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Senator Bill Heffenan

Dear Senator

Further to your inquiry today. Just a few additions. I have been associated with the farming industry for 40 years. We purchased our first farm in 1986, my husband worked for and managed another farm.

The farm we were managing sold in 1997. With bank managers beating a path to our door and telling us to look to the future if we wanted to keep farming and provide a life for our son along with that future we should become bigger.

Well that future landed with a thud from projecting ahead 10 years that future arrived within 5 years to the point where our son is now off farm and ourselves, and all the other farmers can no longer manage without a proper income.

You asked about an average farm 12,000 – 15,000 tonnes of cane is fairly average for the Herbert District.

Someone asked about the cost of fertilizer for the year. Fertilizer for our farming enterprise – we farm anywhere from 12,000 – 16,000 tonnes of cane depending on season, season length, wet weather, etc. was \$106,119.00 (fertilizers and chemicals) for 2006/2007.

We saved ourselves \$30,000.00 by using more user friendly fertilizer – microbes, molasses and other ingredients, cutting back on some fertilizing to try and make ends meet. Our fertilizer bill 2007/2008 financial year came in at \$78,754.85.

You asked about the companies that supplied fertilizer in our area – They are:- Grow Force – Ingham Farm Centre, Liddles Liqua Force, privately owned company. The person who owns this company stated on the ABC” that he was sick and tired of being a bank.” The other companies that sell fertilizer – Gofton’s, Ingham, and Rinaudo Engineering. All owned by people living locally.

You also asked about farms for sale, as pointed out to me every farm is for sale, they are just not advertised because what is the point? There are no buyers other than tree people. A very small proportion of larger farmers have bought one or two farms. One that I know of sold off a lot of his gear to buy one- by gear tractors, harvester, put off all his workers and put his work out on contract.

A list of real estate people for you to do your own investigations are – Ray White, Ingham, Ingham Real Estate, LJ Hookers, Ingham, Felix Reitano, Ingham, Tom Venables Real Estate, Ingham.

LJ Hooker and Ray White are as I refer to them as “The Vultures have landed.”

Having never been on a Federal Senate Inquiry before I felt my opening statement wasn't wonderful as I did not know what to expect. If you have any more queries I will only be too happy to answer them or find out the information for you.

With reference to Incitec Pivot they made wonderful profits for the year capitalizing on farmers who are reeling from the huge burden of increasing costs, giving themselves a pat on the back for their efforts.

It is extremely important for people who are representing grass roots farmers to tell it how it actually is. Our major peak body has a lot to answer for as it seems to like glossing over the facts, telling their growers things will improve next year, they only have to hang in there as the price will pick up. How long do they have to wait? They have come to the end, this is crunch time.

Thanking you for allowing me to answer the questions from the Senate and yourself today.

Kind regards

Carol Mackee
Director
Australian Canefarmers Association