LOCAL FARMERS LEAD THE WAY

Twenty one WA wheatbelt growers, representing 15 local farmer groups, recently met at the University of Western Australia (UWA) to discuss how to best lead and facilitate the development of a productive grains industry.

They attended the Local Farmer Group Network (LFGN) Group Leaders Workshop to 'chew the fat' and debate what does and doesn’t work for them.

The Grains Research and Development Corporation supported LFGN, a key support for many local farmer groups, is based at UWA.

Many growers said the LFGN provided the leadership tools and motivation to keep groups on track, while linking them with a network of fellow growers, industry and researchers.

Esperance Land Conservation District Committee member, Rob Agnew, offered advice for producing good leaders.

“Many groups need to know how to better manage groups and emerging issues,” he said.

“Everything is alright when it’s functioning well, however, when a problem strikes, many groups don’t know how to resolve it, so members need to be equipped with the right tools.”

Workshop guest speaker and facilitator, Nigel McGuckian of RM Consulting Group, was impressed with Mr Agnew’s response to recent critical feedback from some of his fellow members while he was President of the Neridup Soil Conservation Group.

Although surprised, Mr Agnew was grateful and thanked them for bringing it to his attention.

Mr McGuckian said this was a perfect example of how a good leader should respond.

“A good leader doesn’t react to criticism defensively, but should appreciate having the opportunity to fix what they’re doing wrong,” he said.

Leon Ryan of the Greenhills Production Group, said the LFGN had been the critical support tool, helping the group reinvent itself after years of recess.

“Our group is a bit sluggish and if we weren’t part of the LFGN, I doubt we’d have got motivated again, as quickly as we did,” Mr Ryan said.

“The LFGN has been very supportive, helping muster the drive in the group to get projects up and running.

“The workshops I’ve attended have been excellent for networking, discussing ideas and equipping groups with effective management tools.”
However, Chezley Guest of the North Mallee Farm Improvement Group, said her group would operate with or without participating in LFGN because there was a strong need for the group.

“The LFGN has, however, provided us with an excellent network and helped develop our leadership skills,” Ms Guest said.

“It’s a great forum to meet with other group members, share information and discuss farming and group dynamics.

“LFGN has also given us the opportunity to meet with researchers and I believe it’s helped make many WA local farmer groups more efficient.”

LFGN coordinator, Paul Carmody, said the Group Leaders Workshop, supported by Farmbiz and ANZ Bank, was held after farmer groups sought guidance on how to encourage more people to be actively involved in groups.

For more information on LFGN and group leadership please visit www.lfgn.org.au

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