

CARBONCARE™ VOICES

Carbon Project Owner Insights: Pech - North Stirling Downs, WA

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CARBON FARMING PART OF THE LONG-TERM GOALS AT NORTH STIRLING DOWNS

The Pech family – Jody, Wayne and teenage daughters, Sophie and Olivia.

Wayne and Jody Pech run a mixed farming enterprise in Gnowangerup, Western Australia. On 13,000ha of Wheatbelt land, they run sheep and crop. The family have been farming North Stirling Downs since the 1950's and when it comes to their family and farm, the Pechs have always got sustainability in mind; they are future focused.

By embracing new technologies, they have increased the efficiency and productivity of their business. Their open-minded approach extends to carbon farming opportunities, as well. That's why Wayne and Jody accept the science of climate change and have made the decision to incorporate carbon farming plantings on their property.

THE NUTS AND BOLTS

- Wayne and Jody Pech have committed to 100ha of carbon farming plantings per year over a 10-year period – which will help them achieve their goal of carbon neutrality by 2030.
- The Pech family have established a partnership with Outback Carbon and registered a project with the Emissions Reduction Fund to generate Australian Carbon Credit Units (ACCU's).
- ACCU's generated at North Stirling Downs will be held by the Pech family as they anticipate using them to offset their emissions in future.

THE FUTURE IS FARMING

When it comes to carbon farming, Wayne Pech chooses his words carefully. And it's not because he's unsure about what he's trying to say. Steeped in agriculture from a young age, Wayne understands the fear and anxiety that go along with decision-making on farms.

Wayne says that some farmers can get defensive when he brings up carbon farming – and for him, it's not about judging other people's choices. It's about making the best possible decisions to



support agriculture and choosing the long-term sustainability of the industry over shorter-term goals.

The Covid-19 pandemic has shone a light on the essential nature of the work that farmers do (this, of course, is not news to the farmers themselves) and Wayne envisions a future in which farmers work as a cohesive unit. “Farms are so diverse,” he says. “And we’re really good at arguing amongst ourselves, which can make it hard to make progress”.

Wayne and Jody are working towards carbon neutrality at North Stirling Downs by 2030, but they

want to support farmers across the industry and government regulators to make changes as well. This involves planning with sustainability in mind, lobbying industry and government for appropriate policy development and the creation of a carbon calculator – so that, when it comes to emissions, farmers can compare apples with apples.

1,000HA FOR SUSTAINABILITY

If you want your farm to be carbon neutral by 2030, the first thing you need is a plan. To start with, Wayne and Jody have committed to planting 100ha of carbon farming conservation plantings each year until 2030. They have established a partnership with Outback Carbon to achieve this goal. For their first plant in 2020, they worked with Geoff Woodall, who provided consultation on species selection, site design and planting.

The 2020 carbon farming project is registered with the Australian Government’s Emissions Reduction Fund. Here’s how it works:

- The Pech family provides the land and Outback Carbon manages the project and contract work
- Outback Carbon and the Pechs will split the resulting carbon credits 50/50
- Wayne and Jody have opted for 100 years permanence on their project, in keeping with their sustainability and future-proofing goals,
- With the help of GreenSkills, they have undertaken biodiversity monitoring to assist with choosing future planting sites, and
- By 2030, the family will have 1000ha of carbon plantings, which is 7.7% of their farm



The Pechs plan to hold onto the ACCUs that their projects generate, so that they can make an informed decision about how to best use them when the time is right. They anticipate that they may be needed in future to offset carbon emissions generated through their farming operations.

A COHESIVE INDUSTRY

There are no two ways about it: Jody and Wayne are in amongst the trail blazers with an early adopter attitude. Their ethics and understanding of climate science give them no choice but to make changes on their farm to secure it for the future. The Pechs do their bit to communicate the importance of carbon offsetting to other farmers, but they understand some of the fear and resistance that goes along with thinking outside the box.

Wayne acknowledges the barriers that farmers face when it comes to carbon farming. Fire and vermin risk are commonly raised issues, though Wayne believes they are manageable risks. “The agriculture industry needs to maintain market access,” Wayne says. This will improve the cohesion in the industry when it comes to carbon. And, the way he sees it, there are three key steps to maintaining market access.

- The benefits (co-benefits as well as financial) need to be made clear to growers
- The agriculture industry needs to come together to develop policies to inform government policy development
- An industry-wide carbon calculator needs to be created and adopted, so farmers can understand how they’ll benefit from carbon farming

A GRASSROOTS MOVEMENT

When it comes to farming, experience and intuition are worth their weight in gold. Farmers know their land intimately and there is a huge emotional connection to what happens on farms. Not only that, but carbon confusion is also rife in the industry. But the fact is, farmers need to know that the changes that they make to their business to offset climate change aren’t going to come back to bite them.

For Wayne and Jody, carbon farming is a no-brainer. The benefits – ACCUs – and the co-benefits, like improved soil and boosted efficiency, outweigh the risks. Their plan is to continue the carbon farming conversation with their neighbours and colleagues. To keep using their farm as a research and demonstration site for local validation of carbon farming, and to encourage open dialogue about progress, because they know that trust is an integral part of changing hearts and minds on such a sensitive issue.

On a practical level, Wayne is committed to working towards industry cohesion. With the carbon farming planting program started, the focus for 2021 for the Pech family is to concentrate on carbon calculation and the measurement of soils and to then share their story; in amongst everything else that goes with being involved in a farm business, family and community.

For more information please visit: www.carbonpositiveaustralia.org.au/carboncare
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