?

How much will it cost to do this properly?

Do markets exist for the amount of produce I will produce? How far away is the market?

Do I have to spend half my time trying to sell the product?

Are there other things that I would rather be doing?

DEPARTMENT OF PRIMARY INDUSTRIES

Options for Lifestyle/Hobby Farmers

There are many land management options for lifestyle and hobby farmers.

Lease, share farm and agistment agreements

You can enjoy living on your rural property without taking part in farm activities.

Leasing, share farming and agistment agreements allow another farmer to use your land for agricultural purposes. For leasing, share farming and agistment, an agreement should be prepared that defines the terms, conditions and payment. See the Small Property Agistment information note from the services and information for new landholder team on this issue.

These agreements can be helpful when you have just purchased a property and before you commit to a particular activity.

Contracting out labor requirements

If you are involved in an agricultural activity that has regular demands for skilled labour, or for heavy workloads then you may be able to contract out the work. Specialised contractors for jobs associated with land and enterprise management operate in most regional areas.

Bushland conservation and revegetation

For many lifestyle and hobby farmers, the primary attraction of rural living is getting

closer to nature. Many lifestyle properties have significant areas of native vegetation or are close to the bush.

Some people have placed a covenant on their bush property for conservation purposes.

Native bush has a low stock carrying capacity and requires careful management to prevent degradation.

The development of woodlots for firewood or timber plantations can turn re-vegetation into a commercial enterprise in the medium to long term. Using local species of plants will provide both biodiversity benefits and wood production benefits.

Further Information

More information on each aspect of this framework is provided in other information notes.

This information note is part of a series that explores five important aspects of decision making: compatibility, observing, trialing, complexity and resource advantage.

This series has been developed and written by Bruce McGregor, Attwood.

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