

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN AGRICULTURE AND COAL SEAM GAS DEVELOPMENT

PROJECT INFORMATION SHEET

Our project examines how to best manage agricultural production and coal seam gas (CSG) development to maintain agricultural assets and long term productivity of both enterprises in southern Queensland. The research will investigate on-farm interactions between agriculture and CSG with a focus on farm logistics, operations, business management and profitability in three main production systems:

- Extensive grazing on native and improved pastures,
- Mixed farming where grazing occurs with broadacre dryland cropping,
- Intensive dryland cropping.

What's outside the scope of this project?

Intensive irrigation production systems are currently not a focus in this project as CSG infrastructure is not yet present on irrigation properties in the study areas. Irrigated production systems will be considered for inclusion if CSG infrastructure is established on these properties.

Aims of the project are to:

1. Determine effective ways to measure the interactions and impacts of agriculture and CSG development on farm production and profitability
2. Collect a body of evidence that quantifies the effects of CSG development on agricultural production and profitability on farms in southern Queensland
3. Define coexistence between agriculture and CSG, and explain the factors and strategies that encourage or limit (constrain) coexistence using real examples
4. Communicate information and develop tools to assist farmers and CSG developers to better manage coexistence in key agricultural production systems

The research team

Jim Cavaye is the Chief Investigator (Associate Professor, School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, UQ) who leads a multi-disciplinary team to design, carry out and evaluate the project's activities:

Investigative /Field Team

Shelley Baldwin Research Assistant (School of Agriculture and Food Sciences UQ)

Lisa Kelly Research Officer (Environmental and resource economist, School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, UQ)

Expert Advisors

Thomas Baumgartl (Soil scientist, Centre for Mined Land Rehabilitation, Sustainable Minerals Institute, UQ)

Donald Cameron (Agricultural economist and rural scientist, School of Agriculture and Food Sciences, UQ)

Jo-Anne Everingham (Social scientist, Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining, Sustainable Minerals Institute, UQ)

Malcolm Martin (Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry)

Sue Vink (Water scientist, Centre for Water in the Minerals Industry, The Sustainable Minerals Institute, UQ)

Call for Participants in the project (across March-August 2014)

The researchers are seeking to interview up to 50 people with CSG production impacting on their properties and who are involved in extensive grazing with some broadacre dryland cultivation, and/or grazing with intensive dryland cropping. Participation is entirely voluntary.

Project promise – no surveys to fill in!

We have designed our project method to achieve two important objectives:

1. To provide current and evidence-based information for farmers and CSG developers throughout the project in a three stage feedback process, and
2. To limit time and effort spent by participants in data-collection activities

In Stage 1, the project Field Team will conduct confidential face-to-face interviews in a place convenient to each participant (such as your home or office, or nearby town) lasting approximately 30 minutes, to establish the impacts of CSG development on various aspects of your operation including:

- Siting of wells and access roads and impacts on farm infrastructure,
- Changes to production systems, farm routines and on-farm decision-making,
- Changes to farm income, financial and business management, succession and value of assets,
- Changes to agricultural labour, service industries and marketing and production systems.

In Stage 2, the team will contact participants by phone to provide feedback about the project, and to collect more detailed information about impacts of CSG development on farm operations. After this information has been processed, participants will receive written communication via letter and/or email to keep them updated about the project and to invite further comment (Stage 3).

CASE STUDIES –some representative landholders will be invited to have their farms featured as research case studies, involving more detailed interaction with the research team and provision of more comprehensive monitoring data as quantifiable measures of production and profitability/examples of co-existence are developed and tested.

Outcomes

The project will deliver improved methods to assess the impact of CSG development on agricultural productivity and profitability at the farm scale, the effects at local agricultural regional scales, and promote more efficient and sustainable CSG operations. This would be achieved through:

- providing independent information to support decision-making by farmers and CSG developers around co-existence to enhance the efficiency and sustainability of their respective industry
- enhancing opportunities to better inform and engage landholders, CSG companies and other stakeholders about CSG issues in relation to agriculture

Handling participant information

Any information you provide will be completely confidential. This includes your name and property details, your responses to questions, physical or commercial data and any other information. All the information you provide will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet or in password-protected computer files. Any information that will be included in any publications or communications arising from the project will be reported only as aggregates, categories, or ratios to indicate impacts, e.g. x per cent of landholders reported a y per cent increase in the use of product z.

Please be assured that participation in this project is entirely voluntary, and you retain the right to withdraw from the study at any time, without penalty. Should you choose to withdraw from the project, you can request that we remove information provided by you from the study.

We greatly appreciate your help with this project and to show our appreciation we are able to offer you a water pressure gauge. We hope that this will help you to monitor groundwater levels on your property. Further contact details are included at the bottom of this information

Further Information:

This study will be cleared by one of the human ethics committees of the University of Queensland in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council's guidelines. If you would like to speak to an officer of the university not involved in the study, you may contact the Ethics Officer on 3365 3924. For further information, or to discuss the progress of the research or consequences of your participation, contact:

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