

2006 Public Health Awards for Excellence and Innovation:

Public Health Programs Award for Excellence

Sustainable Farm Families Project

Western District Health Service

The Sustainable Farm Families (SFF) Project has engaged consumers (farming families) in decision making about their family health, wellbeing and safety. After three years the project has demonstrated significant change in the health status of farmers, based on a comprehensive framework of community health promotion that:

- empowers farmer (consumer) knowledge and skills
- collects physical assessment data and tracks over three years
- strengthens community action and planning
- uses inter-sectoral collaboration
- provides an evidence base for farming family health
- shares knowledge with other health professionals.

The project has experienced increased consumer (farmer) demand, planning and participation. Due to strong farmer involvement SFF has been extended to the Victorian dairy industry, cotton and sugar industry throughout NSW and Northern Queensland, and finally to remote farming populations nationwide. Workshop evaluation across all the SFF projects show that 100 per cent of farmers would recommend SFF to other farmers and feel more empowered about their personal health. Independent economic evaluation of the SFF confirms the benefit of this program, not only to the farming family unit, but to the future of Australian agriculture.

The SFF project aims to uncover the issues affecting farming family health across broad agricultural industries. Significant inter-sectoral collaboration has been developed with over 30 partners from agriculture, government, health and university organisations involved in the research.

Western District Health Service is leading the way in farm family research with funding now exceeding 1.4 million dollars. This investment is in the health of our farming families, still the central part of Australia's agricultural future.

Contact

Mr Jim Fletcher

Phone: (03) 5551 8215

Email: jim.fletcher@wdhs.net

Website: <http://www.sustainablefarmfamilies.org.au/>