

## OUT & ABOUT

### Agricultural Technology comes to Life at East Loddon

East Loddon took delivery of their iFarm last week. A very impressive Ag / Tech Unit and a very exciting day for agricultural students, teachers and the STEM team.

The iFarm is the product of years of planning and hard work of Steve & Kate Mansur, after Steve dreamt of this innovation to bring Agricultural technology to life at school for students. Kate and Steve not only developed the iFarm, but also personally drove all the way from Tamworth to East Loddon, to deliver #10 iFarm.

The "iFarm" is a fully computerised interactive farm science research station designed specifically for Australian high schools. Its purpose is to improve student's understanding of the resources required to produce food and fibre, and to stimulate interest in careers in agriculture and related fields. Students can do comparative trials, measuring and monitoring all variables such as water, fertiliser and plant growth.



iFarms have 8 individual growing beds with subsurface drip irrigation and overhead spray options, a 2000L water tank, moisture and temperature sensors, and an inbuilt digital touchscreen (but can also be operated remotely). iFarms are fully powered by wind and solar, they have their own weather station, a composting worm farm, and come with both summer and winter shade cloths.

Designers and builders Steve and Kate Mansur came up with the concept of the iFarm after realising they wanted to help students learn about agriculture, science, maths and technology in a more exciting and engaging way, and also to make the job easier for teachers. Steve and Kate chose to set up their manufacturing business Manski Pty Ltd in Tamworth

NSW so as to help create employment in a regional community and they use local suppliers wherever possible. iFarms are fully Australian designed, developed and manufactured.

Over 50 high schools across the nation in every state and territory will be receiving their iFarm over the next 3 months. The iFarm project has been supported by funding from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry as part of the Educating Kids About Agriculture: iFarm program.

Thank you to Paula Maxted for this information

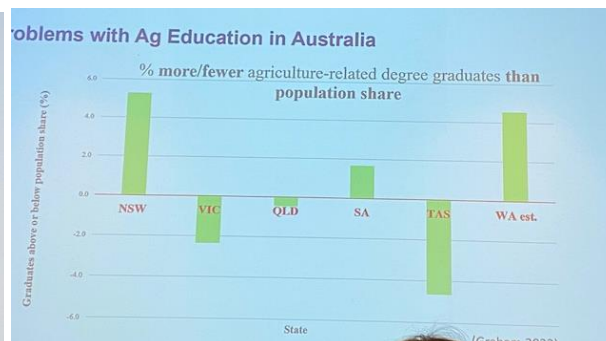
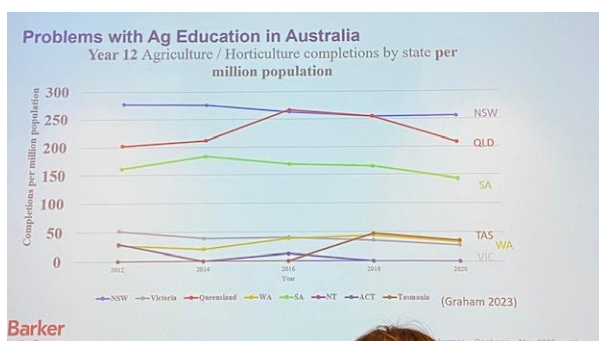
# PIEFA Conference



I was fortunate to attend the Primary Industries Education Foundation Australia (PIEFA) conference earlier this month. I will share some of the workshops and presentations over the next few weeks.

## Key Take home messages

- To be future-focussed, agriculture must consider the behaviour and trends of **Generation Y**. According to Michael McQueen (futurist), Gen Y are
  - Using AI - ChatGPT/GPT4.
  - Are engaged with the Metaverse and virtual reality.
  - Choosing different social media (TikTok, BeReal) than their parents (Facebook, Instagram)
  - Committed to environmental sustainability.
  - Confident to query the status quo, they ask questions, and speak out.
- There are **six** jobs available for every agriculture graduate.
- Jobs in Agriculture are approximately –
  - 20-30% on-farm
  - 40-50% rural/regional off-farm
  - 20-30% in the city
- Victoria's agriculture education is underperforming both at school and university level compared to the other states. Excuse my poor photography of the slides presented by Scott Graham from Barker College Sydney



- Anthony Lee, beef producer from Australian Country Choice is spearheading a national task force to investigate Australia's agricultural education. Watch this space!  
[https://www.piefa.edu.au/uploads/9/8/9/8/98986708/020523\\_piefa\\_conf\\_2023\\_media\\_release.pdf?mibextid=Zxz2cZ](https://www.piefa.edu.au/uploads/9/8/9/8/98986708/020523_piefa_conf_2023_media_release.pdf?mibextid=Zxz2cZ)
- The next PIEFA conference will be in 2025. I encourage teachers to start lobbying for the opportunity to attend.

## Ag Gap Year

<https://agcareerstart.com.au/>

I love this concept. A fantastic opportunity for young people and farmers. Download the teacher guide or direct your students to browse the website. Also spread the work amongst local farmers, as it is a program that could bring new young people to our regions.

- Ages 17-25
- Full-time paid farm job with a passionate host farmer
- A \$4,500 Training and Engagement Bursary to upskill.
- Funding to travel for industry events.
- A dedicated support team.
- A network of peers across the country



## Kerang Agricultural Careers Expo

**KERANG TECHNICAL HIGH SCHOOL AGRICULTURAL INDUSTRY CAREERS EXPO 2023!**

**KTHS would like to invite you to our first Agricultural Industry Careers Expo**

**Interactive Displays Will Include:**

- Machinery
- Engineering companies
- Ag technologies
- Animals and animal husbandry
- Guest speakers & demonstrations

**Where:** KTHS oval Murray St  
**When:** 7th June  
**Time:** 9:30am-2:30pm

Further Info Contact Krystal Grills  
kerang.tech.hs@education.vic.gov.au

Food trucks will be available all day.

#KTHS #foodandfibre #Agriculture #Agcareers



## In the Garden

So, after two attempts, my carrot planting was an abject failure, so it's back to Rocky Lamattina's carrots for me! In their place, I have planted one of my reliable favourites - spring onions. These are great for a school garden, as you can plant them all year around and they have a super quick growing cycle. Spring Onions are perfect for fried rice which is a school staple recipe. Costa (Gardening Australia) tells me that if you just cut off the top to use, they will keep re-growing for a few years.



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