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FarmReady grants recognise contribution of farmers

The NSW Farmers' Association has welcomed the announcement that funding for FarmReady grants are now available, calling the program a step towards recognising the important contribution farmers make to their local communities and the economy.

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie believes the grants acknowledge the determined resilience farmers have shown over the past 10 years.

"There's no doubt that farmers are doing it tough, and it is important to recognise the work they do to feed the nation and support the economy despite prolonged drought," Mr Laurie said.

"The Association has long argued in favour of incentives for education, as programs that provide real support and incentive to ongoing education and skill development of farmers will be increasingly necessary in the current environment.

"It's no secret that agriculture will feel the greatest impact of climate variability, which is why the opportunity to learn about and support for uptake of new innovations, technologies and research are all essential in helping our farmers maintain their world-class food and fibre production," Mr Laurie said.

The FarmReady fund is designed to assist primary producers to gain access to specialised training to help them deal with both the business and production sides of farming. Association Members will be able to apply for FarmReady reimbursement grants in order to receive up to \$1,500 per financial year for approved training courses.

The Hon. Tony Burke, Minister for Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry initially announced the FarmReady program at the NSW Farmers' Association Annual Conference in July last year; however the announcements regarding funding and the courses available have just been made by the Government last week.

"Agriculture remains one of the most productive sectors in Australia, playing a major role in strengthening our economy and building farm skills enables us to extend this productivity and international competitiveness," Mr Laurie said.

"In fact, agriculture was the leading industry contributing to growth in Australia in the September quarter last year – a remarkable feat considering the many challenges facing the agriculture industry and the global financial situation.

"As a result, we see the introduction of the FarmReady program as great news for farmers. The availability of training grants in NSW has been uncertain for a number of years, and this program will provide some surety and assist farmers wishing to undertake further professional development," Mr Laurie said.

Members of the Association interested in accessing FarmReady grants are encouraged to speak to their training providers or visit the Department website: www.daff.gov.au for further information.

**Note for Radio: An audio grab from NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie is available from the Association's website (www.nswfarmers.org.au/media_centre/audio_grabs).*

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