CASE STUDY

ERIN VALE FARMING • GALORE, NSW

INTEGRATING KEY ON-FARM TECHNOLOGY

CHALLENGE

Matt and Dan Lane run their 7,500-hectare farming operation, Erin Vale Farming, together with a number of staff and with advice from an agronomist. Because of the sheer scale of the operation, communication between all the different stakeholders was becoming increasingly difficult and at the same time becoming more important.

SOLUTION

Erin Vale Farming implemented Agworld in 2014 as their Farm Management Platform. They connected their account with their Agronomist as well as with all their John Deere machinery and certain key employees.

RESULT

By utilising Agworld as the platform to connect their key stakeholders with each other as well as their John Deere machinery, Matt and Dan have been able to simplify the communication processes and data connectivity within their operation. Because of this improved connectivity, expensive mistakes are being avoided and the ability to view and control costs has improved.

“By using John Deere’s digital technology and Agworld together, I have gained peace of mind that every job gets executed correctly. There’s no doubt in my mind that every dollar we invest in both Agworld and John Deere technology sees a big return in many different ways.”

Matt Lane
Erin Vale Farming, Galore, NSW
A mixed operation in Southern New South Wales

Gerry and Jan Lane started farming at ‘Erin Vale’, Milbrulong, NSW, back in 1966. Fast forward to 2019 and sons Matt & Dan together with their wives and children have taken over the helm and farm both ‘Erin Vale’ as well as ‘Bulgary’ at Galore, NSW. Comprising 7,500 hectares of which 620 are irrigated with bore water, the Lane family now grows a combination of summer- and winter crops and also run some sheep. Summer crops include corn, soybeans and irrigated lucerne while wheat, barley, canola and lentils are grown during the winter months. It is exactly this size and variety of the farming operation, that drove the Lane family to adopt Agworld, according to Matt Lane: “Agworld simplifies my communication with our employees as well as our agronomist; with an operation of our size, you really can’t afford simple mistakes anymore, they’re just too costly.”

Matt continues: “Our agronomist, Neil Durning, will drive around our fields and check our crops, the reports of which he sends back to us through Agworld. So instead of getting information verbally or having to track down pieces of paper further down the line, we have all this communication streamlined into Agworld. As soon as Neil creates a recommendation, I get it on my phone and can check it and make adjustments if needed. From there, I am able to immediately turn the rec into a work order and send it through to our employees as well as to the GS3 system in our sprayers. Just having all this take place on the same platform makes a big difference to us.”

Using technology to tackle noxious weeds

Connecting with their agronomist and employees through Agworld makes a big difference to the Lane family but, when it comes to using technology, thinking outside the box and working with multiple stakeholders on the same project can make a big difference. Matt gives an example: “This year, we saw some abnormalities on the Agworld SVI (Satamap Vegetative Index) layer; some random patches in our cropping fields appeared to have a lot more biomass than other parts of the field. I asked our agronomist Neil about it and he found
that they were large rye grass strips in our cereal crops, which is a big problem for us and very hard to control. So, Neil dropped some points in Agworld, which allowed me to easily go and check out the worst strips myself. I then marked them on a map and sent them through to Andrew Watt, Operations Manager of our local John Deere dealership, Hutcheon & Pearce.”

“Andrew then created a variable rate script for us, which he sent straight through to the monitor in our sprayer, and that allowed us to spray out those specific strips so we could bale them and, hopefully, prevent the rye grass from going through to seed and spreading even further.” Andrew Watt adds to this: “It’s these kinds of use-cases that might seem very simple, but can really make a big difference to growers and demonstrate the value that digital technology offers. Increasingly more growers are struggling with hard-to-control weeds and, by being able to tackle problem areas through variable rate scripts, these growers have another ‘tool’ at their disposal to attack these issues head-on.”

Lowering costs through technology

By creating farm records in Agworld, Matt has automatically gained the ability to accurately budget and control the costs of growing crops; something which Matt says has become really important for Erin Vale Farming in recent years. “There are lots of factors in farming that we cannot control such as the weather, commodity prices and other macroeconomic factors. What we can control however, is the cost-side of our operation. In order to do this though, we need to have accurate data and reports first so we know exactly what we spend where in our operation.”

“Right now, through Agworld, I know exactly what it costs us to grow wheat, barley or canola for example and this really helps us to budget accurately. And it’s not just us as owners that need to know this information: it’s equally important for our bank. They love it that they can sit down with us, go through Agworld, and see our exact costs and how they’ve trended historically. Because we’ve got our costing down to a tee, our bank has faith in us following our budgets; this gives them more certainty and the ability to offer us a better deal. In the end, we all win.”

Preventing mistakes

It’s not only through budgeting though that farmers are able to lower costs with technology, adds Andrew Watt: “One of the big risks to farms, and one that is hard to quantify, is the cost of mistakes. Mistakes with crop inputs can happen in any operation and at any time during the season; the only thing that never varies however is that these mistakes tend to be very expensive. We feel that digital technology is exceptionally well placed to help growers avoid these mistakes, as well as assist with many other key issues obviously. John Deere has a very heavy focus on digital technology and how it can help growers improve their operation; we at Hutcheon & Pearce have taken that one step closer to our growers by launching ‘TECSight’.

“Right now, through Agworld, I know exactly what it costs us to grow wheat, barley or canola for example and this really helps us to budget accurately.”

Matt Lane
Erin Vale Farming, Galore, NSW
“Hutcheon & Pearce is one of the larger John Deere dealerships in Australia with 11 branches and a 250-strong team. In order to support all our growers with Digital Technology, we created TECSight as a separate department with Hutcheon & Pearce that offers growers the right level of support to get the best results in their farming operation using John Deere Technology. Our team not only helps growers with John Deere technology but also assists them with connecting our technology with Agworld and other providers with which John Deere has established API’s.”

“It’s great to see growers like Matt and Dan Lane make the most out of the technology available to them and use Agworld and John Deere in tandem. By pushing Agworld work orders straight to GS3 screens and the operator’s phone, the chance of mistakes occurring with sprays gets minimised.” Matt adds to this: “It’s hard to put a price tag on this as every mistake tends to be a unique case, but I can tell you though that they’re never cheap! By using John Deere’s digital technology and Agworld together, I have gained peace of mind that every job gets executed correctly. There’s no doubt in my mind that every dollar we invest in both Agworld and John Deere technology sees a big return in many different ways.”