**UNDERSTANDING PRODUCTION COSTS TO REMAIN COMPETITIVE**

**CHALLENGE**
Lilliput Ag grows a variety of crops and produces seed for sister-business Baker Seed Co. Lilliput Ag looked to adopt a newer recording platform linked to the cloud to try and track production data. Co-owners Andrew & Sue Russell felt that they had to be able to connect production data to his finance software in order to remain competitive.

**SOLUTION**
Andrew adopted the Agworld platform in 2017. Lilliput's agronomist, Andrew Bell with IK Caldwell, was already using Agworld to record all observations and recommendations, so a lot of data entry was already happening regardless.

**RESULT**
By collaborating with their agronomist on the same platform, Lilliput Ag is able to easily record all critical production data. Planned production data for Lilliput Ag is now available in Agworld so that financial data can directly be derived from it. Lilliput Ag is now able to make better-informed crop management decisions.

“With Agworld, you can easily ring somebody for help or support; that really means something from where I sit. Growers have got so much technology to maintain, you need the high-quality service that Agworld offers to make it all work.”

Andrew Russell
Lilliput Ag, Rutherglen, VIC
Excellence starts with planning

Lilliput Ag is a farming enterprise comprising 2,400 hectares just west of Rutherglen in Victoria. Run by Andrew Russell, it works in unison with sister company Baker Seed Co., run by Co-owners Ashley and Pam Fraser. Lilliput Ag produces seed for wheat, barley, faba beans, triticale, oats, lupins, safflower and canola while Baker Seed Co. focuses on processing and selling this seed to growers. Needless to say, quality requirements are very stringent when producing seed and Lilliput’s agronomic practices and constant quest for data to enable improvements in production, reflect this.

At the start of every season, Mr Russell creates an agronomic plan in Agworld together with his agronomist, Andrew Bell of IK Caldwell in Corowa. Mr Bell explains: “Once we know which varieties of wheat and canola, for example, we are planting that year, we start with a fertiliser plan – this is usually in February. We work out what the total nitrogen requirement will be per hectare and then divide that over the different application times, both up-front and in-crop. We then set our chemical plan, which is based on a worst-case scenario. So, we put every single chemical, snail bait etc. in our plan that we can possibly use, and then we eliminate from there as the season continues. The advantage for us in doing it this way in Agworld is that at all times during the season we can put a potential yield in and see what our hypothetical profit will be, even if the season throws every possible pest and insect at us.”

Capturing data to improve planning

Being able to plan the season ahead as accurately as possible is key for Lilliput Ag, and indeed for most farming enterprises, with the availability of historical data being one of the main prerequisites for accuracy. Mr Russell elaborates: “I’m trying to capture as much data as I can in Agworld so we can dial back our inputs where possible and decrease or costs; when we have more data to reference, we can become more precise with the inputs we apply. We capture all our data in Agworld and one of the features I enjoy most is the ability to enter observations. Because of different crop management tactics or nitrogen levels we might get different results across the farm; observations are really good to help track this kind of information. With Agworld you’ve got this data all available later to reflect on.”
Entering observations in Agworld is not only used by Lilliput Ag however but just as much by their agronomist. Mr Bell: “Storing observations in Agworld is an excellent way to track soil moisture and varietal traits for example. Same for when our crops are getting planted, I can take pictures and enter emergence results which Andrew Russell can then see while still sitting on the tractor, planting another field. This really makes the operation a lot more efficient and lets both of us focus on our jobs without having to run around to different parts of the farm, wasting precious time. I love that I can put plant counts, appearance and all that kind of information in Agworld and add pictures with it too. I use photo’s a lot; a picture is still worth a thousand words!”

Joining the collaborative platform

Lilliput Ag had been using an older software solution for 20 years up until 2017 when Mr. Russell felt the need to advance to a cloud-driven mobile platform and made the change to Agworld. Mr Russell: “When I started to look at upgrading my farm management software, I knew that Andrew Bell was already using Agworld, so the benefit of being able to collaborate with my agronomist on the same platform had me interested immediately. And, I just love being able to capture data on my mobile, wherever I am – and then being able to reference back to that whenever I need to.”

Mr Russell, however, is not the only person in his operation using Agworld, with leading hand Chris Colvin using Agworld as well to receive spray recommendations on his phone for example and converting them to a record of what was done (called ‘actuals’ in Agworld) once the job is completed. Mr Russell: “This is what I see as a great advantage of using Agworld, being able to have everyone on the farm contribute to collecting and entering data and making sure that we’re all on the same page. Another benefit of having Agworld available to everyone is the library contained in it: we can look up labels, tank mixes and any other chemical information we might need. It is a legal requirement to have this all on-hand whenever we use chemicals; Agworld makes sure that we are compliant at all times.”

Future

The Lilliput Ag farms are located in a historically very reliable cropping area with good soil and regular rainfall in most season. Farming here is not without challenges, however, as Mr Bell explains: “Soil pH requires constant monitoring and correction with a liming program due to the historic nature of the Acidic soils in the district and the ongoing fertiliser program of the use of acidifying fertilisers. We have been using a different program for soil testing but are looking forward to using Agworld for this as well from next season onwards. I really want to get a historical view of our Phosphorus levels so we can base our inputs on P replacement and tailor other inputs as well. This is where I see a big future for precision agriculture and programs like Agworld: allowing us to store and analyse the data we need to make informed decisions, about ameliorates for example. We are driving the system hard and need to make sure we keep maintaining it, so we don’t cause problems for the future.”
Lilliput Ag is focused on suitable grain production, both commercial grain and seed production, but the goal of the farm is naturally still the same as any other farming enterprise: creating a profit, and Mr Russell has a very holistic view on this: “In order to remain competitive on the world market, we need to keep our costs down and in order to do that, understanding your cost of production is crucial. To me, big data means that we need to have the medium to connect our production to finance and other parts of the business, so we can make sure we optimise every part of our operation. To me, this is what Agworld offers us: the opportunity to collect and share data on one platform that allows us to make more profitable decisions. In the end, this means that we can be ahead of the game and ensures that we survive and thrive through the season and well into the future.”

**IMPROVING PROFITABILITY IN AGRICULTURE**

**WHAT AGWORLD OFFERS YOU:**

- Collect data at every level in a structured way.
- Easily share data with anyone important to your organization.
- Un-paralleled insights into your operation.
- Empowers you to make more profitable decisions than your peers.

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