Digitising Farm Management

**Challenge**

Stuart Murdoch used to manage his farming operation purely based on pen and paper records, but realised in 2010 that there are benefits to digitising his farm management operations.

**Solution**

Agronomist Bill Long, Ag Consulting Co., had started to use Agworld soon after it was launched in 2009 and brought the platform to the attention of Stuart. After seeing the benefits of digitising his farm records while collaborating with his agronomist on the same platform, Stuart decided to adopt Agworld as well.

**Result**

By having a digitised farm management system, Stuart and his sons are now able to easily plan and budget before the season starts, receive recommendations from their agronomist, create their own digital farm records and analyse their results at the end of the season. Because Stuart now farms together with his two sons and a full-time farmhand, everyone has access to all critical data on the Agworld platform, wherever they may be on the farm, which ensures that jobs are done when they need to be done and prevents errors from occurring.

“Agworld is now central to what we do as a family on a daily basis, and allows us to run our farming operations as well as possible.”

Stuart Murdoch
Warooka, SA
The Murdoch family grows a rotation of wheat, barley, lentils and faba beans, and runs some livestock as well. “With the size of our operation, the rotation we use and some farm-specific weed problems that we have, it is very important for us to be able to look back on data from previous years,” Stuart says. “Agworld shows us what we’ve done in a field over the past years and allows us to realise early on that we have a ryegrass problem for example, so we can adjust our plans accordingly by changing the chemistry, planting a different crop or doing whatever else we have to do to avoid issues during the season. It’s this kind of proactiveness that really helps us.”

George adds to this: “Having this field data available to us during the season is valuable in many other ways as well; depending on the weather, we regularly have to spray fungicides during the season. Agworld allows us to quickly see how long ago we last sprayed a fungicide and when we have to spray again. The product library is also very useful: If I have any questions about mixing the chemicals, which product is rainfast or anything else, I have the Agworld library of products with me on my phone, wherever I might be at that point.”
Improved accuracy for profitability

One of the reasons why Stuart originally started using Agworld was to increase the accuracy of his operation. Stuart explains: “With ever-tightening margins for farmers, I realised years ago that accuracy on every level is critical to ensuring profitability. Whether it’s to calculate the exact hectares that need spraying, the chemical I need to order or ensuring that the correct product is getting applied at the correct rates; if we make a mistake at any of these steps, we jeopardise our profit potential.”

“Having all this accurate information available throughout the season, carrying that through to harvest and then using it for analytical purposes at the end of the season, really helps us ensure that we’re doing the best job we can. Being able to see the cost of production during the season already helps us in our decision-making process as well. Knowing our production cost up to that point in the season, in combination with a yield and commodity price expectations, helps us rationalise whether we should spend that extra $40 per hectare for example, or whether the risks outweigh the potential profit in that case. Instead of going by gut-feeling, we can let the numbers make our decisions for us.”

“We know our cost of production at all times so when I look at the bank balance during the season in combination with the costs still planned in Agworld for the months ahead, I know exactly whether we’re going to run into issues or not. This allows us to proactively manage these issues, which is often key to avoiding problems.”

When it comes to accuracy, planning also plays a major role in the Murdoch’s farming operation, not in the least because of the variety of circumstances on the different properties, both owned and leased, that they farm. Stuart: “Some properties just don’t yield as well as others, whether it’s due to soil, weather conditions or something else. By knowing what we’re going to spend on certain crops, we can make informed decisions as to which crops should get planted in which fields, or even whether a specific property is worth leasing at all.”

Working as a team

Everyone with the Murdoch family uses Agworld as part of their daily duties, as Stuart explains: “My two sons, George and Hugh, came home to join the family operation a couple of years ago, and our farmhand has been with me for 14 already. When I adopted Agworld in 2010, I initially only thought about digitising my own processes but, now that we work together as a team of 4 people, the communication piece that Agworld brings to the table has become important as well. I already communicated with our agronomists, Bill and Stefan, through Agworld for the recommendations etc., but increasingly Agworld helps us make sure we’re on the same page as a team as well.”

“As they are still learning the ‘profession of farming’, Agworld is a great platform for them to be able to access 9 years of historical data.”

Stuart Murdoch
Warooka, SA
to just find the information they are looking for and learn things as they occur; a very valuable learning tool.”

Stuart concludes with: “It’s hard to say exactly why we like using Agworld, as it’s really the whole picture of what the platform offers that makes it so interesting to us. Having all our data on the same platform allows us to plan, execute our season, analyse our results and enables us to work as a team. Agworld is now central to what we do as a family on a daily basis, and allows us to run our farming operations as well as possible.”