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Random off-the-cuff comments on the inquiry into rural skills and training
 (my apologies for a late submission --short-staffed and accidents have cut into spare time--because of this some things will be repeated and be disjointed --please be patient--the only reason it is happening now is that it has rained)

- “real” producers are now starting to fall in the range of \$5-10m whereas many of the programs to me aim at the \$1+m group which are the shaky ones (but some of which will become “real” producers)
- what does aust agric want???- ask this of the wider community
- however the hobby/sub-economic farmers are a part of agric --esp from an enviro and social and cultural aspect
- the ones who are going to survive are not being helped and the ones who are marginal are getting a disproportionate share of resources--is this equitable????
- how many old rural families are encouraging their children to come home?-really a significant number are doing the opposite--we are losing our corporate knowledge--especially our environmental/long-term info
- see Greg McKeon et al “ pasture degradation and recovery in australia’s rangelands--learning from history”
- producers have data-sets except they are often non-verbal . intuition is often experience locked away in the sub-conscious
- see Aust Farm Business Review issue 25 may/june 2005--educating young farmers ph 02-69317110
- really on the land with all the knocks we get it is the size of the fight in the dog rather than the size of the dog in the fight
- have we ever asked the wider community what they want of farmers/agriculture?--once we have this answer then we can answer your question
- we are losing our critical mass in info/people/skills etc
- all the figures that I see wrt to the economic effects of droughts suggest that the flow-on/multiplier effects of agric is much much greater than economists have generally conceded--thus community investment in agric is good value
- more and more I see comments that “subsidies” are an acceptance of the stewardship role of farmers and an attempt to partially reward them for this role
- see Jared Diamond “Collapse how societies choose to succeed or fail”
- make sure you are treating the cause and not the symptom
- academic standards appear to be slipping--it seems to be accepted that PhD’s today are not the same standard of a generation ago
- agric needs a few generalists -- there seems to be very few if any around -- the system has not encouraged their existence! -- I can not find many around and the few have gone elsewhere as they were not appreciated/rewarded
- the landcare movement has largely stalled if not failed as there was no mentoring of the raw and underpaid facilitators/graduates and the project based funding ensured any corporate knowledge was not passed on- and their skills were not appropriate to the problem
- also scientists are still not believed -- a number of reasons -- one I believe is that they are not encouraged to speak out -- in QLD one of the best scientists was gagged wrt the Veg Act -- I still do not believe that the scientific community has been so cowed to accept it

WE HAVE TO CHANGE THIS CULTURE- SOMEHOW?

- the scientific societies have not been used and appreciated by the wider community or governments eg ASAP, TGS, Aust Rangelands Society etc--and they are close to being wound up and closed down--this can not be allowed to happen--could they be

supported in some way- in the past it was accepted this was part of their role - not any more - it is done in their spare time - if any

-agric is still in a mining mode -and if we paid producers the real cost of food production all we would probably cause is more degradation on marginal lands - thus we need controls-which the agric community would complain about -solution??????
-there seems to be a declining interest in the "hard" agric courses and the salary rewards are not there- cf in India the OP I's go into soil science - WHY?- a different culture

- in QLD there are very few soil scientists left-for the basis of conservation , this seems to be rather silly!

-most of the private agric advisors were trained by the depts of agric - this is not stated in their charter but it remains one of their important role

-agric is not capturing the benefits of electronics - there could be many benefits of applying the cost-effective used of high-tech " things" from other industries-the linkages and minds and/or culture are not there anymore

Secretary: *J. Palmer*

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