MEASURING FARM PERFORMANCE

Challenge
When Tristan Baldock came home to join his family on the farm, he knew they needed a tool to capture data in a one-touch electronic format that everyone could access, so they all know exactly what happens in the field. Tristan also realised that the family needed more reports from their farm data in order to be able to make more transparent management decisions. At the same time, Tristan’s father, Graeme, had been using a legacy system but was already exploring the use of Agworld together with their agronomist.

Solution
Having worked as an agronomist previously, Tristan was already familiar with Agworld and the advantages it offers agronomists with their daily duties. He soon found out what Agworld can do for growers as well, and the Baldock family therefore decided to adopt Agworld as the data capture platform on the family farm.

Result
As soon as Tristan and his father Graeme started to capture data in Agworld, his focus shifted to the outputs he could derive from Agworld. Now, at the end of each year, the Baldock family is able to analyse all individual crop types through Agworld farm performance reports. By doing so, they know exactly what the operational costs and profit per crop are and can use this to inform their decision-making process for next year’s crop rotation planning.

“The accurate information provided by Agworld farm performance reporting is critical to what we do; it helps us improve the profitability of our decisions and ensures that we reflect on past seasons and learn for future seasons.”

Tristan Baldock
Karinya Ag, Buckleboo, SA
From agronomist to farmer

When Tristan Baldock finished his Bachelor of Agriculture degree in 2004, he immediately started as an agronomist in Port Lincoln, SA. Tristan worked as an agronomist for the next 12 years, the last three of which were part-time, before he and his wife Lisa joined parents Graeme and Heather Baldock full-time on the family farm at Buckleboo, SA. The Baldock family manages approximately 6,000 hectares, with a mix of both owned and leased land, and grows a rotation of wheat, barley, canola, peas, lentils and export hay. “In an average year, we are able to crop 5,500 out of the 6,000 hectares and leave the other 500 under medic pasture as a break crop,” according to Tristan.

Tristan first started using Agworld in his role as agronomist for National Rural Independents: “We were using a legacy software provider at the time - but in 2011, we decided that we wanted to switch to a provider that offers a mobile solution, and therefore switched to Agworld. Using Agworld made our life so much easier from an agronomy point of view, especially with those clients that we didn’t visit every week. I probably had around 20 key clients that I saw at least once a week, but the other 30 or so I would only visit every three weeks for example; Agworld really helped me remember what happened at previous visits and what the paddock history was.”

“When I came home to join the family farm, I was initially really focused on capturing what was going on in the paddock, like operations and inputs. I knew
from my agronomy days what Agworld was able to do, and so the decision to adopt Agworld on our farm was easily made. Agworld really allows us to capture all operations, cost them, and at the end of the year see what we spent on each field and use that for budgeting purposes in future seasons,” Tristan says.

Capturing data, from planning to performance

Before the start of a season, the Baldock family plans the crop rotation and works on a chemistry plan for each field. Tristan elaborates: “We usually start planning next year’s rotation in Agworld in September, so we’ve got our seed summaries before harvest, and know how much seed we need to keep for each crop. Then, at harvest time, we collect a lot of data in Agworld about observations around weed populations and other conditions in the crop that will then influence whether or not we need to change our plan for next season.”

“After our harvest has finished, we then start planning the chemistry for next season, which obviously gets informed by the rotation planning and the observations we’ve made throughout the season and during harvest. During the season we then record all activities that take place in a field, so we have the exact history of each paddock available in Agworld.

When it comes to financial figures, the Baldocks use standard rates for each operation: “I like to use contractor rates, as they really represent the true cost of an operation; this is what it would cost us to get the work done if we weren’t doing it ourselves. By doing so, we get a good financial snapshot that tells us whether we’re making money or not. It’s not financial-accounting, but it’s the kind of management-accounting that we need to make good decisions on our farm. At the end of the year we use the farm performance reporting tool in Agworld to analyse each particular crop type. We might think for example that wheat is our bread and butter, but Agworld might show that in the last five years barley has been the better performer. It’s by having the actual figures available in Agworld, that we’re able to make decisions based on data instead of assumptions or gut feel; this can make a big difference in our decision-making process.

Informed decision-making

To optimise the decision-making process, accurate and complete data-capture is key, which is why everyone at Karinya Ag has access to data entry. Tristan explains: “My father and I are the primary users when it comes to Agworld, and I usually create the reports that the whole family can then access and utilise, but everyone else can also enter data when they need to. This really helps us ensure that everything we do in the paddock gets entered into Agworld throughout the season, so that our data is accurate and can be used to inform our decision-making process.”

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prices or advice from third parties, we can now base our decisions on data and facts in Agworld.”

Tristan continues with: “The reason we’re trying to get accurate data recorded is so that we get accurate reporting at the other end and so that we can find this information when we need it in years to come, for whatever reason. Agworld is a great tool for capturing data and it’s one easy, central place to find it when needed. The accurate information provided by Agworld farm performance reporting is critical to what we do; it helps us improve the profitability of our decisions and ensures that we reflect on past seasons and learn for future seasons.”