

Week 16 – fuel prices

2 November

Farmers are feeling the brunt of extraordinary increases in fuel prices over the last 12 months. On top of a run of poor seasons and falling terms of trade, rising fuel prices are contributing to the stress of reduced farm income. There is a push to bring forward the fuel excise reforms. With farmers already adopting sustainable farming practices and reducing fuel consumption, is there anything more they can do? This week, BCG asked Wimmera and Mallee farmers the following question:

Will increased fuel prices impact upon the way you run your farm?



Chris Cook – Watchem

Chris and Claire Cook and their children, Ruby and Hannah, farm with Chris's parents Graeme and Lesley Cook, 5km west of Watchem. Half of their 3500ac of self-mulching Mallee loams is used for growing wheat and barley and the other half is in fallow or pasture for sheep.

Fuel prices: “The short answer is no. The biggest impact it will probably have for us will be in the future. When looking at updating machinery, the fuel efficiency will be a lot higher on the list of features that are important to us. Not that it isn't an issue for us, or a concern, but the cost of everything seems to be going up, except of course for what we are producing.

And I certainly won't be sticking the hose from the over head tank into the fuel trailer and walking away and forgetting about it, again (luckily I was in earshot and heard it as soon as it started running over). But as far as changing the way we farm, no, not at this stage.”



Tim Polkinghorne – Marnoo

Tim Polkinghorne owns some of his own land as well as property in partnership with his family. The Polkinghorne's have 20,000ac of river loams and self-mulching Wimmera clays around Wedderburn, St Arnaud, Logan and Marnoo. Sixty percent of the area is cropped with wheat, barley, triticale and oats. The remaining area is used to run commercial and stud sheep.

Fuel prices: “We make sure we don't run from farm to farm for no need and only do necessary jobs. For economy, we run fair-sized machinery and only cart full loads with trucks, (whether it's sheep, wool, grain, fertiliser or hay) as the cost is the same for part loads.

We keep cultivation to a minimum, time operations to minimise passes and keep an eye on profit margins. We are wary of cutting corners, which may cost.

In the future we plan to use more legumes, such as medic, clover and lucerne, to boost nitrogen, and include one- or two-year pasture rotations.”



73 Cumming Ave
PO Box 85
Birchip 3483
Phone 03 5492 2787
Fax 03 5492 2753
info@bcg.org.au

www.bcg.org.au