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Road trip gives CQ group natural insight

More than 20 people from Central Queensland visited the Hunter Valley recently to gain insight from natural sequence farming (NSF) guru Peter Andrews.

In a follow-up to NSF field days held across CQ in late 2007, the Fitzroy Basin Association Inc (FBA) funded a group of interested locals to learn more about the system by visiting Mr Andrew's *Tarwyn Park* property at Bylong in New South Wales.

FBA's Boyne Calliope Sub Region (BCSR) Coordinator Kristy Dalton said six landholders from the Boyne Calliope area were funded to attend the trip and witness the principles of NSF in action on-ground.

"It's great to see these local landholders take the time to discover more about this emerging new farming practice, and we hope they will continue to share their knowledge with others in the region," Miss Dalton said.

Miss Dalton said the group saw what could be achieved through NSF on Peter's property, as well as Gerry Harvey's *Barrumul Stud*, and nearby Frog Rock Winery, over a period of four days.

Landholders John and Nancy Kunze, who run cattle on just over 300 acres west of Gladstone, said participating in the trip had confirmed the value of NSF principles in their minds.

"We'd seen Peter on TV and read one of his books, and we also went to the FBA field day at *Stowe Park*," Mr Kunze said.

"On the trip to Peter's property we were able to gain valuable insight into his understanding and methods of this system and how his ideas might be applied to our own set of circumstances," he said.

"We were able to identify some of the significant aspects of his system, including returning landscapes to their original systems of ponds and streams, reduction in energy of water flows, the raising of water tables, the concept of the 'leaky weir' principle for water outflows and the importance of vegetation, both in the surrounding landscape and along the creek banks."

Mr Kunze said they could clearly see the benefits in terms of erosion control, pasture fertility with the use of weeds not chemicals, and on-property water retention enabling better drought-proofing.

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“We are looking at putting some of these principles into practice such as improved vegetation along creeks and surrounding landscapes, and the use of weeds to aid pasture management,” he said.

“It’s about reversing the effect of land degradation, returning fertility to areas that have lost it and increasing productivity in the long-term – it may take months or years.”

While he believes the principles promoted by Peter Andrews are sound, Mr Kunze said he felt that clearer models or guidelines were required to enable local land managers to implement the ideas.

“He’s a practical bloke, and he certainly knows how to read the land, but I’d like to see more on the science side of things and I’m interested in coming up with a basic model of how you can apply NSF to different properties,” Mr Kunze said.

Kristy Dalton from BCSR said the FBA hoped to work with landholders who joined the tip in future to develop a locally-relevant set of guidelines on how NSF could be applied in the region, as well as possibly establishing demonstration sites.

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