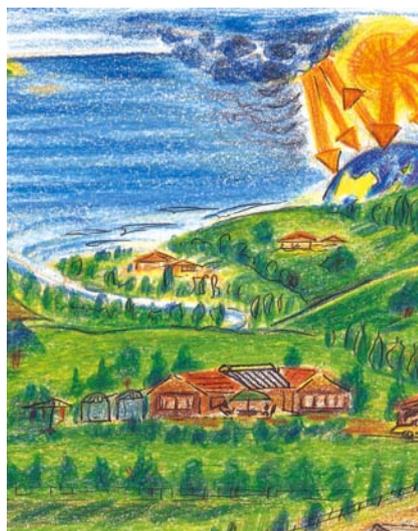


The micro adaptation picture

This chapter began with the message that farmers are already adapting. While not currently driven by the prospect of climate change much of what they are doing is relevant.

Three questions were asked:

- *What is known about the adaptive capacity of farmers?*
- *What adaptations have they implemented or are implementing, and why?*
- *Is there an ideal example of on-farm resilience that can provide a model for others to follow?*



The adaptation picture that emerges is that proactive farmers are well attuned to fluctuations in climate, along with many other trends and variations, so are readily able to consider climate change in their thinking. They are considering their options and acting to ensure the viability of their farm business. They care about the environmental footprint they are leaving on the land, working with the natural resource base of the local environment.

Those who have been farming for many years have experienced crises and change and adapted accordingly. They have focused over time on establishing basic infrastructure, fencing, water reticulation, getting the right mix of stock and stock classes. Some began planting trees early and have been doing so for the last 20 to 40 years. These farmers are fine-tuning their systems and are developing the broader farm environment picture. They are fencing riparian areas and establishing bush covenants with the QE II Trust. For younger farmers there are issues of succession planning and developing the basic farm infrastructure to lift their incomes.

Climate change is coming into the thinking of proactive farmers. High rainfall events in the 1960s and 1970s and droughts combined with economic changes in the 1980s and 1990s led to change for many. Changes are on-going, particularly in some eastern areas where drought and water shortages have become persistent. These local situations have attuned them to climate change and the rapidly changing global environment. A willingness to change and be flexible has become their mode of working on the farm.

Water is the biggest issue on-farm for many and will be the key issue for the future, whether it be dealing with shortages or coping with too much. Water harvesting and more efficient use is featuring in the plans of farmers. Some have already changed stock policies, carrying more trading stock that they can off-load in a drought. There is a lot of knowledge and experience with trees for multiple benefits including income diversity, shade and shelter and buffering against extremes of drought and flood.

The pressures of subdivision for lifestyle blocks and the subsequent effects on water catchments are beginning to have an impact. This is associated with increased rating pressures in some areas. The changing social structure of communities is also an important issue. A vibrant healthy community is vital for the health and well-being of farmers and farming.

The best model for others is the example of individual farmers who have worked and are working to develop the resilience of their farms in accordance with the potential and limitations of their local environment. The overall picture is of a lot of knowledge and capacity to deal with climate change. It is vital that this is supported for the benefit of all.

