

## **Courtney Ferguson, beef, sheep and cropping, Longford, Omeo and Seaspray**

I am a 24-year-old female farmer.

Two years ago I took on the responsibility of running our family farms. This is a mixed enterprise, beef, wool, and cropping, not all in which I was raised with.

I grew up on mainly a sheep property in Longford, my younger years were spent in a shearing shed or raising potty lambs, even on a tractor discing fields that were about to be sown down to pasture. Little did I know it was to be the sculpturing of my future career and life!

When year 12 finished I had to make my choices about what the hell I was going to do with my life. I thought about what makes me happy; firstly, the outdoors, secondly, the environment and thirdly nurturing.

I thought 'Yep, environmental engineering', and off I went to Swinburne University.

I was the only female and one of two Australians ... that was the end of that.

I thought, 'what's next? Yep agriculture'. So off I went to Latrobe University to study Agricultural science and agribusiness.

I successfully finished my degree and thought 'Wow! What to do now?' I applied for a cadetship in the Northern Territory and an agronomy traineeship in Lismore.

Surprisingly, I got both. Now what? "Mum, Dad, what do I do?"

This is when it all changed. Dad said "The farms are yours. Take it or leave it."

So I thought 'why bloody not?'

I arrived home. They handed me the farm keys. I wondered 'how am I going to make this work? Where do I start?'

There wasn't much pasture since the drought, the weeds were outgrowing the grasses. I sat down and did my farming plan.

The introduction of cropping seemed the only sustainable step into renovating the flogged-out paddocks. Cropping is now an important part of our business, and will continue to grow as the farms grow.

What's next...? Increasing our farm sizes and production and hopefully diversifying into other aspects of agriculture.