

# Sponsorship prospectus



**MFS**  
MONARO FARMING SYSTEMS

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# Introducing Monaro Farming Systems Inc.

The MFS group was established in 2007 by a progressive group of local innovative producers with Industry support with an aim to build capacity and continuous improvement in the Monaro grazing Industry. Over the previous eight years, MFS has grown from strength to strength and now consists of 63 farm businesses which equates to over 200 individuals. With strong, professional leadership from the ground up it has been able to secure over \$700,000 in project funding covering several core focus areas which include soil management and fertility, pasture improvement, enterprise comparative analysis, genetic improvement and farm business growth.

The MFS group collectively manages 123,988 hectares on the Monaro and is responsible for approximately 40% of total production. Members run approximately 375,500 sheep and 25,000 head of cattle, produce on average 1,875,845kg of wool per year and turn off over 2,500,000 kg of sheep meat and 4,207,000 kg of beef annually.

The members manage approximately 35% of the privately held land on the Monaro, over 80,000ha, and are responsible for approximately 40% of production. This land includes approximately 20% of the native pasture and 24% of improved pasture within the Bombala, Cooma-Monaro and Snowy River Shires.

## About our members

The membership base runs several enterprises including wool (93% of members), beef (69%), meat sheep (52%), cereal (31%) and producers growing other crops (28%).

Common production aims for our members include:

- Understanding and addressing limitations and constraints to pasture growth by focusing on; legume persistence and production, species adaptability to the Monaro climate, soil nutrient targets, grazing strategies and innovative technology advances in the grazing Industry.
- Continuous improvements in labour efficiency on-farm, productivity gains in terms of gross margin per ha (kg lamb per ha, kg wool per ha) and enterprise mix.
- Developing resilient, productive and sustainable farm systems through optimising soil fertility and fertiliser inputs, improving pasture quality and animal genetics and adapting to seasonal variability.

In terms of business performance indicators:

- more than 90% of our members prepare annual financial budgets
- 45% have a written farm business plan
- 65% calculate cost of production (return per head and per ha)
- 65% apply fertiliser regularly
- 80% practise soil testing

## Our aims

- provide members with proven, relevant and targeted information which improves knowledge and profitability

- provide a forum to focus on and manage research, development and extension on the Monaro
- provide opportunities for members to interact and exchange ideas
- be member owned and driven
- continue to develop partnerships by seeking the involvement of individuals and organisations in the pursuit of our objectives

## Our research focus

- MFS has identified six major production limiting issues facing producers on the Monaro. These issues provide the focus for our Research and Development Business Plan;
  - efficient pasture systems ie. legume composition
  - pasture productivity and finishing systems
  - soil fertility (targeted and strategic use of fertilisers, optimal soil nutrition, farm mapping)
  - comparative analysis of farm businesses
  - aligning stock performance with seasonal growth patterns (closing the winter feed gap)
  - enterprise mix
  - farm system risk management (seasonal forecasting modelling)

## Existing partners

MFS has existing partnerships with agribusiness and other organisations including:

- University of Sydney
- CSIRO
- Boyce Chartered Accountants
- South East Local Land Services (SE LLS)
- NSW Department of Primary Industries (NSW DPI)
- Meridian Agriculture (formerly Mike Stephens & Associates)
- Holbrook Landcare Network
- Tablelands Farming Systems

## Current sponsors

- Incitec Pivot
- Rabo Bank
- National Australia Bank
- Commonwealth Bank
- Australian Wool Innovation
- Cooma Rural

- Telstra Country Wide
- NSW Farmers Cooma Branch
- Gordon Litchfield Wool
- Lambpro
- RB Sellars

## Our achievements to date

### Research projects

Past, current and prospective...

- **Adapting to climate variability**

GrassGro® is a process-driven model of grazed pasture systems which helps producers to analyse farm management and enterprise options in the context of climate variability and risk. Once validated, the GrassGro® model will provide a key extension tool for improving grazing management decisions on the Monaro. MFS has received FarmReady and Woolworths/Landcare Australia funds to drive a three-year project looking at integrating GrassGro® modelling into farm businesses. This has included regular “seasonal outlooks” to be delivered at critical decision making times of the year which has been extended across NSW through NSW DPI.

- **Spring sown cereal variety evaluation trial (funded by GRDC)**

Dual purpose winter wheats, triticale and canola sown early on the Monaro have the potential to provide both grazing and grain production, and offer high income opportunities for producers. MFS developed and submitted a successful tender under the Grains Research and Development Corporation to fund a 12-month trial that primarily assessed yield and quality of the various wheat, barley and triticale cultivars in a replicated plot trial. The final report gave members and stakeholders a comprehensive income analysis report for the various cultivars based on a statistical analysis.

- **Economic comparative analysis of merino versus fat lamb enterprises on the Monaro**

MFS has hosted two interactive forums on the Monaro in 2010 to critically analyse the role of the ewe enterprises on the Monaro. These forums presented an economic comparative analysis using a combination of GrassGro® derived simulations and presentations from recognised speakers on the key profit drivers in the wool and lamb industry. The Forums addressed issues such as wool and meat enterprise performance, variability within and between enterprises, historical productivity of each enterprise and impact of current high meat prices on enterprise choice.

- **Merino genetic comparison trial**

This trial was conducted over a period of 3 years (2012-2014) and involved 24 teams of 15 wethers. It was open to all commercial Monaro wool producers and objectives include the evaluation of economic performance traits including fibre diameter, greasy fleece weight, yield, bodyweight, condition / fat score and carcass yield over a three year period. This trial gave participants an objective measure of their genetic position in relation to the industry benchmark and their potential for genetic improvement. The Final

Results have been distributed and a booklet published which demonstrates the variation across bloodline in economically important wool traits. This trial has links to National Industry benchmarks. A second wether trial based on the Monaro is due to start in April 2015 and will finish in 2018.

- **Soil Club**

This club meets regularly to develop whole-farm soil fertility management plans specifically looking at targeting phosphorus investment and linking soil fertility with the value of fertiliser use as well as stocking rate. The club has focused on integrating soil test information and innovative decision support tools such as the “P-Tool” to set management targets for soil fertility and assess fertiliser investment against productivity gains to get the balance right. This club now has a data base of over 1000 soil tests collected over six years and is moving towards precision based agricultural soil fertility techniques such as variable rate applications. The data base initiated by MFS and created by CSIRO, is now also shared with other farming groups such as Table Lands Farming Systems and Holbrook Landcare Network.

Activities also included a three year fertiliser on-farm trial on the three main Monaro soil types (basalt, shale, granite) which compared different sulphur fertiliser products and also linked the theory with the practice of correcting soil deficiencies and the resulting pasture response.

- **Building resilience and business returns within the family farm business**

Rural farming families continue to face increasing challenges imposed by the constant exposure to market uncertainty and climate variability. A critical factor underpinning the success of producer initiated groups is the strength and resilience of the family farm business which can successfully balance personal, business and family goals and values. This project, via a series of interactive sessions, aims to focus on the promotion of more strategic thinking within a business as well as redefining roles within the family unit, engaging in more effective communication, enabling skills and guidelines for making decisions, resolving conflict, recognising partner & spouse contributions and managing and adapting to change.

- **Traineeship program**

This program was initiated in 2012 due to the growing concern of retaining and attracting young local youth to choose a career in the agricultural industry and to stay and work on the Monaro. The program aims to “give young people the opportunity to gain skills and get an understanding of a broad view of successful management practices across the Monaro”. To date, 7 full-time, traineeship positions have been filled since 2012 and the trainees work across 8-9 different properties throughout the year. The program has proved highly successful in attracting and training local youth in the agricultural industry. For the 2017 program, MFS have partnered with Hay Inc. to enrol our trainee in the Hay Inc. Certificate which includes a three week training block in the Hay district.

- **Soil Carbon Project**

The project will trial and demonstrate the impact of various on-farm practices on sequestration of carbon in soil. Systems compared include hi and low input, pasture age, timed rotational versus standard grazing, native versus improved pasture, east versus west aspect pastures and conventional cropping compared to continuous permanent pasture on properties in the Monaro Farming Systems’ region of New South Wales. The project will gather baseline soil carbon data and look at soil carbon/fertility trends under these different management systems on 20 paired sites on 9 participating properties over a three year period. It will also look at spatial variation and sequestration potential of soil carbon across paddocks and across different soil types, pasture types and management practices thereby enabling producers to make more informed choices

when considering carbon trading options into the future. This Project was initiated in 2012 and will be completed in June 2015.

- **Remote Sensory Technology to Measure Pasture Biomass – not successful**

The aim of this Project proposal was to promote the application of new technologies that may help to optimise productivity while improving the resilience of native perennial pastures on the Monaro, within grazing enterprises. MFS, in partnership with Sydney University, was looking to demonstrate the feasibility of emerging innovative pasture assessment tools (NDVI devices / remote sensing technology) to assess pasture quality and growth potentials and identify variable production zones within a paddock. The outcomes to include land holders being able to explore why this variability exists and adopt management practices that maintain groundcover, optimise productivity opportunities and reduce impacts on more fragile areas and native pastures within the landscape. Although this proposal was not successful, Lachy Ingram from Sydney University has since run several assessments on Monaro properties with his NDVI device and this information is feeding in to MFS members.

- **Establishing persistent, productive new legumes.**

MFS has been successful in securing funding over three years as part of the MLA Participatory Research Program (National Feed Base Plan) to run on-farm trials looking at establishing persistent and productive legumes. This work will be supervised by NSW DPI researcher Belinda Hackney and NSW State Coordinator Doug Alcock. Two trials have been established at Gaerloch and Sth Bukalong, both focussing on legume establishment and performance in a pasture re-sowing and pasture rejuvenation scenario. Some of the legumes to be trialled alongside the more traditional white and sub clovers include French Seradella, Casbah Biserrula, Prima Gland, Paradana Balansa as well as some lucernes. The legumes will be sown in a variety of mixes, sowing rates and pasture preparation regimes to look at their performance over the three years under rotational grazing conditions. This trial has also included a legume nodulation survey conducted at 55 sites across the Monaro.

- **GrassGro Seasonal Outlooks**

The “seasonal outlook” reports are short term (generally 3 month) tactical projections based on Monaro “farm systems” for both a native and improved pasture enterprise. In developing these “farm systems” the parameters have been derived from Monaro district soil, pasture, climate and animal management data. The aim of these outlooks is to promote increased awareness of risk management options and potential strategies for the next few months to enable more informed decisions to be made.

Understanding the likely projection of pasture growth and animal performance wether good or bad is useful to the proactive management of your farm business in order to take advantage of opportunities and minimise the “down side” to poorer seasons. These “outlooks” are delivered by Doug Alcock, GrazProphet Consulting using the GrassGro® software tool developed by CSIRO to assist producers to manage climate variability and to make opportunistic business gains.

- **Probing for Preparedness – not successful**

MFS recently submitted a joint proposal with Tablelands Farming Systems (TFS) under the Australian Wool Innovation (AWI) 2015/16 Call for Proposals.

This proposal aims to lift overall farm business productivity by directly engaging 105 farm businesses (with a combined management area of 147,000 ha of grazing country, farming of 450,000 sheep producing

1,800,000kg wool & 27,000 cattle) across the Monaro and Southern Tablelands by delivering targeted, accurate, scientific and timely information that will increase producer confidence in making seasonal based decisions. A system of soil moisture probes at strategic locations across these districts, will link in with already established seasonal outlook (based on GrassGro® modelling) format presentations to deliver validated, targeted and tactical information to producers at critical decision points in the season. This will empower producers to make informed decisions regarding pasture and stock management, manage risk and lift long-term pasture productivity and stocking rate capacities.

- **Monaro Benchmarking Group**

Monaro Farming Systems has formed a group of 15-21 farm businesses to benchmark their business performance to help identify potential to increase overall farm productivity. This opportunity allows participants to explore the strengths and weaknesses of their business which leads to more informed decision making to achieve additional profits as well as improve resilience in areas like human resources and environmental management.

MFS sees benchmarking as a key long term initiative that will help decide directions for future projects that will benefit sustainable, productive agriculture on the Monaro.

- **Lamb Finishing Systems**

MFS has recently been successful with a lamb finishing Producer Demonstration Site through MLA. Commencing in 2017, we will receive \$56,314 over three years to ground truth the modelling work for six “lamb finishing” pasture systems. These will include two rape pastures, a plantain, lucerne, and improved grass pasture (grass based and legume based). This project will give us very useful information on the dry matter production, feed quality, and lamb growth rate performance on various finishing pasture options.

- **Worm Club**

MFS initiated a Worm Club in April 2016 in response to growing worm burdens adversely affecting weaner survival, wool production and sheep welfare as well as a reduced effectiveness of some chemical drench groups. The project aims to increase the effectiveness of worm and fluke control in sheep grazing enterprises on the Monaro by developing a district profile of worm populations for early warning alerts, to tailor better worm control programs, and to document resistance status. The MFS group now has a total of 244 worm test results and engages 28 farm businesses with an expenditure of \$4,490. With additional investment MFS can grow this initiative to integrate best practice worm management into the Monaro grazing Industry.

## Events and activities

The MFS annual program of events and activities includes:

- **Several events/field days per year** with a flexible program. In 2015 / 2016, issues targeted included comparative analysis, soil fertility mapping, alternative fertilisers, soil moisture probe interpretation, Grassgro® modelling seasonal outlooks, phalaris cultivars, worm club development / drench resistance, legume nodulation status, lamb finishing systems and farm transition strategies.

- **Four newsletters** are prepared and issued annually to members, sponsors and other interested parties. The newsletters ensure members receive regular updates on current projects, event opportunities and industry information.
- Visits by **key speakers** such as Rob Napier (Director of Napier Agrifutures – a firm specialising in strategic planning for agriculture and agribusiness), Mick Keogh (Executive Director of the Australian Farm Institute), Brian van Rooyen (AWI Board member, formerly Chairman), Dr Jeff Baldock (CSIRO), Prof. Ian Plimer (University of Adelaide), Sandy McEachern (Holmes & Sackett), Adj. Prof. Julian Cribb (University of Technology, Sydney), David Sackett (Growth Farms Australia), Hamish Dickson (Productive Nutrition), Dr John Webware (Mackinnon Project, Faculty of Vet science, University of Melbourne), Hon Dr Mike Kelly MP, Dr Richard Simpson (CSIRO Soil Scientist), Rob Hermann (Ag Concepts), Tony Benson (Wool Trade & Auctions Plus), Prof. Ross Garnaut (advisor to Australian Government), Ian Page (Commonwealth Bank Risk Executive), James Whiteside (Incitec Pivot Chief Operating Officer), Lee Menhenett (Incitec Pivot Technical Agronomist), Susan Orgill (Soil Scientist NSW DPI), Jenianne Hall (Mecardo Business Manager), Dr Lachy Ingram (Researcher University of Sydney), Jimmy Jackson (General Manager Product Development, The Woolmark Company), Lyn Sykes (Communication Specialist, High Resolutions), Georgia Twomey, Commodity Analyst and Matt Costello, Animal Proteins Analyst from Rabobank.
- Our **major event in 2011**, ‘The Carbon Day Out 2’, focussed on impacts of carbon pricing and climate change at a local level including mitigation strategies. This event attracted an audience of approximately 200 people, including farmers, researchers and politicians from throughout the Monaro and surrounding regions.
- **Event highlights in 2014** including a Soil Club / Wether Trial Field Day which attracted 83 participants and a Labour Efficiency Field Day which attracted 70 participants.
- **Event highlights in 2015 / 2016** included two Farm Asset Transition Forums with a panel of local and inter-state professionals which attracted 150 participants and three Monaro group benchmarking / comparative analysis sessions attracting over 45 participants.

MFS has been seen by Government, funding bodies, industries groups and companies as a credible organisation to invest in. MFS has received over **\$700,000** in the last eight years to deliver projects on the Monaro.

# Sponsorship packages

Monaro Farming Systems has identified your company as a potential partner and invites you to consider a sponsorship opportunity with our organisation.

All sponsorship packages can be tailored to meet your specific organisational objectives, we have included an outline of the benefits and costs below:

## **BRONZE Sponsor - \$1000 pa (plus GST)**

Specific benefits:

- full membership entitlement (usually worth \$385 pa)
- access to all events
- sponsorship opportunity at one event per year and signage at selected events
- advertising space in one of four newsletters throughout the year (1/4 page)
- speaking rights at one event per year by invitation
- inclusion of your logo as a sponsor on all material issued to members and media for the duration of the sponsorship

## **GOLD Sponsor - \$4000 pa (plus GST)**

Specific benefits:

- full membership entitlement (usually worth \$385 pa)
- industry exclusivity at the gold level (by negotiation)
- access to all events
- sponsorship opportunity at all events throughout the year and signage at events
- advertising space in all four newsletters throughout the year (1/4 page)
- extended speaking rights at one event per year by invitation.
- inclusion of your logo as a sponsor on all material issued to members and media for the duration of the sponsorship

## **One-off event sponsor**

MFS is also happy to explore opportunities to provide one-off sponsorship support for a particular event or research project. This may take the form of a combination of cash or merchandise and in-kind support.

To discuss ways your organisation can work with MFS please contact **Georgie Hood**,  
Producer and Board Director 02 6458 4388 / 0487 186 419 / [maharatta@activ8.net.au](mailto:maharatta@activ8.net.au) OR  
**Nancy Spoljaric**, Executive Officer 0438 066 322 / [Nancy@Meridian-ag.com.au](mailto:Nancy@Meridian-ag.com.au)

## Leadership of MFS

We have included information about board members to give you an insight into the people behind MFS. The team are committed to rural industries and passionate about developing and providing increased knowledge to farmers for the benefit of individual businesses, the rural sector and the wider community.

### Board members

**Richard Taylor, Chairman (B. V. Sc., MVS)** Richard Taylor graduated from Sydney University with a 1st class honours degree in Veterinary Science in 1987. He spent two years working with the Mackinnon Project, a farm advisory service based at Melbourne University, during which time he completed a Masters in Veterinary Studies, with a focus on livestock production and genetics.

Since 1990 he has been managing the family agricultural business on the Monaro, in conjunction with his father and brother. This operation has nearly tripled in scale over the period, and now runs over 40,000 sheep and 3,600 beef cattle on the Monaro and South West Slopes, on land owned by the business. In addition 18,000 sheep and 1,200 cattle are run on leased properties.

Richard was the founding director of Growth Farms, a farm management company which now manages over \$380 million worth of rural properties in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. He is now the Managing Director of MH Premium Farms, a business that has 13 large farms under management with enterprises including dryland and irrigated grain and cotton, sheep, cattle and sugar.

**Mike Stephens, Executive Officer (Dip FM, CPAg, FAICD, CRC, MAIAST, AAAC)** Mike Stephens specialises in project management, community and workshop facilitation and people management. His training activities concentrate on helping people to work more effectively together in a farming and rural environment. The key on-farm activities in which Mike is involved are succession planning and the review and management of farm labour. Until recently, Mike was the Executive Officer of the Beef Improvement Association of Australia and a director of Working With People. He was an inaugural director of Farm Management 500. In 1993, he was awarded a Churchill Fellowship and studied Farm Business Management in the UK, New Zealand and France.

**Angus Hobson (Rural Sc. Hon, UNE)** Angus previously worked as the CEO of the Red Meat Advisory Council Ltd (RMAC), which is the peak policy and advocacy body for Australia's red meat and livestock industry. Previously Angus was the Manager of Communication, Research Adoption and Evaluation at Meat & Livestock Australia Ltd. His most recent position is election as the Chair of the Southern Australia Meat Research Council (SAMRC) which decides research and investment priorities for livestock industries in southern Australia.

Angus has an extensive background in the practical aspects of grazing systems and livestock management from experience across Australia, NZ and the United States, as well as the 6th generation owner/manager of 'Bukalong', Bombala.

He has both a breadth and depth of experience working in a managerial and executive capacity in the commercial, not-for-profit, service delivery and advocacy/policy sectors of the livestock industry. He will add value to the MFS Board and MFS more broadly through his significant expertise in product & policy development, marketing strategies, RD&E project design & delivery, negotiating within and between departments and his substantial Industry networks.

**Georgie Hood.** Georgie is the Company Secretary and CFO for Growth Farms, a farm management company which now manages over \$380 million of rural properties in NSW, Victoria and Queensland. She is responsible for quality control, procedural improvements and the office team based in Bombala and Moree. She has developed, and maintains the financial management and reporting systems for the business. Georgie is also the CFO for a family farm operation in South Eastern NSW which runs 50,000 dry sheep equivalents. Prior to her position at Growth Farms Georgie worked for Michael Boyce and Co. where she played a major part in producing the first Monaro Grazing Comparative Analysis of farm enterprises, a benchmarking service. Georgie has deep knowledge and skills to combine agricultural production systems with meaningful compliance and management reporting.

**John Murdoch** CA GAICD (B. Comm, ANU) (G. dip Accounting, ICAA). John is a joint owner and operator of a family wool, beef and lamb producing enterprise on the Southern Monaro NSW. John also sits on the Sheep Connect NSW project advisory panel which oversees AWI's industry extension within NSW. Prior to operating a primary production enterprise, John worked for KPMG specialising in private enterprise and government body governance, performance and compliance. John is graduate member of the Institute of Chartered Accountants Australia, and the Australian Institute of Company Directors. John has a depth of experience in pasture based livestock finishing systems and sustainable livestock grazing enterprises.

**Jonathan (Jono) Forrest, Invited Industry Director (Chartered Accountant – FCA).** Jono is a Chartered Accountant and has been in the profession for 18 years. He is also a director of Boyce Chartered Accountants, the largest regional accounting firm in Australia. Jono is passionate about agriculture and his professional experience involves working with clients of Boyce closely on their management accounting, tax, succession/estate planning and other needs in business. Jono was raised on a dairy and grazing family farm in South Australia and then spent four years working near Wagga for a family with multiple grazing properties before completing his tertiary education.

**Phil Graham, Invited Industry Director (B Sc Agr (Uni of Sydney) , Dip Farm Forestry ( McMillian Centre)** Phil Graham works for NSW Industry & Investment . He is a pasture & livestock technical specialist based at Yass. Phil's working career has included time in the cotton, dairy and textile industries with the last 23 years spent with the NSW Department Primary Industries. Since 2005 he has filled the role as technical specialist grazing systems covering NSW. A current project Phil manages is looking at the impacts of potential changes in our weather on livestock systems.

## Support team

**Nancy Spoljaric, Executive Officer (B Sc Agr (Uni of Adelaide), GC AppSc (Rural Extension))**

Nancy currently manages a sheep and cattle property near Bombala with her husband. She has approximately 20 years' experience in various roles in the agricultural industry including jillarooing in outback SA and the Kimberleys, WA as well as working as a Department of Primary Industries Sheep and Wool Extension Officer, an Animal Program Project Officer under the Chief Veterinary Office (DAFF), an OJD Officer for the Cooma Rural Lands Protection Board and a field data collector for ABARE. Nancy has a strong background in project management and working with producers and agricultural organisations.