



2018 NATIONAL LANDCARE AWARDS

11 October
Brisbane Convention & Exhibition Centre

Nominee: Simon Falkiner, VIC

Category: Australian Government Innovation in Agriculture Land Management Award

Simon Falkiner's 600-acre mixed-enterprise family farm at Freshwater Creek produces meat merinos, cereals and oilseed crops while prioritising farming techniques that preserve and enrich the land's biodiversity. Simon's focus on maintaining soil health and his integrated pest and grazing management has made him a leading advocate for best-practice Landcare.

Simon's leadership has seen him represent land managers in a variety of capacities. As chair of the Surf Coast and Inland Plains Network he helped establish the Beach to Bush Biolink project. A project which successfully responded to broad community demands for enhancement and protection activities to be undertaken but risked threatening farming productivity and environmental outcomes if implemented poorly.

Simon is a Corangamite Catchment Management Authority (CCMA) Community Advisory Group member and the chair of Surf Coast Rabbit Action Network, a group founded in 2016 to educate and activate the community in their battle against one of biodiversity's biggest threats the rabbit. He is a key researcher into mixed farming solutions for both Southern Farming Systems and the CCMA Land Health Project.

Simon's advocacy work is based on lessons learnt in the field. His farm has hosted long-term trials exploring everything from soil acidification and biology to pasture cover and cropping. He's also undertaken extensive riparian restoration along Thompsons Creek to protect remnant vegetation, while partnership projects with CCMA and the Arthur Rylah Institute have seen him assist in monitoring the threatened Yarra pygmy perch and Growling Grass frog.

The learnings from Simon's on-ground work have been disseminated nationally. As a GRDC supported Carbon Farming ambassador Simon has promoted and implemented tactics to reduce carbon emissions from Central Queensland beef herd. Through the use of IVF technology (multiplication of superior Brahman animals) and the introduction of Angus genetics cattle producers have been able to improve their herds reproductive and animals performance reducing turnoff times (carbon emission) whilst improving productivity. His research work with Southern Farming Systems into the revolutionary idea of grazing of winter grain crops lead to a role as a keynote speaker in Grain and Graze 1's National Grazing Crop Roadshow.

Simon has worked as the livestock manager for Murdeduke Agriculture, a large mixed farming business with 7000 acres, since 1997. In his bid to drive research and increase collective knowledge of sustainable farming systems, Simon has collaborated with a number of Universities. His connection with Murdeduke led to collaboration with Latrobe University, studying grazing management and livestock performance through the use of "Fit Bits" and blue tooth technology.

Collaboration with Melbourne University, local engineers and a team of 20 local farmers lead to the development of a subsoiling machine and process that incorporated organic matter grown in situ with the aim of ameliorating hostile subsoils – a cost-effective alternative to expensive animal waste amelioration. Their findings were shared nationally, through the GRDC's Subsoil Amelioration Machinery Workshop.

This program is supported by Landcare Australia and the National Landcare Network, through funding from the Australian Government's National Landcare Program.





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As a mixed farmer, researcher and rural advocate Simon champions innovation that supports smarter and more sensitive farming techniques that are supported by and enhance multi-faceted rural outcomes.

Landcare is a grassroots movement that harnesses individuals and groups to protect, restore and sustainably manage Australia's natural environment and its productivity. Groups that fall under the Landcare umbrella work on a diverse range of environmental projects and include farmers embracing sustainable farm management and any community group that partakes in volunteer environmental activities. To find out how you can become a Landcare volunteer and for full details on all 2018 National Landcare finalists, visit www.landcareaustralia.org.au

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Web Summary

Simon Falkiner's 600-acre mixed-enterprise family farm at Freshwater Creek produces meat merinos, cereals and oilseed crops while prioritising farming techniques that preserve the land's biodiversity. Simon's focus on maintaining soil health and his integrated pest and grazing management has made him a leading advocate for best-practice Landcare. His farm has hosted long-term trials testing everything from soil acidification and biology to pasture cover and cropping. He's also undertaken extensive riparian restoration along Thompsons Creek to protect remnant vegetation, while partnership projects have seen him assist in monitoring the threatened Yarra pygmy perch and Growling Grass frog. Simon has also driven research, collaborating with LaTrobe University on livestock performance research and with Melbourne University on the logistics of subsoil manuring. Reducing Carbon Emissions and increasing productivity in the Northern beef herd has also featured in his work.

Pull-out quote:

As a mixed farmer, researcher and rural advocate Simon champions innovation that supports smarter and more sensitive farming techniques that are supported by and enhance multi-faceted rural outcomes. His establishment of a beneficial insect nursely in an endangered volcanic plains grassland that delivers cropping and biodiversity benefits is an example.

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