

# AGRIMAC CLIENT PROFILE



## GEOFF & BRETT MCEWAN

### FARM LOCATION

Inglewood

### TYPE OF FARM

Broadacre Cropping

### YEARS BEING A FARMER

48 years Geoff + 7 years Brett

### NO. OF FARM WORKERS

Family & Seasonal

### MACHINERY

8010 CaseIH Header, STX450 Quadtrack, Ausplow DBS Airseeder, Goldacre Crop Cruiser, Agrimac Workshop, Parts & Maintenance

### TELL US THE STORY OF THIS FARM?

*Geoff:* My Father, Brett's Grandfather was from a large family and originally a qualified butcher. He decided to have a go at farming – he had the land and liked animals. This property here was all Mallee Trees, he cleared 400 acres for a dry land dairy farm. You can see his Stump Fence over there, all those stumps were cleared by hand and built into that, one stump at a time. It's now been heritage listed – there's a covenant to protect it.

The old dairy is still here, he milked those cows and progressed from dairying into cropping. Initially he got a few cows, started milking, started selling the milk. At the time there was a lot of gold mining around and they didn't have their own meat or milk, so he could see you could sell milk as well as meat. The milk was originally sold bulk but then delivered in glass bottles door to door and it just grew from there, it then went into shops, hospitals in town and so on. As times changed, regulations changed. We retailed milk supplied by Sandhurst Dairies up until 2001 and ran that in conjunction with the farm.

For me, as one of six kids, labour was always short here on the farm so I came home to work on the family farm after I left school. I started share farming, growing and developing the farm from there, that was about 48 or 49 years ago, slowly we bought our own land, added to this farm and let sharefarming slip.

With my long married wife Chris, we originally had a lot of sheep, she's was great with the sheep, however, as we've become older we decided for our lifestyle and with Brett being an agronomist that we'd make a change. We've gone totally cropping for the last 3 years, it's meant big changes but we're very happy with it, it frees up a lot of time. Now it's really Brett's turn to take over isn't it?

### WHAT DO YOU LOVE ABOUT FARMING AND THE FARMING LIFESTYLE?

*Brett:* I think the fact that you are self employed, its flexible, challenging, rewarding and a great place for kids to grow up.

I went to Dookie Ag College, it's part of University of Melbourne, had 3 years there, then 2 years at Narrandera as an Agronomist, 2 years back at Kerang as Agronomist and last 6 years here based in Bridgewater part time. I wanted to get the family and the kids back on the farm, so we built back here 2 years ago and have been working since. Like my Mum, my wife grew up in the country so she was happy to come back.

We're looking to grow the farm as land becomes available – the big challenges in the last 3 years has been to get rid of the sheep. In drier years, its easier to manage cropping than worrying over sheep through the summer months, carting water etc. That and no till cropping – conservation farming – has made a difference to our yields, stabilised our averages and our ability to grow something in a dry year.



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Not having sheep means you can concentrate on one thing. Usually there is a compromise with cropping and stock - pasture, paddocks feed - and now when you're concentrating on cropping everything gets done to suit the cropping rather than trying to suit the livestock. It's been a big thing for us and we're happy with it, it's much, much easier.

Next step is to control traffic - all wheel marks are in the same spot year in and year out. Using GPS Autosteer is great, it's time to make it really work. One of the reasons for the boom spray is being able to achieve that over time. All our internal fences have been removed to allow greater efficiencies, for control traffic.

## WHAT HAD YOU CHOOSE A GOLDACRE CROP CRUISER?

Dan knew we were looking for a boom sprayer, we weren't fussed whether it was trailing or self-propelled. We have been leaning towards self-propelled for a while but it was more about the crop clearance height, to be able to go up and over and the width to minimize passes.

Dan had run a couple of demo days so we spoke with him and let him know we were interested. He was able to do a deal with us, willing to trade a tractor and boom sprayer as part of it, which helped the deal get across the line, which was good. Dan made us feel comfortable with the purchase.

Agrimac has a lot of expertise now on Goldacres in their team with Darren (nicknamed 'Pig') and Steve Ross. Ultimately, the back up service from Agrimac is great, they're locally made so even if St Arnaud haven't got parts, we only have to go to Ballarat.

We're excited to be using it. We're expecting it to save time, reduce costs, get stuff done faster, increase productivity and outputs. As a farm, we're focused on being more efficient - we're quite spread out, it's 30 kms from furthest block to here so something that moves quickly and easily is fairly important to us.

## WHAT ABOUT THE 8010 HARVESTER AND SOME OF THE OTHER GEAR YOU HAVE?



We bought that 2nd hand out of WA and it's been pretty good. We have had a lot of support technically from Dan, which has been great, as things get newer and more complicated that's so important. We do a bit of maintenance but since Agrimac have been looking after the header its very reliable.

We're very pleased Dan gave us the support he did especially since we didn't buy it from him, that has definitely been a factor in why we do keep buying now from St Arnaud.

Our STX450 Quadtrack came out of SA about 3 years ago, this will be our 3rd sowing season. We were interested in trying something different, when you compare it to our dual wheeled John Deere, there's less compaction, less width and with our undulating paddocks we needed the power and traction to cope. You look out of the John Deere equivalent and all you see are wheel tracks - with the Quadtrack, you look out and see paddock. It's been excellent, it's been going really well, no dramas at all.

We got the Ausplow DBS Airseeder new this year in March - its 12 metre, 300 ml spacing and triple cart, we previously had a 2nd hand 10m DBS we picked up 5 years ago. It's been great. We didn't look at other brands, I see most other brands working through my job and was confident the Ausplow suited our conditions best.

## WHY RED FOR YOU?

We use a mix of machinery and equipment here, we are keen to always try what we think is the best. Life is fairly dull if you just stick to one, sometimes its good to have a change. The demands of precision agriculture though, means that things are a lot easier if machinery is all the same colour - so we are heading back to red - frankly, we are really drifting back to red because of Dan - then he sells us a green Crop Cruiser!!

Previously, we haven't had the right service here in the district for a long time. We had all red gear here 30 years ago, and then gradually Paul Kenny sold out to Dunlop & Isbel - we tried a few different things, John Deere tractor, Fendt - the dealer in Swan Hill, he's fantastic but he's 170kms away vs. 70kms.

Dan is carrying a lot of spare parts and is willing to help so we're happy to go back to CaselH gear because it doesn't matter which brand, they all need service and maintenance. They never break down when you don't want them or don't need them, only when you've got something happening, so you have to have someone there who gets how important it is to keep going. It's that service and support, that's important and Agrimac, Dan and his team are there when you need them.

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## WHAT MOTIVATES YOU/HOW DO YOU APPROACH BUYING NEW OR USED GEAR FOR THE FARM? WHAT ARE THE KEY THINGS THAT MATTER AS YOU MAKE THAT KIND OF DECISION?



High hours aren't necessarily a problem if you can't afford lower hours. We believe you buy the best you can afford at the time and be sure to buy something someone else will want when you don't want it anymore. We tried to buy 2nd hand mainly and have had a good run, its all about the condition of the gear. I have a brother who is a mechanic, we've turned the Woolshed into a proper Mechanics Workshop - he's really great and helping us out - that gives us a fair bit of confidence to buy stuff with hours on it. Generally, in our experience you can have bigger and better gear 2nd hand than we could if we just stuck with new.

Eventually as things get bigger and better, you get to a point where the only step up is to go new. For us, this could be a good sign for the future, that new is our next step.

## HOW LONG HAVE YOU BEEN DEALING WITH AGRIMAC?

We used to buy through a dealership in Charlton, when that closed we moved to Dunlop & Isbel in St Arnaud, that eventually became Agrimac and we've enjoyed working with Dan and the team from the outset.

## WHAT'S GREAT ABOUT AGRIMAC? WHAT DO YOU LIKE ABOUT AGRIMAC?

The team are all easy to talk to and you get a whole of expertise. The mechanics - Chris, he's good and the young apprentice, Nick, is shaping up well too. Darren has been very helpful too, but Dan is Agrimac for us. He's very knowledgeable. Being a farmer himself, he is either doing or about to be doing the same things we're asking about. He's motivated and very willing to help.

For example, a screen in the header wouldn't work on 2nd day of harvest, we called Dan asked what we could do about it, he couldn't get one to us quick enough, so he lent us his own. That's great service. We've known him 3 years now and he's been the same with everything - blokes like that deserve to do well.

To his credit he never turns his phone off - I called him late in the day yesterday, he said he'd get back to me first thing this morning - and he did. One of the few blokes that for a boss, you can ring him and he answers it. Sometimes he rings to say G'day just to see how things are going, on a weekend even, we appreciate it.

You have to build up a relationship with people - it takes time. We've done that now we think and also we feel confident that they'll be there a long time.

