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2010 SCHOLARSHIP SUPPORTERS

Australian Dairy Conference	Horticulture Australia Limited
Australian Processing Tomato Growers	Landmark
Dairy Australia	Meat & Livestock Australia
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Grain Growers Association	Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation
Grains Research and Development Corporation	Sidney Myer Fund

Friday 23 October 2009

EMBARGOED UNTIL 10AM, FRIDAY 23 OCTOBER 2008

Nuffield scholarship for Riverina grain grower

Riverina grain grower Alastair Starritt will tonight be awarded a scholarship in Australia's leading research program for primary producers, the Nuffield Australia Farming Scholarship Program.

Mr Starritt is one of only 18 Australians to receive a 2010 Nuffield Scholarship. He will be presented with his scholarship tonight at the Innovation in Australian Farming Awards dinner at the Hawkesbury Race Club, which is part of the four-day Nuffield Australia Spring Tour being held in the NSW Hawkesbury region.

Nuffield Farming Scholarships, each worth \$27,000, give young Australian farmers the opportunity to travel internationally and explore agricultural issues and opportunities in a global context. There are about 1400 Nuffield scholars worldwide.

Mr Starritt will use his scholarship, sponsored by the Grains Research and Development Corporation, to investigate the role of soil carbon in maintaining soil fertility and generating additional carbon-related income.

He is a partner in his family's mixed livestock and cropping business, at Womboota, in the southern Riverina near the NSW-Victorian border. They run a 2500-head Merino flock and 2500 first-cross ewes for prime lamb production across 4000ha, with cropping focused on winter cereals, canola and lucerne hay. Production is based on biological farming systems to maintain and improve soil health.

"There is currently a lot of confusion about the benefits of soil carbon, and I think its role in emissions trading schemes will essentially come down to our ability to measure stored carbon in the soil," Mr Starritt says.

"Some literature suggests that if farmers – who make up the largest group of land managers in the world – can increase their soil carbon by just a small amount we can make a significant impact on greenhouse gas emissions and carbon storage. If all it takes to do that are a few adjustments in our farming practices then it's something we should pursue," he says. "But I think farmers also need to be encouraged and rewarded for good soil management."

Nuffield Australia CEO Mr Jim Geltch says many Nuffield Scholars go on to become active leaders in agriculture and the community, and sharing their research findings is an important part of the scholarship program. "For many, the scholarship experience changes their lives by opening their eyes to the wider world and giving them the confidence to pursue their goals," he says.

The 2010 Australian Nuffield Scholars will leave Australia in February, June or September 2010 for a compulsory Global Focus Program. This will involve travel to China, North America, South America, Middle East, India and Europe investigating agricultural marketing and trade issues, environmental issues and experiencing the different social and cultural aspects of each region.

Following the initial six-week program the scholars will go their individual ways to pursue specific study programs in the country or countries of their choice. Mr Starritt plans to visit the cropping regions of North America, Canada and Europe.

More information:

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A high-resolution photograph of Mr Starritt can be downloaded from the link www.coretext.com.au/communications_images.php