

John and Liz Manchee – 2011 Farmer of the Year Finalists

John and Liz Manchee own and run Manchee Agriculture, a Narrabri based beef breeding operation, producing stud and commercial cattle with a strong emphasis on 'paddock to plate' attributes. Manchee agriculture consists of three properties, two of which are situated between the Namoi River and Nandewar range. The third is North East of Narrabri. Manchee agriculture employs three local people as well as four family members who are active in the business.

The Manchees have worked hard to take drought out of the equation when it comes to running their business. The Manchees have increased rotational and cell grazing techniques and have concentrated on smaller paddock sizes, increased watering points, improved pastures, mulched grass (seasonal) and weaning of calves early, which all apply less pressure on the grazing country. Bunk weaning of calves has also freed up thousands of acres for breeders in the winter months to ease the pressure on their grazing property. They established an opportunity feedlot of 600 head for stock during dry times along with two 2000 ton capacity silage pits to safeguard their genetics from drought. Recently a 100 acre centre pivot was set up to enable supply continuity of fodder and drought minimisation along with a 400 mega litre storage dam with the intent of purchasing further centre pivots. The Manchees have slowed runoff water down and have spread it across the land to better utilise rainfall by implementing contours, improving pasture types and increasing ground cover.

Family history plays an important role in this business, genetics used in the Manchee's herds date back to beasts owned by family as far back as 1947. The Manchee Ag breeding program has always been to deliver cattle that breed consistently for the commercial cattleman, delivering superior profits. The Manchees are continually striving to improve their cattle further and benchmark them against other producers, through research, development and the country's leading feedlot trials. Meat quality and the end product are of vital importance to the beef industry and it is our duty as genetic suppliers to provide bulls to breeders that produce beef the consumer will enjoy, to enable market share to be gained.

The Manchees are now looking towards the future and have developed online innovations to better promote their business. They are also working with another company to turn manure from their feedlot into bio diesel and biological fertiliser. The manure produced in the feedlot will become a 'profit centre' rather than a 'cost centre' as is currently the case with every feedlot. The feedlot will become an integral part of the enterprise, feeding cattle 365 days of the year, rather than the opportunity feedlot that it currently is.

John and Liz are also active in their local community. In recent years they helped to re-establish cattle showing at the Narrabri show and have now turned the event into a profitable one. They also assist the local high school by teaching students how to

assess and handle cattle and the ins and outs of the cattle industry. The Manchees are also heavily involved in their local polocrosse club as both players and supporters.