



# Seeking a vision for whole industry

ORGANISERS have promised the inaugural Merino 2020 conference won't be just another "talkfest" but will shine valuable light on how the whole wool and sheepmeat supply chain can function more profitably, efficiently and sustainably.

The conference – to be held at Wagga Wagga, NSW, on August 18-20 – will be chaired by Mick Keogh, the executive director of the rural think-tank, the Australian Farm Institute.

Speaking on behalf of the organisers, Norm Madden said Merino 2020 will be a national whole-of-industry event to provide participants with the most up-to-date information on improving productivity, sustainability and marketing results with the goal of improving on-farm profitability.

He said the Merino industry had never had an annual conference that brought all sectors together under the one roof to explore key issues, developments and opportunities.

He said a panel of local and overseas speakers would provide an update on cutting-edge research and technology across the supply chain, highlight the flow-on benefits of sustainable Merino sheep and wool production, discuss the emerging opportunities for Merino fibre and other products and explore the value of product traceability from farmer to consumer.

The guest speakers have been selected to fit the theme of the conference which is to build a "Vision for a Profitable and Sustainable Future".

Headlining the event will be Todd Copeland from California-based and environment-sensitive outdoor apparel label, Patagonia, who will outline the power of traceability as a marketing tool and the changing face of the global consumer.

Keynote speakers, Pam and Martin Brook, who have established an inspirational paddock-to-plate macadamia business near Byron Bay on the NSW



Large-scale organic wool, sheepmeat and beef producer, Stuart McKenzie, from 'Plevna Downs', Eromanga, Queensland, will be a guest speaker at the Merino 2020 conference at Wagga Wagga, NSW.

## Merino 2020

**When, where:** Friday, August 19, and Saturday, August 20, in Joyes Hall Convention Centre, Charles Sturt University, Wagga Wagga.  
**Conference dinner:** Charles Sturt Convention Centre, Friday, August 19, 6.30pm. Guest speaker, Kerry O'Keeffe.  
**Who should attend:** Stud and commercial sheep producers, agribusinesses, service providers, policy makers, academics, customers and retailers.  
**Conference inquiries:** Primary industries Centre, TAFE NSW Riverina Institute (02) 6939 5000 or email [RICourseInfoPIC@tafensw.edu.au](mailto:RICourseInfoPIC@tafensw.edu.au) or visit [www.merino2020.com.au](http://www.merino2020.com.au)

North Coast, will speak on balancing sustainability and profitability.

Then Emeritus Professor John Chudleigh from Orange, NSW, will set the scene by providing an insight into the longer term trends in Australian agriculture.

Professor Chudleigh has been closely tracking world farm commodity prices and trends for many decades and releases the results of his work in a monthly newsletter, *Analysing Agriculture*.

He will be followed by an array of speakers who will provide an insight into the issues, developments and opportunities along the whole supply chain, from the farm to retail markets at home and overseas.

Two Merino producers, Errol Brumpton and Stuart McKenzie, will provide grower case studies on how to breed more profitable and sustainable flocks.

Mr Brumpton and wife, Candy, own and operate the Well Gully Poll Merino stud near Mitchell in Queensland's Maranoa region where they have devel-

oped a quick-maturing, hardy, mules-free Merino which produces both high-quality carcasses and 18-micron wool through genetic selection based on science and historical data.

They will follow a presentation on the first morning of the conference by Dr Richard Apps, Meat and Livestock Australia's project manager for southern livestock extension, who will discuss how to get the right balance between meat and wool to achieve a sustainable sheep industry.

Mr McKenzie, a large-scale organic wool, sheep and beef producer from "Plevna Downs", Eromanga, in south west Queensland, will speak on the second morning after a presentation on the role of sheep production in transitioning Australia to a low-carbon future by Walter Jehne, a leading soil microbiologist and plant ecologist who is a director of Healthy Soils Australia.

Dr Joanne Sneddon from the University of Western Australia and a consultant to Meat and Livestock Australia and

Australian Wool Innovation will discuss key findings of recent focus groups on consumer trends in the US market.

Other speakers include Mark Murphy who runs Karbullah Poll Merino and Boyanga Meateor Merinos north of Goondiwindi, Qld, with wife, Vicki, and family where they are focused on breeding easy-care, dual purpose Merinos.

Also giving presentations will be Mark Grave, chief executive of the Australian Wool Exchange; Rob Davidson from WAMMCO, a producer-owned WA lamb and mutton co-op; Sam Gill, manager of Sheep Genetics and leading sheep geneticist, Andrew Swan.

## It's not just cricket for O'Keeffe

KERRY ("Skull") O'Keeffe (pictured), a moderately-talented Test cricketer from the 1970s who has gained something approaching cult status since becoming a cricket commentator on ABC radio, will be the guest speaker at the Merino 2020 conference dinner.

His unique humour and distinctive laugh combined with a deep analytical knowledge of cricket and a number of other sports have made him a hit on ABC radio and on the public speakers' circuit.

Known as "Skull" because of his bald head, O'Keeffe's store of entertaining



cricket stories seems endless but he also delivers passionate and inspiring addresses on motivation around "being the best you can be".

Despite being Sydney-born and bred, many of O'Keeffe's biggest fans are from the country and include many farmers who have been helped through long, hard days in the paddock or on the tractor listening to O'Keeffe's wit and jokes (many told against himself).

He was a leg break bowler and useful lower order batsman who took 53 wickets at an average of 38.07 and scored 644 runs at an average 25.76 in 24 Tests.

# Macadamias and Merinos a not-so-nuts comparison

ONE might ask why the owners of a Macadamia enterprise are the keynote speakers at a Merino conference.

Pam and Martin Brook (pictured), of Brookfarm, have established one of Australian agriculture's most remarkable paddock-to-plate businesses near Byron Bay on the NSW North Coast, so they know a thing or two about value-adding and balancing sustainability and profitability.

The former Melbourne professional cou-

ple bought a denuded and weed-infested 40-hectare block in the Byron Bay hinterland about 20 years ago which they have transformed into an award-winning business where they value-add the macadamias they grow and the nuts they buy from local producers into a range of gourmet products including macadamia muesli, oils and walkabout mixes.

They had to battle hard in the early days, including returning to Melbourne for some years to generate money to retain



and develop the business, but success has come thick and fast in recent years with booming domestic and export sales and a swag of awards including Telstra national business of the year in 2007 and NAB best rural enterprise in 2010.

Brookfarm, which has about 4500 macadamia trees (most planted in 1989), is in transition to full organic certification and uses natural pest management methods to control insects and disease.

They have also regenerated rainforest

and eucalypt stands on part of the farm as part of their commitment to combine environmental sustainability with profitability (owls, for example, have now taken up residence in their forests and are cleaning up the rats which eat macadamias).

The Brooks have developed all their products themselves and continue to produce new items including macadamia oil infused with lemon myrtle (a local bush spice) which has won a number of gongs overseas.

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