



MINISTER FOR PRIMARY INDUSTRIES  
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## Walgett cattle and broadacre cropper Michael O'Brien wins top farmer award

Walgett grazier and dryland cropping farmer Michael O'Brien has tonight been named the 2009 NSW Farmer of the Year.

One of the first of the State's farmers to champion no tillage practises as part of a farmer cooperative in 1995, Michael's large acreage mixed cropping management, and drought coping skills, resulted in his selection for the top farming honor.

Finalists Megan and Andrew Mosely from Cobar and Bede and Narelle Burke of Tamworth were also celebrated for their regenerative farming efforts, and intensive caged egg production.

NSW Minister for Primary Industries Ian Macdonald described Michael's large scale enterprise comprising of almost 40,000 hectares, as extremely productive in spite of the variable rainfall climate.

"At a time when we want to showcase to the nation – and the world – our food production capacity, Michael's ability to utilise improvements in technology and empower his farm team with the skills and energy required to overcome the challenges of a dry climate is a great story to share," he said.

"Michael strives to offset drought's effects by boosting production in grain and stock enterprises when seasons allow, and maintaining core breeding cattle and sheep and production in drought seasons. His sustainable farming efforts through the Walgett Sustainable Ag Group are commendable."

NSW Farmers' Association President Jock Laurie also paid tribute to this year's winning young farmers, Stephen and Amity Chase of Trangie, who have a commercial and stud cattle enterprise.

"The Chases are an excellent of young farmers who have returned to the family farm and introduced new enterprises to the business, replacing sheep with their angus cattle operation," he said.

"Use of initiatives such as saltbush in their feeding regime has helped them also survive drought conditions, and involvement in farm and community groups has enabled them to implement other sustainable strategies, and share their ideas with their farming peers."

"This year's young farmer finalist, David Gibson of Dorrigo, is also achieving some fantastic results through his fodder conservation and contracting businesses."

Judges paid tribute to Farmer of the Year finalists Andrew and Megan Mosely, who run a livestock enterprise featuring a white dorper stud, Santa Gertrudis/shorthorn cross cows and boer goats west of Cobar; and Bede and Narelle Burke, who operate a caged egg production along with winter and summer cropping, beef cattle, prime lambs and opportunity feedlotting on their Tamworth farm.

Judging panel spokesperson and western division farmer Marie Russell said one of our challenges was to select farmers who act as industry leaders and share their innovative approaches with others.

"This year's finalists displayed leadership skills within either their relevant industry or local community – and a passion for identifying ways to remain productive in spite of current challenges such as drought and climate change."

The successful Farmer of the Year Award was awarded \$10,000, while the Young Farmer of the Year received \$5,000. The annual Awards are coordinated by the Association and the NSW Government, with support from The Land and the Royal Agricultural Society of NSW.

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