

Food has a story to tell

Top beef direct to door

Shoppers want facts

ROGER HANSON

TRACEABILITY of the source is emerging as key issue of product going to market.

Rabobank's Hobart-based rural manager, Gareth Horne, hosted dinner for a cross-section of about 60 farmers in the Bothwell hall in the Central Highlands, covering key issues for producers, from paddock to plate concepts to managing farm input costs.

Managing director of Greenham Tasmania, Peter Greenham, said being able to trace a product back to the producer was becoming an increasingly important tool in the competitive food market.

Rabobank's senior analyst – dairy and farm, Michael Harvey, said structures and efficiency of farm inputs affected business profitability.

Mr Greenham, the sixth generation of his family involved in family meat business, said the company first started out as a sole trader family butchery business in the mid-1860s.

"It has now grown in to a multimillion-dollar meat-processing business, with buying and export centres in Smithton and Tongala in northeastern Victoria," Mr Greenham said.

"Consumers are looking to know the story about the product, the property where it came from and more about the actual product."

He said Greenhams had introduced QR code for product traceability.

"The program is extremely sophisticated and detailed. It allows a cut of meat to be traced from your plate back to the paddock where the animal was raised."

He said the dollar exchange rate was making it difficult to compete in the export market.



SUPPLY: Peter Greenham at Greenham Tasmania's beef processing facility

"We now have a focus to create a presence in the domestic market."

The company now sells 70 per cent of its product to the domestic market with 30 per cent export.

"This has changed from a few years ago when those percentages were reversed with most of our product going to export," he said.

"We couldn't compete with the bigger processors. We have a focus on the domestic market and we apply a scientific approach to all our production processes for the control of food safety hazards."

In 1999, the Meat Standards Australia (MSA) was introduced, which is a beef and sheep meat eating quality

program. "It is designed to take the guesswork out of buying and cooking red meat," Mr Greenham said. "MSA involves all sectors of the supply chain from paddock to plate."

MSA provided an endorsement of quality for graded cuts of red meat indicating product had met quality standards for tenderness, juiciness and flavour.

Greenhams Tasmania has developed several brands for the market. In 2007, it introduced Cape Grim Beef, which is promoted as quality hormone free and GMO free grass-fed angus and hereford beef.

Other brands the company has launched are Pure Black – Natural

Angus Beef, and Greenham Tasmania Natural Beef.

Cape Grim was named as a medalist, in the "From the Paddock" section of the 2012 *delicious* produce awards this week.

Mr Greenham said there was a promising future for producers and the company.

"We work with almost 1000 farmers to develop our brands. We are processing about 95,000 cattle a year at present and we plan on moving that to 110,000, which is about 480 a day.

"We will stick with processing cattle because our company ethos is to do one thing and do it properly."

Greenhams will be launching a retail-ready *MasterChef* meat packs line in September.

Mr Greenham said Cape Grim Beef was joining the online Aussie Farmers Direct, which was a growing range of 100 per cent Australian produce including the freshest fruit and vegetables, meat, seafood, everyday food staples and even fresh gourmet meals.

Mr Harvey, from Rabobank, said Australia was heavily reliant on the global market for fertilisers.

"Dynamics across global markets are changing, impacting entire supply chains, and farmers need to understand the principles of global farm inputs," Mr Harvey said.

"Australia is a small player in the global market and the market in the future is going to be volatile.

"Farmers need to arm themselves with a combination of market-leading knowledge in order to negotiate the market complexities."

Mr Harvey said Australia was going to play a big role in feeding the nine billion people of the world projected by 2050.

"Energy costs will increase because of carbon tax, but the government is trying to help with financial assistance to farmers to transition out of high consumption of energy," he said.

Mr Harvey said because of changes in the agricultural landscape, it was important farmers be continually innovative and improve productivity to maintain viability.

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TASMANIA'S award-winning Cape Grim Beef has teamed up with Australian home online delivery food business, Aussie Farmers Direct, to deliver restaurant-quality beef.

About 1000 Tasmanian farmers produce meat under the Cape Grim brand which is famous for its hormone and GMO-free, grass-fed Angus and Hereford beef.

Aussie Farmers Direct chief executive, Braeden Lord, is proud to partner with such a high-quality brand that is coveted by Australia's top chefs including Rockpool's Neil Perry and Grossi Florentino's Guy Grossi.

"Cape Grim producers grow incredibly tender beef and now Aussie Farmers Direct customers will be able to have it delivered to their door," Mr Lord said.

"We have always delivered high-grade meat across our ranges, and the new Cape Grim offering really adds to our credentials of delivering premium quality Australian food," Lord said.

Managing director of Cape Grim Beef, Peter Greenham, said the Aussie Farmers Direct partnership was an important milestone.

"This is a real win for Tasmanian Cape Grim Beef farmers. Aussie Farmers Direct will expand our products' availability from a selection of independent food stores and restaurants to more than 67,000 homes across Victoria," he said.

Cape Grim Beef farmers follow the quality and processing standards set by the Meat Standard Australia (MSA) and Cape Grim Beef is consistently ranked in the top four of MSA's 18 grades of beef.

Cape Grim Beef was recently awarded silver at the 2011 Royal Sydney Show Fine Food Awards, gold at the 2011 Royal Queensland Food & Wine Show and a swag of accolades at Beef Australia 2012 Awards.



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